

What is stress?

Stress is the body's natural reaction to changes in the environment and although it has a negative connotation, not all stress has to be bad. When it is handled properly, it can actually have a positive effect on the body. Ever feel that rush of adrenaline right before a test? Or the pounding of your heartbeat before you go out and take the field? These are examples of positive stress that helps motivate the body to perform and rise to the challenge. The key to positive stress is that it is essentially short-term in that the physical reaction subsides once the task is completed. Negative stress, on the other hand, occurs when the body is unable to relax and maintains a state of tension long after the demands have been met. This type of stress can have very serious negative effects on your health, your relationships, your academic success and your overall well-being. HOWEVER, the way you handle stress is entirely in your control and by acknowledging that you are feeling stressed, you're already taking a huge step in the right direction.

How do I know if I'm stressed?

Stress does not affect everyone in the same way. People can experience stress physically, behaviorally, emotionally and intellectually. Physical symptoms of stress can include headaches, digestion problems, chest pain, fatigue and muscle tension. Some people notice behavioral changes such as changes in eating or sleeping, an increase in alcohol or drug use, or social isolation when they experience stress. Emotional symptoms of stress include moodiness, restlessness, anger and a lack of confidence. Finally, stress can cause intellectual changes such as memory problems, difficulty making decisions, poor judgment and an inability to concentrate.

Just because stress is common among college students, doesn't mean it's inevitable. There are a lot of resources on campus to help students deal with stress if, and when, it occurs. CAPS offers FREE and CONFIDENTIAL counseling services to all enrolled students of Florida Tech.

Also, the CAPS Web site
www.fit.edu/caps

offers FREE anonymous screenings and resources.

Students can call (321) 674-8050 or come to the center to make an appointment.

Florida Institute of Technology
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

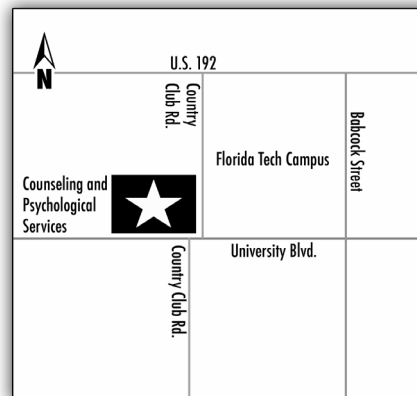
Center Hours

Monday–Thursday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

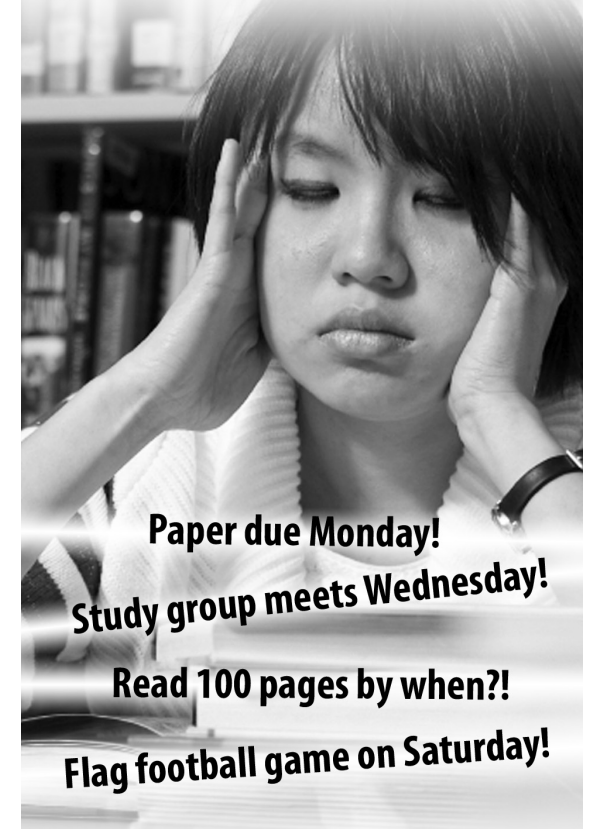
Location

Intersection of Country Club Road and University Boulevard, west of Babcock Street



PY-169-308

STRESS LESS!



Paper due Monday!

Study group meets Wednesday!

Read 100 pages by when?!

Flag football game on Saturday!

If this sounds anything like your schedule, you may be feeling a little bit **STRESSED OUT!**

Don't worry, it's normal to feel totally overwhelmed, especially when you're adjusting to this new chapter of your life.

Florida Institute of Technology
Counseling and Psychological Services

I've never had a problem managing my stress before. Why has it gotten so much harder now that I'm in college?

While college life can bring new freedoms and exciting opportunities, it also requires a great deal of responsibility which may be difficult for some students to handle at first. College students face many unique stressors like roommate problems, test anxiety, deadlines, finances, exams, relationships, parents, school and work obligations. These are all very common causes of stress among college students and, fortunately, there are many things students can do to alleviate the effects of these stressors in their lives.

MANAGING YOUR STRESS

By Randi Johnson, B.A.

Get enough sleep! Most people need 7–9 hours of sleep each night in order to feel well rested the next day. Try to exercise no later than 8 p.m. and avoid caffeine after 6 p.m. to make falling asleep at night easier. Consuming caffeine 3–6 hours before bedtime can double the time it takes to fall asleep and quadruple the number of times a person wakes during the night. Establishing a regular sleep schedule can help you make sleep a priority. This includes weekends! You may think that sleeping in helps your body “catch up” on lost sleep throughout the week. In reality, changing your sleep routine by an hour or more will throw your body off for the following week. Stick to a sleep schedule to avoid feeling tired during the day.

Plan ahead! Pulling all-nighters are nothing to be proud of and they certainly aren't worth the trouble. You're guaranteed to be stressed out over the 15-page paper you have due on Monday if you start writing it on Sunday night. Plan on finishing your assignments at least 24 hours before they're due. That way, instead of frantically rushing to squeeze out five pages an hour, you can reward yourself for finishing early by going out with friends or working on your tan at the beach.

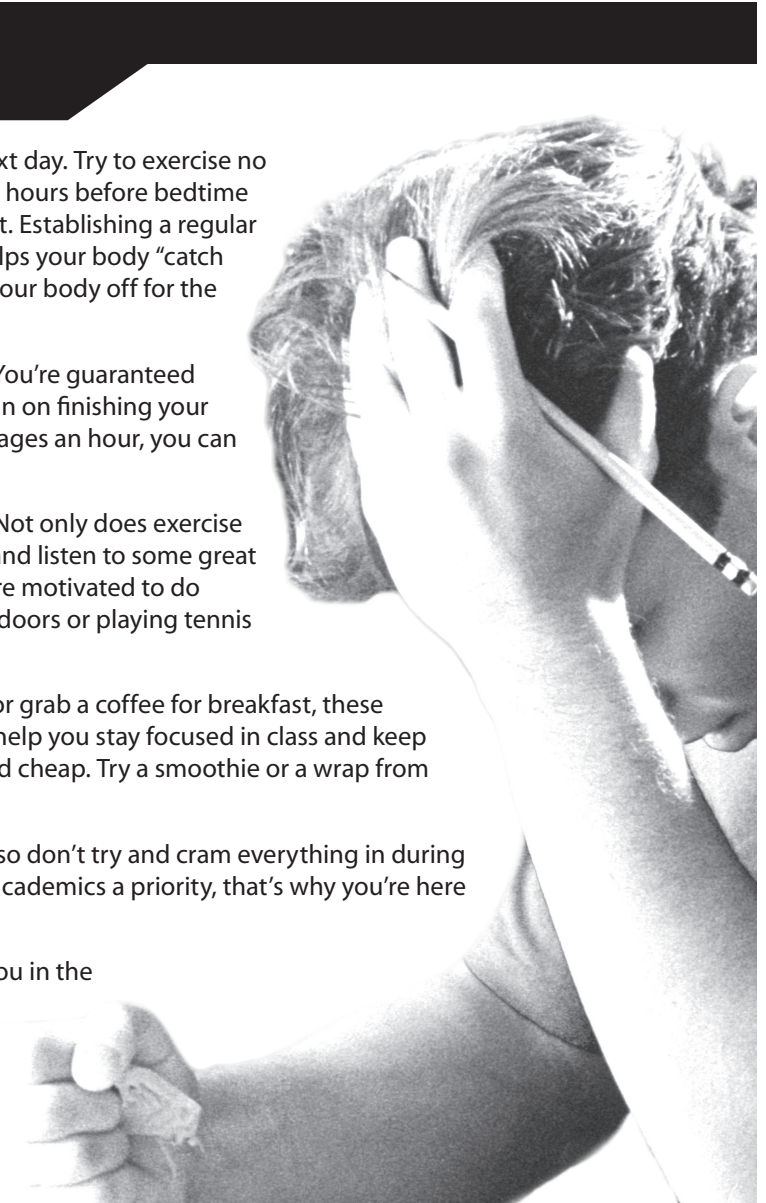
Exercise! Getting some kind of physical activity for 20–30 minutes each day is a great way to beat stress. Not only does exercise relax muscle tension, it also improves your sleep and boosts your confidence. Leave your textbooks at home and listen to some great music to give yourself a break from your workload while you work out. Chances are you'll wind up feeling more motivated to do schoolwork after your body gets a chance to run off some tension. Change up your routine and try biking outdoors or playing tennis to keep exercise enjoyable.

Skip the temptation of fast food! Although it's extremely tempting to order pizza at midnight or grab a coffee for breakfast, these options only make it harder on your body to handle stress. Eating smaller, healthy meals every 3–4 hours will help you stay focused in class and keep your body satisfied. Even when you're in a rush, there are tons of healthy options on campus that are quick and cheap. Try a smoothie or a wrap from Center Court in the Clemente Center or an omelet at the Sub Café & Deli in the Denius Student Center.

Learn how to say no! There's plenty of time to get involved in different activities on and off campus so don't try and cram everything in during the first few months. Allow yourself to take on one or two activities outside of classes but remember to keep academics a priority, that's why you're here after all!

Don't skip class! Skipping class to catch up on sleep or to finish up a last minute paper will only hurt you in the long run. Missing notes or quizzes will only add to your stress level.

Talk it out! Surrounding yourself with supportive friends and family is a very important aspect of overcoming stress. It helps to share concerns with someone you trust and respect. Whether it's a friend, family member, teacher, minister or counselor, another person can help you see a new side to your problem and, thus, a new solution.



If you've tried some of these techniques and you still feel overwhelmed, it might be a good idea to seek professional help from a mental health counselor or a psychologist.