

## Study Success: Stressed out or laid back?

Look at these situations.

1. How do the situations affect college work?
2. For each situation, discuss how stressed you would be. Rate each one from 1 (not stressed) to 5 (very stressed).

You've got 3 assignment deadlines for next week. You've started working on 2 of them but don't know how to begin the third. You feel you've got so much work, you don't know how to begin.

You've got a big exam in 2 weeks. It's worth 30% of your 'AS' level course. You haven't started revising yet.

You've got a difficult and demanding relationship with your partner. You're always arguing and he/she often puts pressure on you to spend time together to sort the problems out.

Your boss is really demanding. She's always calling you at home, asking you to do shifts at the last minute. You really need the job so you feel you have to say "yes."

Your mum really depends on you to help out with your younger brothers and sisters. She works full-time and is often home late, so you have to do a lot of the chores in the evening.

You live in a 2 bedroom flat with your mum, step-dad, little brother and baby sister who you share a bedroom with. You're finding it really difficult to sleep and impossible to study at home. You've been missing morning classes because you're too tired and are behind with your college work.



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## Study Success: The signs of stress 1

Everyone experiences stress at some time in their lives. In most cases, stress is the anxiety we feel about failing. A little bit of stress can be good – it motivates us to succeed and gives us the adrenaline needed to work to deadlines. However, too much stress can seriously affect our health and ability to perform at work and college. So what are the signs of stress?

*In pairs, think about the last time you were stressed. How did you feel? Fill in this table.*

	<p><b>Physical</b> your body</p>	
	<p><b>Mental</b> how you think</p>	
	<p><b>Emotional</b> how you feel</p>	

## Study Success: The signs of stress 2

*Look at the signs of stress below. Are they physical, mental or emotional symptoms? Write them in the correct boxes on handout B.*



- Angry
- Argumentative
- Blaming others
- Butterflies in stomach
- Can't concentrate
- Don't want to talk to people
- Feeling sick
- Frustration
- Hard to make decisions
- Headaches
- Heart beats faster
- Impatience
- Insomnia (can't get to sleep)
- Irritability
- Jumbled, confused thoughts
- Muscle tension
- Negative thinking
- Overwhelmed / suicidal
- Palpitations
- Preoccupied with problems
- Tight stomach
- Wake up in middle of night

## Study Success: Coping with stress

Read these statements from students.

1. Which ones are coping with their stress well? Which aren't? Give them a score from 1-3. 1= coping well 2= coping OK 3= coping badly.
2. Underline the good strategies for managing stress.
3. What could the students scoring 2 or 3 do to manage their stress better?

My accountancy course is really demanding. There are a lot of assignments and tests. I find myself staying up half the night cramming for exams the next day. I need to keep myself awake with energy drinks or I'd never get all the work done. I really like sports but I haven't got enough time to keep active these days.

Nicola Sanz  
NVQ Accountancy



I have to work really hard for my computing course. It's difficult because I'm not used to studying so much, but I try to break down all the work into smaller bits and focus on one part at a time. I always do my work in my bedroom which is OK, but when I'm not working, I find it hard to relax 'cos my room reminds me of all the stuff I still have to do.

Joel Bowen  
National Diploma  
IT



Anh Tuan Nguen  
Electrical  
Installation



I've finished college and now I'm working. I think studying can be really stressful and I had loads of problems. My main stress was that my friends and my boss kept asking me to do things when I was supposed to be studying. It's really hard to say 'no'. I went to see a student advisor and she gave me loads of useful advice about planning my time better. It was also good just to tell someone about everything.



Michaela Hendriks  
MA Development  
Studies

I'm doing a Masters Degree which I'm trying to fit in around my full-time job and 2-year old daughter. I've had to become more efficient – I just force myself to meet deadlines. Rather than trying to do everything perfectly, I make sure the important things are done. When things get on top of me, I try to think rationally – the worst that could happen is that I would fail my MA – nobody would die and the world wouldn't end – this makes me feel better. I also try to focus on each job as I do it rather than worry about all the other things I have to do. And the most important thing is to get enough sleep.

## Study Success: A summary of stress

The main definition of stress is the feeling of anxiety about failure. Everyone suffers from stress, and although a little stress can be positive, too much can cause health problems, result in an inability to work and ultimately, depression.

### The causes of stress

- Exams
- Deadlines
- Trying to juggle lots of different things, eg work, family, friends and study
- Poor time-management
- Bad housing
- Not enough sleep
- Problems with relationships

### Recognising the signs

Physical: Heart rate speeds up, Palpitations, Muscle tension, Headaches, Can't sleep, Stomach ache / butterflies

Mental: Jumbled, confused thoughts, Preoccupied with problems, Can't concentrate, Hard to make decisions or solve problems, Negative thinking

Emotional: Irritability, Impatience, Frustration, Anger, Depressed or suicidal

### Coping with stress

- Look after yourself: eat well, drink water (cut down on fizzy drinks), take relaxing hot baths etc
- Get enough sleep
- Separate the places and times for work and relaxation so you don't associate your time off with work
- Break down work into small chunks
- Focus on one thing at a time
- Plan when you're going to do your work
- Plan so you're not doing one thing for too long – you're varying your tasks so you don't get bogged down and bored
- Say 'no' to the things you can't do
- Keep physical – sport is an effective stress reliever
- Don't forget – it's not the end of the world if you fail
- Plan for relaxation time – everyone needs breaks
- If you're stressed, don't try to do everything perfectly. Decide what's most important and do these things well
- Tell someone about it – visit the **student advisors in K block**, ground floor

