

As the end of the semester approaches...

Expect some stress and plan to manage it rather than just reacting and feeling overwhelmed.

When we are stressed, we often let go of our healthiest habits in order to focus on a big deadline. Make a conscious decision this semester to maintain at least a few core, healthy habits in order to hang on to your best self through finals.

- **Eat** as healthily as possible weeks before and during finals. Buy healthy snacks and think through your meals. Make choices daily that include vegetables and lean proteins.
- **Drink plenty of water.** A major sign of dehydration is being tired and sleepy. Don't drastically change your caffeine intake by drinking more tea/coffee than your body is used to or picking this time to stop all caffeine. Avoid or significantly limit alcohol consumption weeks before and during finals.
- **Get plenty of sleep.** Regular sleep hours with a consistent wake up time every day of the week helps your mood and concentration. Omit napping altogether or limit naps to 20 - 30 minutes to keep your nighttime sleep cycle intact. A couple hours before bedtime turn off overhead lights and limit electronic screen time. Reduced light sends a message to your brain that it's nighttime and sleep is not far away. Limiting electronic screen time takes some advanced planning in order to get your computer work done well before bedtime.
- **Exercise regularly.** It helps manage anxiety and stress as well as produces a relaxation effect, improves alertness and a sense of well-being that can last hours beyond the work out.
- **Go outside** and get a little fresh air and sunshine every day.
- **Limit time wasters**, like social media.
- Identify and practice a couple of different kinds of **meditative, relaxation techniques** daily. Meditative practices calm the mind and body as well as add energy and focus through various kinds of deep breathing in as little as 10 – 20 minutes a day. Concentrate solely on the meditation during the allotted time. When a thought or sensation distracts your focus, just go back and refocus on the breath. Be gentle with yourself. Meditation and relaxation are more difficult than they seem. Some examples can be found at the two websites below:
<https://www.drweil.com/health-wellness/body-mind-spirit/stress-anxiety/breathing-three-exercises/>
<https://www.nytimes.com/guides/well/how-to-meditate>
- **Think rationally.** Approach problems calmly. Rather than condemn yourself with hindsight thinking, like "I should have...", do what you can now, in the present moment. Watch out for perfectionistic thinking. Get things done in a good enough manner, not perfect, when time is limited.
- **Get organized** and develop a realistic schedule of tasks. Don't procrastinate, but prioritize difficult tasks first, breaking them down into doable pieces. Give yourself enough flexibility in time management to include the above listed, healthy activities. Work daily, not in marathon sessions. Organize your notes, past tests and readings for each subject that you'll be tested on.
- **Begin reviewing** course content weeks before finals to refresh your memory and to identify and remediate problem areas before it's too late.
- **Assess your grades** in your classes, checking also to make sure all of your work is turned in. Talk with your professors about this if you have questions or concerns.
- Seek out study groups, SI sessions and tutoring if that helps you.
- **Study** in a variety of places. Make it fun. Include the library, coffee shops, porches, outside.

For more information contact

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