How to Manage Your Stress

We have all had the feeling before, our muscles are tense, our stomach is upset, we can’t sleep or eat; though some of us may eat too much. You may feel sad or depressed and when you try to think of a way to fix your problems you go blank. This is because you are stressed.

Medicinenet.com defines stress as a physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. Stresses can be external (from the environment, psychological, or social situations) or internal (illness, or from a medical procedure).

I think all of us can relate to stress, especially since we are all college students. We are faced with all different types of stress. Stress is constant in our lives and can not be avoided; that’s why I would like to inform you of the two types of stress and a few tips on ways that you can help manage your stress. I think that the tips I give you can help with every day stress situations and make life more enjoyable.

There are two types of stress: Short-term (acute) and Long-term (chronic). Acute stress is the type of stress that comes immediately with a change of routine. It is an intense type of stress, but it passes quickly. Some of the effects a person may have are chest pain, abdominal discomfort, headaches, difficulty in concentrating, sleeplessness, depletion of energy.

Chronic stress will occur if there is a constant change of routine for week after week. Chronic stress affects the body for a long period of time. This type of stress happens when a person faces moves or job changes. Some of the effects of Chronic
Stress are headache, mood swings, anxiety disorder, substance abuse, memory disturbances and in severe cases a heart attacks because of high blood pressure.

Now that we know the types of stress I would like to talk about a few reasons for stress that I believe most of us or all us can relate to.

The first reason for stress would be being a college student. Being a college student can be very stressful. College can be very demanding; we all have our own lives, some of us work and have to take care of our families, and to add school work such as tests, papers, project, and finals on top of that can be very stressful and time consuming. We all want to succeed in our classes and that can add a lot of stress as well. So many times we put overwhelming pressure on ourselves to do well and get good grades. We don’t want to disappoint our family and friends and especially ourselves. At times this all can be too much.

The second type of stress I think we can all relate to is succeeding in life. Whether it is doing well in school, in our career, or a goal we have set for ourselves. We all want to succeed! Who wakes up in the morning and says, today I think I want to fail? I don’t think any of us do. It is deeply rooted in the American dream that anything is possible if only you can dream and seek to make those dreams come true. Dreams are believed to be attainable as long as you work hard enough and are motivated enough to reach that goal. Society does not accept failure too well. So, along with opportunities and possibilities come the pressure to succeed and the pressure to be successful. I think a very motivating quote would be “I do not fail, I succeed in finding out what does not work”.

The third type of stress would be personal relationships. Those could be with our mom and dad, with our children, husband or wife, or our friends. I believe personal relationships are one of the top causes of stress. Family life can be very stressful; Family-related stress can be attributed to various factors such as dealing with a family member's terminal illness, the loss of a loved one, the effects of financial hardships, sibling rivalry, divorce, re-marriage, blending families. There are so many issues that can come up with personal relationships.

Wanting to live up to the high expectations that are placed upon us can be very stressful. I suggest seven ways that can help us manage our stress.

I came up with an acronym to help me remember, RELEASE covers all seven ways to help with stress.

R stands for Recognize. First we have to recognize the problem and acknowledge it is there. Start a journal, write down what caused your stress? How you felt physically and emotionally? How you responded? What you did to make yourself feel better about the situation?

E stands for Exercise. Every day try and set aside some time to exercise. Exercise is a good way to release the excess energy. Exercise not only improves health and reduces stress, it also relaxes tense muscles and helps you to sleep. It causes the release of endorphins into your bloodstream, making you feel relaxed and happy.

L stands for Let it go. If whatever is causing you to stress will not matter a month from now or a year from now, let it go. Don’t stress yourself out over things that
will not matter in the long run.

E stands for Eat Healthy. Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat.

A stands for Attitude. Having a good positive attitude can go a long way. Being able to have a sense of humor and laugh at yourself. I always try and remember the saying “What doesn’t kill us makes us stronger”. Try and look at bad situations differently, ask yourself how can I grow from this and what can I take away from this situation that is positive.

S stands for Sleep. Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

E stands for Enjoy life. Pamper yourself, take a time out during the day just to have a cup of coffee or tea. Do hobbies you like to do.

In conclusion we can not ignore that we have stress in our lives. Rather than ignoring it we need to find ways of dealing with it. I hope you take from my speech some useful tips on how to manage your stress so that you can live a happier more enjoyable life. And remember, don’t take life too seriously; nobody ever makes it out alive anyway.