

Stress Management – Enhancing Your Emotional Health



**Johns Hopkins
Student Assistance Program**

Serving Graduate and Professional Students

Stress is a normal part of life. It is the body's way of responding to the physical and emotional demands placed upon it. A certain amount of stress is actually a good thing. Stress keeps us focused and aware of all the things that need to be done. It can motivate you to study harder and complete assignments and projects on time.

But when your stress level becomes more than a motivating tool, or when pressures are too intense or last too long, you may be in stress overload.

Signs of stress overload include:

- anxiety or panic attacks
- a feeling of being constantly pressured, hassled, and hurried
- irritability and moodiness
- physical symptoms, such as stomach problems, headaches, or even chest pain
- allergic reactions, such as eczema or asthma
- problems sleeping
- drinking too much, smoking, overeating, or using drugs
- sadness or depression

Ways to Relieve Stress

- Exercise. Regular exercise is one of the best ways to keep stress levels under control.
- Learn ways to relax your body through meditation, massage, and breathing exercises.
- Increase your Vitamin D. Take short walks in the sun. Studies show that Vitamin D increases a positive and focused mood.
- Make the best out of stressful circumstances - Be optimistic. Your outlook, attitude, and thoughts influence the way you see things. Is your cup half full or half empty?
- Ask for help. People who have a strong network of family and friends manage stress better.

How to Prevent Stress

- Treat your body right. Eat healthy foods, exercise regularly and get plenty of sleep.
- Don't overextend yourself. Learn ways to better manage your time. Follow a schedule and keep a prioritized "to-do" list.
- Practice mindfulness. Become aware and respond to the signs your body sends you via muscle tension, increased heart rate, shortness of breath, and unfocused thinking.
- Take action to solve problems as they crop up. Don't wait until a situation becomes too large to handle.
- See setbacks and problems as temporary and solvable. Don't get lost in the moment.
- Build strong relationships and keep commitments to family and friends.
- Have a support system and ask for help.
- Participate regularly in activities for relaxation and fun.

*For Assistance, Call 443-287-7000
or visit www.jhsap.org*