

Managing Mid-Semester Stress

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Spring break is past, yet the end of the semester is still a dim light at the end of the tunnel. During this time of the academic year many students find that they have a lot of work left to do to complete classes and wrap up their responsibilities with extracurricular activities. However, the amount of work it will take to finish up the semester may seem greater than the amount of energy they have left. It is not uncommon to feel exhausted, anxious, unmotivated, apathetic, or depressed during this time of the semester. Some students sleep or eat significantly more or less than usual, are more irritable, or may withdraw from friends or activities that they typically enjoy. These are all signs of stress. Recognizing this and working actively to cope with stress in ways that work for you will help you to successfully complete the academic year stay healthy in the process.

One of the first things to remember is to continue using the healthy strategies that you usually use to manage stress. If exercising, talking with friends, planning time alone, and/or eating healthy are ways that usually help you deal with stress, make sure you keep these activities in your schedule. You need stress relievers more than ever when stress is high.

When dealing with stress it is often important to remember to keep things in perspective. Look for balance between work and rest in your daily routine. It may be helpful to accept that you may not be able to accomplish everything as well as you would like during times of high stress. However, realize that what you do accomplish is good enough. Allowing yourself enjoyable "time off" is just as important as the energy you put into "time on" to keep you functioning well.

Remember to pace yourself. When you are tired or having trouble concentrating, think of breaking tasks down into smaller components. Allow yourself to take short yet frequent breaks from tasks. Research suggests that pulling all-nighters or trying to "cram" to finish tasks is ineffective; we retain less information if we persist without giving our minds a rest. Taking a moment to breath deeply, walk around the room, or stretch your body before continuing with work will increase your ability to retain information.

Finally, look for minor adjustments to relieve the pressure you're experiencing rather than major changes to your routine. This will help to give you some continuity and keep you on track as you find yourself at the end of the tunnel, finishing the semester. If you continue to have difficulty coping with stress, consider using Student Counseling Services, Room 335 Student Services Building.