

Stress Management

Student
Wellbeing
Centre



UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

CONTENTS

Introduction

How does it affect you?

What causes it?



Ways to manage stress

Useful resources

Useful videos



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Introduction

First of all, let's clear one thing up - **stress** is completely **normal**. It is often as a **result** of **feeling** under **pressure** or having **multiple demands** upon us. When we have a lot to do and lots to think about, we can feel like we've lost control.

Stress can be **helpful** at **times** - it can give us **drive** and **motivation**, and can **encourage** us to be **productive**. However, if we are **feeling too stressed** for **long periods** of time, then it can have an **impact** on our general **wellbeing** and **mental health**.

The **stress** management **society** uses a **bridge analogy** to describe this feeling:

“When a **bridge** is **carrying** too much weight, it will eventually **collapse**. It is possible to see the **warning signs** before this happens, the **bridge** would **bow**, **buckle** and **creak**.”

The **same principle** can be applied to **human** beings, with **excessive demands** and **challenges** placed on our bridges. There may be **early warning** signs. However **stress** can **creep** up on some of us, **resulting** in an **unexpected breakdown**.



breathe

How does it affect you?

The way **stress affects** you is not necessarily the way it affects someone else, Stress has a horrible way of ‘**flaring up**’ the things we are **already prone** to. For example if you are already **susceptible** to **headaches**, **stress is likely to make** these **worse** or more **frequent**.

Some of the **changes** you may **experience** when feeling **stressed** can **include**:

- **Memory** issues
- **Irritability**
- **Frustration**
- **Concentration** difficulties
- Feeling **overwhelmed**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Indecision**
- **Headaches**
- **Brain Fog**
- **Panic/anxiety**
- **Demotivation**
- **Sleeping** too much/too little
- **Isolating** Yourself
- **Fatalistic** thinking
- Skin **irritabilities**
- Changes in **appetite**
- **Starting** many **tasks** but **not finishing** any
- **Cynicism**
- **Indigestion**
- **Self-doubt**
- **Low mood**

Remember, it is **perfectly normal** to have a few “**off days**”, especially nearer hand-in dates or **exam** periods. If you have **symptoms** for **several days**, or find that they are **getting worse**, it would be a **good idea** to book an **appointment** with your **GP** for further advice.

What causes it?

We all get stressed by **different things** and for **different reasons**. This is a good thing. Being **different** is what makes us all **unique**. However, **common causes** of **stress** for the student population **include**:

Assignment deadlines

Looming **deadlines** can have a great impact on a student’s stress levels. As the hand-in date approaches, often students start to **increasingly judge** their **work** more **harshly**, and begin to worry that they have left out important information. This is **normal** and to be **expected**; it is often what **encourages** students to **triple-check** their **work** for mistakes.

What causes it?

Exam preparation

Yes, taking the **exams** themselves can be quite **stressful**, however once you're in the **exam** room, there is **nothing more** you can do, therefore **students tend** to just **try** their best. The **preparation** for an **exam** is often what causes **highest levels** of **worry, panic** and indeed **stress**. Similar to the assignment deadlines, as the exam date approaches, it is **normal** to **start feeling** like you are **forgetting** important **information**, or to re-read information over and over. A lot more information is probably sinking in than you realise.

Academic Pressure

Studying at University includes **attending lectures** (which are sometimes several hours long!), **preparation reading** for **seminars**, group **work**, **presentations** and also large amounts of **self-directed study**. Studying at University is **challenging**, and can **induce stress** for **some students**. This is where **goal setting** and prioritising **skills discussed** in previous issues of **Wellbeing World** will come in handy - sometimes we can **spend large portions** of **time focussing** on things that are perhaps not as important or vital as others.

Poor Sleep

This is a bit of a catch-22. **Stress** itself can be the **cause** of **poor sleep**; **equally** poor **sleep** can be a **trigger** for **increased stress**. Poor sleep can include **disrupted** sleep, difficulties **getting** to sleep in the first place, **waking up** in the middle of the night, and even an **irregular sleeping** routine. Sleep is supposed to be the time where our body and brain '**recharge**', therefore it is vital for stress management.

Poor eating habits

Yes it's true - what you are **consuming** can be having an **effect** on your stress levels. A **healthy** and well-balanced **diet** can make you feel physically well, have **more energy** and improve your **concentration** and **memory**. All of which are going to **benefit** your **studies** and overall **motivation**. The foods that can **negatively impact** stress levels include **foods high** in saturated **fats**, **sugars** and **caffeine**.

What causes it?

Expectations of yourself

Students often put great **demands** and **pressure** on **themselves** to perform to very **high standards**. It is always good to have **aspirations** and be **enthusiastic** about the work you produce, but at times students can begin to **ignore** their **own achievements** as they are too **focussed** on being even better **next time**. You need to **acknowledge** the **good** things that you are doing, as well as **areas** for **improvement**, to get a **healthy balance** - be your own cheerleader and be proud of what you are accomplishing.

The need to impress others

It can sometimes feel like we need to **succeed** because that is what **others want** of us - our **tutors, parents** or **friends** etc. At times, this can be the case, but we can also use this as fuel for stress. At the end of the day, you are **studying** hard to **shape your future** - this needs to be something **you want** to do, something you have **motivation** to do. The entire experience of **University** (academic, socially, personally) will be **more beneficial** to you and **your future** than you may realise at the moment. At times of **high stress**, **remind** yourself of all the **good things** this could lead to for YOU.

Full and busy schedule

Studying at University takes up **A LOT** of your **time**, and this often **increases** year-to-year. As well as this there are **often** other **demands** on **students** that are **not** always **academic** such as **social events, societies, sports**, going to the **gym**, making time for **chores**, completing the **food shopping, cooking** etc.

Consequently your days are **whizzing past** you so **quickly**, before you know it you are being fitted for your graduation robe! This busy and hectic schedule can also be a **trigger** for **increased stress**.

Later on in this issue there will be **hints** and **tips** to **help reduce** or **control stress** levels, and one of these looks at **managing** your **time**.

Ways to manage stress

Open Up

Whether it's to your **friends**, **family** members, **academics** or even the **Student Wellbeing** Centre - *'A problem shared is a problem halved!'*

Although the issues may not go away, **talking out loud** about them to someone can **help** you **rationalise** them a little more.

Manage your time

Use **planners**, **diaries**, **timetables** or even scrap pieces of paper to help you **organise** your time.

List everything you want to get **done each day** (incl. everyday tasks) and **allocate time slots** to them. You can **print** and use the **hourly timetable** found here as many times as you want.

Rest breaks are vital

Even at this **stage** in the **year** when you are **feeling** like you are **running out** of precious **time**, you need to make time for **several breaks** from your **work** throughout the day.

First of all, **allocating yourself** regular **rest** will **break** your **working** time up into more **manageable pieces**.

Secondly, when you **return** to your **studies**, you will be in a **better frame** of **mind** to **review** your **work**.

Additionally, if you don't have **regular breaks** you are at **risk** of '**Brain Fog**' (that awful stage where you are staring at the computer screen hoping words will magically appear).

Ways to manage stress

Get some fresh air

Similarly to the point above, **getting out** of your **room/library/working area** for a short **walk** and some **fresh air** will do you more good than you realise.

Look after yourself

When we are **feeling** under **pressure** and have **multiple things** to do, looking after ourselves can 'go out of the window'. **Getting** enough **sleep**, **eating properly** and regularly, **exercising**, spending **time** with **others** and **relaxing** - these are just some of the **fundamentals** that keep us feeling well.

Don't have time? Well **make time** - it is absolutely **vital** that you continue to **take care** of **yourself** when feeling stressed, otherwise you are at risk of **feeling** both **physically** and **mentally drained**.

Seek Advice

Remember that there are **loads** of **services** within the **University** where you can get some **advice**. Whether it is **financial** issues, **accommodation** issues, **academic** issues or your wellbeing, there is a **service** to **support** you.

Such services include the Student **Support** Centre, **Advice** Service, **Accommodation** Service, **English Language** Centre, the **Learning** Centre (Library), **Personal Tutor**/academic support and the Student **Wellbeing** Centre.

Don't know who you need? That's ok, just pop along to a **drop-in** session and we can **point you** in the **right direction**.



Useful Resources

Headspace - Meditation made simple. Guided meditations suitable for all levels. Meditation can help improve your focus, exercise mindfulness, awareness, relieve anxiety and reduce stress.



Calm - Relax with Calm, a simple mindfulness app that can help bring more clarity and peace of mind into your life.

Available on iOS and Android.



Planner Pro Daily Calendar (Free)

Designed for those people who are looking for a full-featured app to manage daily life better. Add your daily events, sync with existing compatible calendars, pick your view from daily, weekly or monthly, and tick off your tasks once complete. Perfect to help get you into a routine.



The Stress Bucket - Managing your stress

by OWEN LIGGINS for Student Life, read [here](#).
Either click the link or scan the QR code to read



Dealing with stress - Are those deadlines starting to bite? Here's a few pointers on dealing with stress.

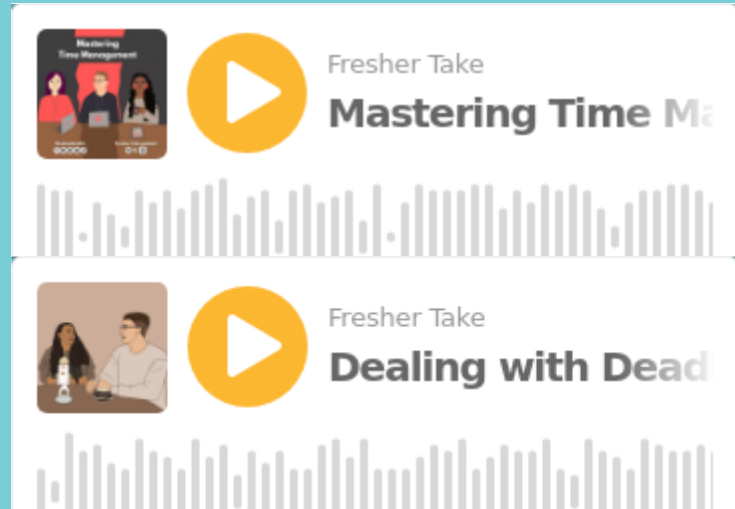
By BECCY WRIGHT for Student Life, watch [here](#).



SUPPORT PODCAST

We also have podcasts available within the university as well as recommending some great external podcasts.

Take a look online for our full range of resources and support:
studentservices.lincoln.ac.uk/



This is a podcast created by Students for Students, discussing topics from homesickness to handling stress. They chat about their experience, advice and tips on adjusting to university.

SUPPORT VIDEOS

