

Start Today!

Start trying the techniques that are mentioned here and work on them the rest of the week.

Develop A Plan

Plan some events to happen each week on a certain day. For example, regularly meet a friend on Tuesday to go for a walk.

Susan's personal plan for week of July 6 to July 12

Jog	MWF	7 - 7:20 am
Best Study Time	M - F	6 - 9:30 pm
Meditation	M - F	5 pm
Socialize	F or Sat.	Plan evening out
Bicycle	Sat.	9 - 12 am
Volunteer Work	Sat.	Afternoon
Church	Sun.	10 - 12 am
Pleasure Reading	Sun.	Afternoon
Make New Weekly Plan	Sun.	1 pm

Notice the balance in this plan. This person is taking charge and responsibility for her life. Stress in this person's life will stay at a manageable level because she is taking charge and treating her body and mind with respect for the basic needs.

Summary

Take a few minutes now and go back over "The Seven Best Kept Secrets of Stress Management." Sit down and make a personalized plan for the coming week. Destructive tension caused by stress is not a "villain" hiding someplace waiting to jump us by surprise. It happens because we do not take the time to manage and plan our week in a constructive balanced manner.

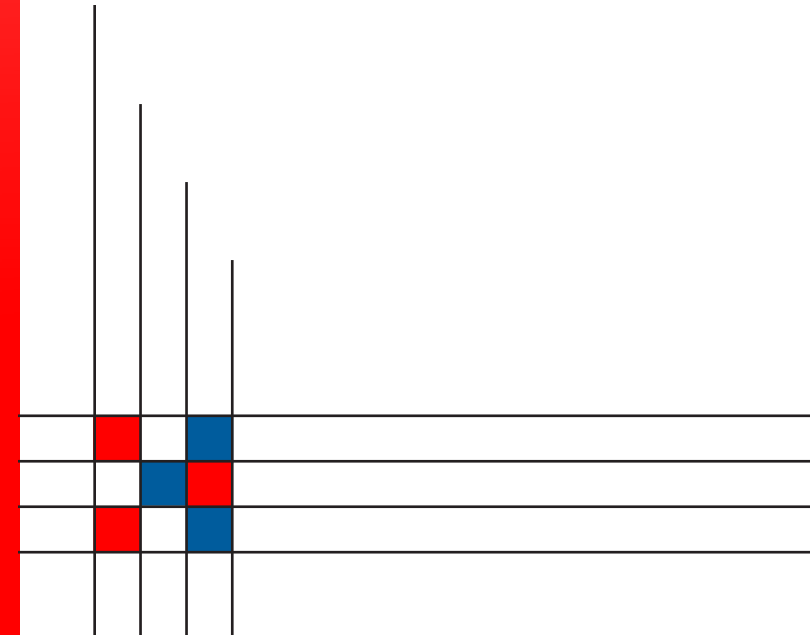
Resources

You may want to take Kirkwood's Stress Management class. See a Kirkwood Counselor (319-398-5471) for an appointment if you want some help in starting your stress management plan. Check a library or the Internet for more information.

This handout is part of a Self-Help Information Series written by the Kirkwood Community College Counselors, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. 319-398-5471 or 1-800-332-2055, ext. 5471.

Please share this information with family, friends and classmates.

Managing Stress College



Managing Stress in College

The best kept secret in the world is how to manage stress in our lives effectively.

The good news is that there are effective and relatively simple techniques that will allow us to manage most stress in our lives. But, before we discuss these, let us look at some myths about stress management.

Popular Myths About Stress Management

- There is a perfect job/spouse/vacation spot that will eliminate the stress in my life. FALSE - None of these will do it!
- I will “magically” find some way to eliminate the stress. FALSE - We will always have stress, the secret is learning ways to manage it.
- Idleness helps us relax. FALSE - It does nothing to positively affect our perception of ourselves. It only serves to increase stress.
- Tranquilizers and sleeping pills reduce stress. FALSE - They have side effects, are addictive and dangerous.
- Music relaxes. FALSE - Rock music actually excites and tenses. Music that has a beat that approaches our pulse, relaxes.
- Watching TV helps us relax. POSSIBLY IN MODERATION - Extensive watching can actually increase our separation from others and increase our loneliness. Violence tends to make us more tense.

The Seven Best Kept Secrets For Managing Personal Stress

1. Search for relaxation techniques which you can use anywhere. Some techniques will work right in the middle of a classroom or crowd. For example, when you notice stress building up, go to your “favorite place,” picture it in your mind (a mountain or a beach you love). See yourself there in your “favorite place” enjoying it. For a few minutes concentrate on all enjoyable aspects and details of your “favorite place.”
2. Interrupt the cycles. Be alert to tension building up within and react positively to it by interrupting its buildup. Some examples: perhaps you can excuse yourself from the scene for a short walk down the hall, or switch your working efforts to another project.
3. Monitor your breathing when you first start to feel stress. People under stress start taking shallow breaths in their upper chest. Interrupt the cycle. Take long breaths. Count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 as you breathe in; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 as you breathe out.
4. Manage the tension in your body better. Watch for first signs of tension in your body. Most people begin to feel stress buildup in their shoulders or neck. They notice an aching there that tends to become more intense. Learn and practice “Progressive Relaxation.” An example of part of the “Progressive Relaxation” process would go like this:
 - a. Tense the muscles of the shoulders, hold this tension to a count of 5 and relax the shoulder muscles completely.
 - b. Now repeat this same process 3-4 times. The complete progressive relaxation process is done throughout all the muscles of the body. But you can use part of it to manage tension in a specific part of your body anytime.

The Seven Best Kept Secrets For Managing Personal Stress cont'd

5. Exercise is the most powerful stress management technique (walking, gardening, swimming, bowling, yoga.) Pick a level of activity that fits you. Start easy today - increase the tempo some each week.
6. Carefully monitor all inputs to your biological system. By inputs, we mean food, fluids, rest, sound, television, and self talk. Some commonly overlooked examples of how these can be stressors or relaxers are as follows:

Stressing

- Missing breakfast or a meal
- Excessive caffeine or sugar drinks
- Destructive “self talk” like “stupid me” or “dummy”
- Television violence/horror/suspense
- Continuous rock music

More Relaxing

- 3 regular meals
- Substitute non-caffeine and reduce sugar
- Compliment yourself in your “self talk”
- Human interest stories
- Music with a slower beat

7. Put balance in your life. Remember the wobbly bicycle wheel; it was out of balance because some of its “plan” was missing (the spokes). There are activities that can take you completely away from the daily routine to a pleasant sense of balance. Some people find the pleasantness of balance in joining a club, in a musical instrument, painting, volunteer work, or joining a chorus. You will find it if you search.