

Anxiety and Stress

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While a little bit of stress or anxiety can be useful since it motivates us toward action, too much stress can result in a variety of physical and psychological problems such as heart disease, trouble sleeping, gastrointestinal problems, and headaches. According to The National College Health Assessment Survey (Spring 2015), students reported experiencing the following symptoms at least once in the last 12 months: Academic Stress, Financial Stress, Relationship Stress, Sleep Issues, Personal Appearance Issues, Family Problems and Health Concerns.

Anxiety can involve a variety of different symptoms, but some of those most commonly reported by college students are panic attacks, generalized anxiety, and social phobia. A panic attack can include but is not limited to the following symptoms: heart beating fast, sweating, chest pain or discomfort, nausea, feeling dizzy, fear of dying or going crazy, and numbness or tingling sensations.

Generalized anxiety involves persistent and excessive worry about a variety of areas of your life such as your grades, friends, family, or health, and you may find it very difficult to control this worry. Social phobia involves experiencing intense fear when you are in situations you are unfamiliar with and/or around people whom you don't know. You may be afraid that you will feel embarrassed, and these feelings may lead you to avoid certain situations.

Some tips for coping with anxiety and stress

- Practice good self-care that involves adequate nutrition, exercise, and sleep. Exercise can reduce fatigue, improve concentration, strengthen the immune system, and increase endorphins to improve mood.
- Reduce your intake of sugar, caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco.
- Practice meditation or other relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation.
- Get support from those around you including friends, family, churches, and/or community groups.
- Check your attitude and express gratitude. Do you see the glass as half full or half empty? Does the grass look greener on the other side? Try seeing the positives in any situation, and think about what may have been learned from it. Staying grateful will help you to focus more on what you do have rather than what you don't, leading to increases in contentment and happiness.
- Maintain perspective and try to see the bigger picture. Monitor your thoughts and evaluate them to see if they are worth holding on to.
- Laugh! Tell some jokes, watch a funny movie, or even try and find the humor in your misfortunes!
- Take a break, pause for a moment, and engage in a simple pleasure. You may want to take a short walk, take a bath, or listen to some music.
- Practice good time management which includes prioritizing, being able to say "no," keeping a calendar, and staying organized.
- Focus on the present moment rather than expending precious mental energy regretting the past or worrying about the future. And remember . . . "Smile, breathe, and go slowly." **Thich Nhat Hanh**