

# UWF Resources



## Stress Management

Stress is very normal especially for college students who are facing multiple transitions, adjustments, and stressors. Both positive and negative changes and adjustments can lead to stress. Unfortunately, stress can lead to many problems if not addressed in a healthy manner.

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## Stress Management

It is important to recognize the common symptoms associated with stress so you can learn how to deal with your stress in a healthy manner.

**Physical Symptoms:** fatigue, high blood pressure, vomiting/nausea, grinding of teeth, backaches, profuse sweating, stomachaches, rapid heart rate, tense muscles, twitches, difficulty breathing, diarrhea, and/or headaches.

**Emotional Symptoms:** anxiety/panic, guilt, fear, denial, irritability, depression, anger, feeling overwhelmed, and/or a sense of helplessness.

**Behavioral Symptoms:** withdrawal, pacing, violence, substance abuse, sleep problems, restlessness, isolation, eating more/less, and/or self-harm.

**Cognitive Symptoms:** expecting the worst to happen, jumping to negative conclusions, poor memory, indecisiveness, fear of failure, poor judgment, self-criticism, decreased motivation, and/or poor concentration.

## How Can You Reduce Stress? The Six R's of Stress Management

<p><b>Responsibility</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Accept that there are things that you cannot control or change.</b> On the other hand, learn that you can control your actions, reactions, and who you choose to be around.</li> <li>❑ <b>Be assertive.</b> Express your feelings, be direct and honest and consider cooperation or compromise rather than confrontation.</li> <li>❑ <b>Manage your time and establish priorities.</b></li> <li>❑ <b>Learn to say “no” and delegate some of your workload to avoid having too much on your plate.</b> Allow room in your schedule for unanticipated events.</li> <li>❑ <b>Avoid perfectionism and overachiever mentality.</b> Recognize your limits and allow yourself to be less than perfect. Remember you are only human and people will like you more if you admit to some weaknesses.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reflection</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Know your stress triggers (situations that lead to stress).</b></li> <li>❑ <b>Be aware of physical, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional stress symptoms.</b></li> <li>❑ <b>Recognize and set limits to maintain a healthy balance of work and fun.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Relaxation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Learn to relax with relaxation techniques, yoga or pilates.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <u>Breathing: Abdominal (Diaphragmatic) Breathing</u> Put one hand on your chest and the other hand on your navel ("belly button"). Now, inhale so that only the hand on your navel moves-as you breathe in the hand moves out and moves in as you exhale. The upper hand on your chest does not move. Take long, slow breaths. When you exhale, imagine all of your stress is leaving your body in the breath. Inhale and exhale like this 10 times.</li> <li>❑ <u>Muscle Tension: Tense-Release</u> Tense yourself all over, one body part at a time. Pull your toes up as if to touch your shins and hold it. Tense your thigh muscles... your buttocks... tense your fists and your arms... tense your abdominal muscles and chest, tense your back and shoulder blades. Clench your jaws and close your eyelids tight. Hold yourself tense all over for four or five seconds... Then let go all at once. Don't ease off, let go. And feel the tension leave each body part. Pay attention to what it feels like to have your muscles relaxed. Focus on each muscle.</li> </ul> </li> <li>❑ <b>Take a mental vacation by visualizing yourself in a relaxing place.</b></li> <li>❑ <b>Rather than worrying all the time, schedule “worry time” or journal about concerns.</b></li> <li>❑ <b>Take a time out or mental break when you begin to feel overwhelmed.</b></li> </ul>

<b>Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Connect with others; get involved in a campus group or activity.</b></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Maintain supportive relationships.</b></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strive to manage and improve your relationships.</b></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Talk it out; share your feelings with a trusted friend, family member, mentor or counselor</b></li></ul>
<b>Refueling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Eat a well-balanced diet with plenty of fruits and veggies, high fiber and low cholesterol.</b></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Drink lots of water.</b></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Get enough sleep (7-8 hours).</b></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Exercise regularly; try to find a physical activity you enjoy and make regular time for it to burn off adrenaline.</b></li></ul>
<b>Recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Maintain your sense of humor, including the ability to laugh at yourself. Give yourself a break by reading or watching something humorous.</b></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Enjoy your life and treat others the way you want to be treated.</b></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Schedule time for fun and hobbies.</b></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Focus on noticing the positive moments throughout your day; these moments may seem like small events, but they can often raise your energy and spirits and help you begin to see things in a new, more balanced way. You can also start a gratitude journal to help you focus on the daily positives in your life.</b></li></ul>

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# Mindfulness

Mindfulness meditation is a way of focusing the mind to help people manage stress better. Research has shown evidence for numerous benefits of mindfulness on both our mental and physical well-being.

## **Benefits Of Practicing Mindfulness**

- Increased emotional regulation
- Decreased depressive symptoms
- Decreased intrusive negative thoughts
- Boosted working memory
- Decreased anxiety symptoms
- Greater cognitive flexibility
- Increased relationship satisfaction
- Increased immune functioning
- Increased information processing speed
- Reduced psychological distress

*This information was retrieved and adapted from "What are the benefits of Mindfulness? Monitor on Psychology," 43(7), 64, Davis, D. M., & Hayes, J. A. (July/August 2012).*

## **The Basics of Mindfulness**

A commonly used definition of the practice of mindfulness: "--paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994)

Three key aspects of mindfulness:

### **1. Intention**

Intentions may be fluid, changeable over time, and different for different people  
Carry the reason for practicing mindfulness during your practice - positively oriented, growth-focused (even the word stress can cue stress)

### **2. Attention**

Involves observing the operations of one's moment-to-moment, internal and external experience  
Active process of increasing awareness of experiences: thoughts, emotional sensations, as well as external stimuli and events  
Continually re-focusing attention when the mind wanders

### 3. **Attitude**

Incorporate attitudes of patience, compassion, and non-striving to the attentional practice

Develop the capacity to not continually strive for pleasant experiences or push aversive experiences away

Maintaining an attitude of open curiosity

## Ways to Incorporate Mindfulness into Your Daily Routine

### **Mindful Eating:**

Use your 5 senses to savor and experience one meal slowly and completely without distractions, such as your phone, friends, homework, to-do listing, etc.

### **Mindful Walking:**

Allow yourself time to walk outside and observe your surroundings using your 5 senses.

### **Deep Breathing:**

Take time out to take a few deep, slow breaths (~4-second inhales/exhales) if you find yourself feeling overwhelmed with stress.

### **Scheduled Admiration:**

Schedule a short period of time during your day (5-10min) to appreciate all the unique, minute aspects of something. It could be something as grand as a beautiful view or as seemingly familiar as your right hand. You might choose something different every day or focus on the same thing for several days.

### **Meditation Practice:**

Incorporate a daily meditation practice. This might be on your own, with a friend, or in a class. The duration might range from a few minutes to a full-hour-long practice or more.

### **Mindful Mundane Activities:**

Pick one activity that you usually complete on "auto-pilot" and complete it mindfully, observing all the minute aspects of the activity.

### **Observing Your Thoughts:**

Practice clearing your mind by observing your thoughts rather than becoming engrossed in them.

Allow your thoughts to pass by like leaves on a stream.

### **Listening To Music:**

Use mindfulness to enhance your appreciation of music by noticing all aspects of a song: the tempo,

the lyrics, the different instruments, the mood of the song, the musical dynamics, the emotions the song stirs in you, the thoughts that arise, etc.

## [A Guided Meditation Through Mindfulness](#)

Please listen to this Guided Visualization Meditation video where Dr. Erin Rabideau will help you imagine a relaxing scene by a stream in the woods using your senses.

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If you feel you need help managing stress or any of the factors associated with it, please contact Counseling and Psychological Services at [850.474.2420](tel:850.474.2420) or visit our center in Building 960, Suite 200A, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. to set up an appointment.