SURVIVING IN GRAD SCHOOL: MANAGING STRESS

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Are You Stressed Out?

Take this quiz* to find out. Check the box if the statement is true about you.

- I often have digestive upsets.
- I tend to lose my temper easily.
- I have trouble sleeping.
- People say I am a "worry wart."
- I have difficulty concentrating.
- I feel tired and drained all the time.
- I watch a lot of TV.
- I often get migraines or tension headaches.
- I feel "blue" and have a hard time getting over it.
- I am really impatient with other people
- I feel "burned out."
- I feel the harder I work, the more behind I get.

Are You Stressed Out?

Count the Checks.

If your score is:

![ 0-3  Congratulations! ]

![ 4-8  You have quite a few symptoms of stress. ]

![ 9-12  The many symptoms you are experiencing may be related to high levels of stress. ]
WHAT LIFE CHANGES OCCUR AS A GRAD STUDENT?

To Priorities?
To Quality of Life?
To Balance?
To Confidence?
RESEARCH ON STRESS IN GRAD LIFE

• Longfield, Romas & Irwin (2006)
• Explored how grad school impacts:
  • Participation in physical activity
  • Social activity
  • Feelings of self-worth
SAMPLE AND METHOD

• 47 Full time grads at large urban campus
• MA and PhD students, varied disciplines
• Qualitative study
• Semi-structured interviews
• Inductive content analysis
RESULTS: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- **Seasonal** (e.g. more active in summer)
- **Structured and Planned**
  - limited free time; max results in less time
- **Availability**
  - less barriers to activity, more likely to do it
- **No Win Guilt**
  - for leaving schoolwork; AND / OR not exercising
- **Mixing** Physical with Social (to maximize time)
RESULTS: SOCIAL ACTIVITY

• **Finances** (less income limits activities)
• Only spending time with grad peers
• **Structure and planning** (less spontaneity)
• Quality of interactions
  • Conversation felt more sophisticated
  • **Guilt** when not discussing schoolwork
• Changed relationships (close others “get” it?)
RESULTS: CHANGED SELF-WORTH

• Delayed Gratification
  • Self-worth challenged by “jumping thru hoops”
  • Waiting for long-term ship to come in.

• Status and Sacrifice
  • Pride at becoming / being a grad student
  • But takes a toll on self worth in other areas of life (e.g. money, family)
• Elation / Depression Cycle
  • At times dramatic fluctuations in self-worth.
    • Powerful! Competent! Support of academy!
    • Frustrated and disheartened! No one is helping!

• Internal Generation of Self-Worth
  • More pleasure and self-worth from things you produce or create.
• Narrowing of domains of self-worth

• Prior to grad school, may have had many areas felt good about self

• During grad school, focus of self worth becomes largely about academic performance
ADDED STRESS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- Culture shock
- Homesickness
- Language and Communication Difficulties
- Building and Accessing Social Networks
- Financial Stress
- Racism
- Immigration Issues
- Fear of Loss of Visa Status
IS STRESS CONTROLLABLE?

- Experiencing some stress is unavoidable
- But there are ways to manage stress
  - By increasing your coping repertoire
  - Changing perceptions about event
- Managing stress can prevent negative outcomes
  - Such as illness, missed classes, impact on relationships.
IDEAS FOR MANAGING STRESS

- Be aware of your stressors / your reactions
- Recognize what you can vs. can’t change
- Moderate your physical reactions to stress
- Reduce the intensity of your emotional reactions to stress
- Seek emotional support
IDEAS FOR MANAGING STRESS II

- Eat and sleep well
- Maintain proper nutrition
- Exercise
- Find hobbies
- Get involved in extracurriculars
- Relaxation, mindfulness, and meditation
- Maintain a spiritual practice
- Be assertive, set limits, practice saying “no”
- Cultivate social support
- Use humor
- Process your emotions
- Talk to others about your culture and the stress
- Meet other students
- Learn how the system works
- Get to know the locals and the new town
THE JHU COUNSELING CENTER
TOP 5 REASONS GRADS VISIT US

• Anxiety and Worry

• Time Management, Procrastination, Motivation

• Feeling Overwhelmed

• Academics Concerns

• High Standards for Self
WHO WE ARE

• 12 Psychologists, 4 Psychology Interns
• 4 Psychiatrists, 3 Psychiatry Residents, 1 Case Manager
• Generalists; each with specific expertise
HOW WE HELP

• Individual Psychotherapy
• Group Therapy
• Couples Therapy (If Both Are Students)
• Pharmacology
• Crisis Intervention (Daily Walk-in Hours)
• Referral Service
GOOD REASONS TO COME VISIT

- It's Covered by Tuition
- It's Professional
- It's Confidential
- It Helps to Talk with Someone Who Cares
- 1 in 5 Grad Students Visited Last Year
CONTACT US

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