TIP SHEET FOR RELAXATION

Relaxation & Stress – what’s the right balance for me?

Stress is part of everyday life. It is so common that sometimes we are unaware of our own levels of stress and accept living with high tension as ‘normal’. However, it is important to learn how you experience stress and what your own signals may be that you are stressed. Headaches, irritability, aching muscles, changes in eating habits, hyperventilation, procrastination, sleeping difficulties and feeling constantly rushed or anxious can all be signs that you are stressed. They could also be signs of a physical health problem so you may want to check this out with your doctor.

Mild stress can be a powerful motivator in the short-term, but feeling stressed over a longer period of time can cause problems for both your physical and mental wellbeing. It can be really helpful to look at the ways in which you relax and add to the relaxation techniques that you may already be using. Experiment with some additional relaxation techniques and then keep practising the ones that suit you best!
While the causes of stress may be complex and varied, such as relationship troubles, study or financial problems, time pressures – the techniques to relax and de-stress can be simple to learn. Below are some suggestions to help you begin to develop a relaxation routine which you enjoy and will want to practise.

Remember that physical exercise is significant in managing stress, due to the release of tension-reducing chemicals. This is why regular exercise (at least 30 minutes, three times per week) is very beneficial. Physical exercise can be the best way to start reducing stress levels.

What can I do to help myself?

Develop your own relaxation practice
There are many different types of relaxation techniques. They can involve breathing control, visualizations, tensing and relaxing muscle groups, listening to music or focusing the mind. Try out several techniques until you are clear what you like and then use the relaxation routine that works for you. For any relaxation exercise, you will need to be comfortable. Any of the following will help you to be comfortable – find one that suits you. Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor and hands resting on your knees with palms facing upwards. Or lie on your back on the floor with your feet slightly apart and arms close to, but not touching, your sides, with palms upwards. Or lie on your back with your legs drawn up so that your knees are resting gently against one another and your feet are turned inwards and slightly splayed apart.
If you are very stressed it may be very difficult to use relaxation practices without assistance.

If you find your level of tension is high and you cannot relax, consider counselling.
Where can I get help from others?

- Talk to a CSU counsellor. Appointments can be made through Student Central on 1800 ASK CSU.
- Make an appointment to see your doctor.
- Lifeline 131 114 offers a 24-hour service.
- Join a yoga, meditation or relaxation class.

What other resources are available?

Websites

The following websites have links to audio files which you can download. There are four relaxation exercises offered on each link, varying from about 5-30 minutes.

www.usyd.edu.au/stuserv/counselling/resource.shml

CDs/ DVDs

Petrea King ‘Golden Light Meditation’ or ‘Learning to Meditate’, or ‘Soar like an Eagle’ or look at her website www.questforlife.com.au

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