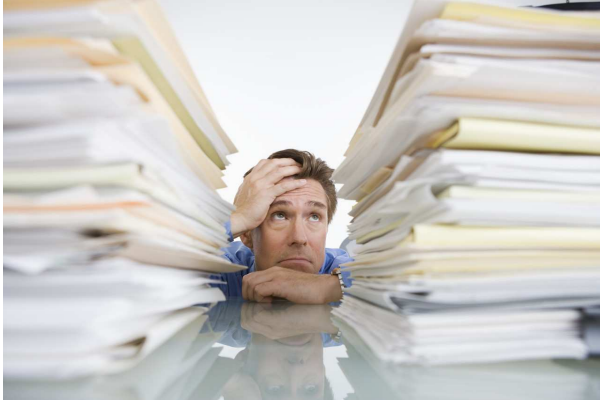


Stress Management

Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize. However, it is not an inevitable consequence of an event: stress depends a lot on people's perceptions of a situation and their real ability to cope with it. Feeling the effects of stress is a normal part of life, especially when you are facing major challenges. But each person responds to stress differently. What causes a lot of stress for one person may not cause stress for someone else. That's because a large part of stress is a matter of perception-how you view a situation determines how much stress it causes you. Therefore, only you can best evaluate the amount of stress in your life and learn better ways to cope with it.



Stress is a part of day-to-day living. As college students, you may experience stress meeting academic demands, adjusting to a new living environment, or developing friendships. The stress you experience is not necessarily harmful.

Mild forms of stress can act as a motivator and energizer. However, if your stress level is too high, medical and social problems can result.

The following may help you identify sources of stress in your life:

What job, family, or personal stress do I have?

Chronic stress can be caused by an ongoing stressful situation such as:

- Family or relationship problems
- Caring for a family member who is elderly, has chronic health problems, or is disabled
- Job stress
- A family member who is under stress

Do my beliefs cause me stress?

Some people feel stressed because their beliefs conflict with the way they are living their life. Examine your beliefs to see if conflict between what you believe and what your life is like causes you stress.

If you are not sure that you are stressed or are not sure what is making you feel the way you do, you need to discover what is causing stress. One way to do this is to keep a stress journal, a written record that can help you identify stressors so you can find better ways to cope with them.

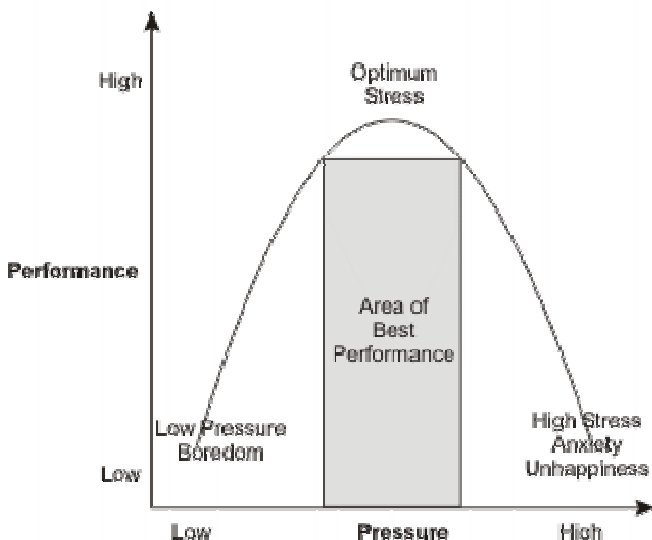
Do I have recent major changes in my life?

Stress is an unavoidable part of life and can be good or bad. We routinely experience stress when we go through life changes such as moving away from home, starting a new relationship, or even changing majors.

How am I coping with stress?

Some behaviors and lifestyle choices can interfere with the ways your body seeks relief from stress. For example, as you sleep, your body recovers from the stresses of the day. If you are not getting enough sleep or your sleep is frequently interrupted, you are losing a chance to recover from stress.

Your actions and behavior can be a sign of stress. Some people who face a lot of stress respond by smoking, drinking alcohol, or eating poorly. The health risks posed by these behaviors are made even worse by stress. Your body experiences stress-related wear and tear from two sources: the stress itself and the unhealthy habits you have developed to respond to stress. Evaluate how you



The Inverted-U relationship between pressure and performance

respond to stress by identifying your positive and negative coping strategies.

Workload issues lie behind much of the stress we experience. Not only can a heavy workload be tiring in its own right, it often drives us to work much longer hours than we would really like. This means that we spend time working that we'd prefer to use for the things that give life value. It also means that we're working when we should really be resting. Worse than this, a heavy routine workload leaves us little time to deal with the emergencies that come up from time-to-time. This adds to the feeling of being "out of control" that is so much part of stress.

Successful workload management is therefore vitally important for your job satisfaction.

WHAT DOES STRESS LOOK LIKE?

There are several signs and symptoms that you may notice when you are experiencing stress. These signs and symptoms fall into four categories: Feelings, Thoughts, Behavior, and Physiology. When you are under stress, you may experience one or more of the following:

Feelings

- Feeling anxious.
- Feeling scared.
- Feeling irritable.
- Feeling moody.

Thoughts

- Low self-esteem.
- Fear of failure.
- Inability to concentrate.
- Embarrassing easily.
- Worrying about the future.
- Preoccupation with thoughts/tasks.
- Forgetfulness.

Behavior

- Stuttering and other speech difficulties.
- Crying for no apparent reason.
- Acting impulsively.
- Startling easily.
- Laughing in a high pitch and nervous tone of voice.

- Grinding your teeth.
- Increasing smoking.
- Increasing use of drugs and alcohol.
- Being accident prone.
- Losing your appetite or overeating.

Physiology

- Perspiration /sweaty hands.
- Increased heart beat.
- Trembling.
- Nervous ticks.
- Dryness of throat and mouth.
- Tiring easily.
- Urinating frequently.
- Sleeping problems.
- Diarrhea / indigestion / vomiting.
- Butterflies in stomach.
- Headaches.
- Premenstrual tension.
- Pain in the neck and or lower back.
- Loss of appetite or overeating.
- Susceptibility to illness.

How to Reduce Stress with the SPARKLE Formula

S – Sleep well.

- Your bed is for sleeping. Refrain from textbook reading in bed to train your brain that bed=sleep.
- When your head hits the pillow, it's time to sleep, not think
- Your bed should NOT be for: watching television, balancing your checkbook, planning the next day, arguing with your spouse, checking your e-mail, or making phone calls.
- When in bed, books are OK, laptops are not.

P – Plan every day.

- Create a to-do list every morning. This gives you a) a roadmap of what you need to do at the beginning of the day, b) a reminder of what still needs to be done throughout the day, and c) a place to check off your accomplishments at the end of the day

A – Anticipate less.

- Recognize the false assumptions you make that lead to anxiety. Will things really turn out to be as bad as you think? Probably not.
- When you look to the future, visualize success rather than failure. After all, you really don't know which it will be. So why not expect the best?



R – Relax.

- Breathe deeply when you feel stressed. Get up and change your environment, if only for a short time.
- Go for a walk at lunch.
- Relaxation means taking a break from what you were doing, not just “vegging out.” For instance, watching television isn't always relaxing; it can be dumbing and dulling. Find activities that calm your body and stimulate your mind.
- Create a time for your own kind of meditation. Find a quiet space and a quiet time that's just for you.

K – Keep Anger under control.

- Be empathetic and forgiving to others when they make mistakes. Like you, they are trying to do their best.
- Learn to give constructive feedback rather than destructive criticism.
- When someone makes you angry, remember that you have a choice in how you react. Instead of yelling at that bad driver who cut you off, do a running play-by-play on his erratic driving techniques. It's more fun.

L – Laugh.

- Use positive affirmations to keep yourself on track.
- Affirmations should use the 4 P's; personal, positive, passionate, and present. For instance, “I am a confident and successful manager who always runs an amazing team.”
- Find time to share a joke. Laugh at the curves life throws at you rather than fretting over them.

E – Eat Well and Exercise.

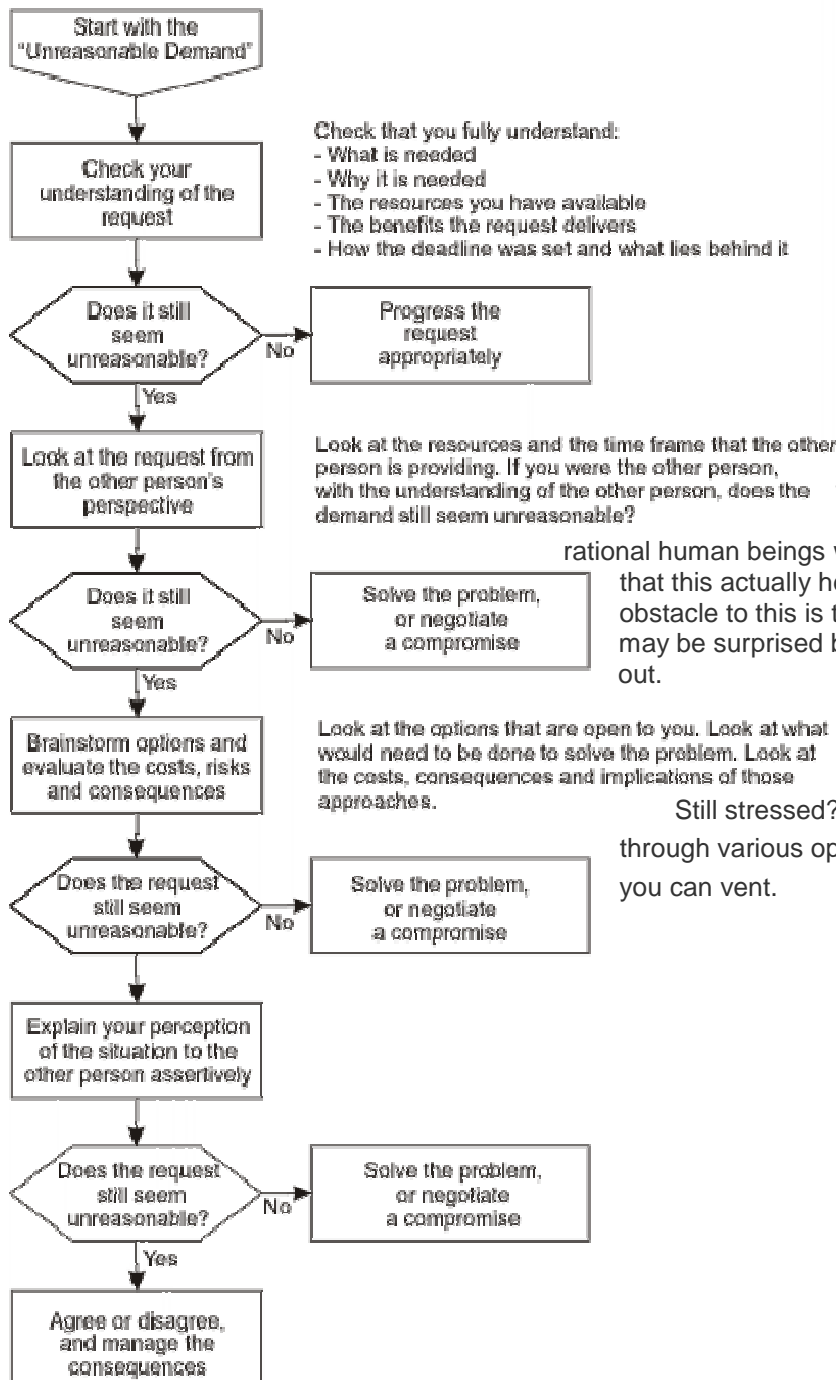
- Your body needs to be a well-tuned machine to manage all of the stresses that act on it.
- Avoid eating packaged snacks – anything that comes in a wrapper or plastic bag. Try natural fruit instead.

- Add more colored vegetables to your meals.
- Reduce caffeine in your diet. It's a stimulant and can exacerbate physical symptoms of stress that you may already have. Choose water instead.
- Avoid the escalator or elevator and take the stairs.
- Find opportunities to go for a walk. Ideally, get exercise that causes you to sweat for twenty minutes at least three times per week.

	Mistaken Traditional Assumption	Your Legitimate Rights
1.	It is selfish to put your needs before others' needs.	You have a right to put yourself first sometimes.
2.	It is shameful to make mistakes. You should have an appropriate response for every occasion.	You have a right to make some mistakes. Mistakes are inevitable, particularly when you are stretching yourself to do something new or original.
3.	If you cannot convince others that your feelings are reasonable, then the feelings must be wrong, or maybe you are going crazy.	You have a right to be the final judge of your feelings and accept them as legitimate.
4.	You should respect the views of others, especially if they are in a position of authority. Keep your differences of opinion to yourself. Listen and learn.	You have a right to have your own opinions and convictions.
5.	You should always try to be logical and consistent.	You have a right to change your mind and decide on a different site of action.
6.	You should be flexible and adjust. Others have good reasons for their actions and it is not polite to question them.	You have a right to protest against unfair treatment or criticism.
7.	You should never interrupt people. Asking questions reveals your stupidity to others.	You have a right to interrupt in order to ask for clarification.
8.	Things could get even worse. Do not rock the boat.	You have a right to negotiate for change.
9.	You should not take up other people's valuable time with your problems.	You have a right to ask for help or for emotional support.
10.	People do not want to hear that you feel bad, so keep it to yourself.	You have a right to feel and express pain.
11.	When someone takes the time to give you advice, you should take it very seriously. They are often right.	You have a right to ignore the advice of others.
12.	Knowing that you did something well is its own reward. People do not like show-offs. Successful people are secretly disliked and envied. Be modest when complimented.	You have a right to receive formal recognition for your work and your achievements.
13.	You should always try to accommodate others. If you do not, they will not be there when you need them.	You have a right to say "No."
14.	Do not be anti-social. People are going to think you do not like them if you say you would rather be alone instead of with them.	You have a right to be alone, even if others would prefer your company.
15.	You should always have a good reason for everything you feel and do.	You have a right not to justify yourself to others.
16.	When someone is in trouble, you should help them.	You have a right not to take responsibility for someone else's problem.
17.	You need to be sensitive to the needs and wishes of others, even when they are unable to tell you what they want.	You have a right not to have to anticipate others' needs and wishes.
18.	It is always good policy to stay on people's good side.	You have a right not to always worry about the goodwill of others.
19.	It is not nice to put people off. If questioned, give an answer.	You have a right to choose not to respond to a situation.

Be careful in expressing negative consequences of not taking the action, as making threats can damage working relationships. In some cases, however, the negative consequences of not taking action may need to be spelled out.

Managing "Unreasonable" Demands



Check that you fully understand:
 - What is needed
 - Why it is needed
 - The resources you have available
 - The benefits the request delivers
 - How the deadline was set and what lies behind it

Look at the resources and the time frame that the other person is providing. If you were the other person, with the understanding of the other person, does the demand still seem unreasonable?

Look at the options that are open to you. Look at what would need to be done to solve the problem. Look at the costs, consequences and implications of those approaches.

Summary:

Using an assertive approach to communicating is a fair and adult way of raising, and dealing with, difficulties in your relationships with powerful people. In using an assertive approach, you avoid both the weakness of passivity and the relationship and career damage that comes from excessive aggression. Assertive approaches avoid the game-play of passive and aggressive communication. They promote clear communication and, because all relevant facts and emotions are considered, are more likely to bring about a successful resolution of the situation.

By being able to communicate clearly, you can bring stress-creating problems and issues to the attention of people who have the power to do something about them. Most managers are

rational human beings who want to keep their teams happy recognizing that this actually helps teams to perform well. Often, the main obstacle to this is that people do not communicate problems. You may be surprised by how willing powerful people are to help you out.

Still stressed? Call The Counseling Center. They can walk through various options with you or even just sit down for a chat so you can vent.