

Korean workers are most stressed in the OECD

Feeling anxious all the time? Dread heading to work in the morning? Join the crowd.

A report released by the Samsung Economic Research Institute yesterday claims that Korea has the highest stress levels and the lowest job satisfaction of any developed country.

The nation ranks at the bottom of the pack among Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development member countries, SERI said, because it has had to cope with a series of economic crises without the infrastructure to maintain workers' mental health.

Though some companies have instituted stress management programs, the report said, many workers still try to hide or suppress their problems rather than seek treatment. Managers also bear some of the blame, it said, for focusing too much on results and not enough on individual workers.

According to the report, 87.8 percent of Korean workers reported experiencing a feeling of malaise or digestive problems, while 74.4 percent said they thought their jobs had driven them to depression. Another reason an increasing number of Koreans are suffering from such stress-related illnesses, SERI said, is a prevailing belief that a drinking outing can solve most psychological problems.

According to OECD health data from 2009, Korea's suicide rate per 100,000 was 21.5, the highest among the organization's member countries and close to twice the average, which was 11.1 suicides per 100,000 people. "The seriousness of stress is not properly acknowledged in Korea, and people need to maintain a balanced life and try to prevent stress," said a researcher at SERI.

"However, Korea's social and working environments are lacking in efforts to prevent individual stress, as they only focus on results." In order to overcome the serious problem of individual stress levels, SERI suggested three solutions including a well-rounded, balanced life that includes exercise and hobbies, measuring and managing one's stress properly through mental health checkups and counseling, and creating a less stressful working environment to prevent more serious disorders from developing.

Stressed and Depressed, Koreans Avoid Therapy By MARK McDONALD New York Times

"With depression, the inclination for Koreans is to just bear with it and get over it," he said. "If someone goes to a psychoanalyst, they know they'll be stigmatized for the rest of their life. So they don't go."

Mental health experts said many troubled South Koreans seek help from private psychiatric clinics (and pay their bills in cash) so their government-insurance records do not carry the stigma of a "Code F," signifying someone who has received reimbursement for such care.

Even when Koreans do seek out counseling, the learning curve can be steep. A prominent psychiatrist with a practice in Seoul, Jin-seng Park, said it was not uncommon for some new patients to come to his office, talk over a problem for 40 minutes and then be shocked when they're presented with a bill.

"They'll say, 'I have to pay? Just for talking? I can do that for free with my friend or my pastor,'" said Dr. Park.

Patients also balk, he said, at the idea of spending more than a couple sessions on talk therapy. Instead, most patients simply ask for, and expect, medication, said Dr. Park, whose Web site advises that "nearly all of the medications used in the U.S. are available here, too. So don't worry about getting those medications in Korea."

How to Keep Your Stress Levels Under Control

It's hard to feel calm and relaxed all the time, but if you're feeling your stress levels rise at least take comfort in the fact that you're not alone. Nearly 75 percent of Americans say they're stressed, with money and work topping the list for why. Learning effective stress-management tools is therefore essential for your mental sanity and your physical health, and here we've listed five methods you can start using today.

1. Exercise: *Aside from strengthening your heart and lungs, two organs that can become physically affected from too much stress, it's great for your mental health too. Exercising increases the levels of endorphins in your body, which stimulate your immune system, reduce stress and put you in a better mood. Stretching should be integrated with your exercise routine, as it will provide you with increased energy levels and an even greater sense of well-being. There are countless stretches for your body, but it takes just 15 of them to stretch 95 percent of your body, according to stretching expert and creator of the DVD *Stretching Toward a Healthier Life*, Jacques Gauthier.*

2. Take Time to Relax: *This may sound easy, but how many of you reading this actually schedule time into your day to relax and enjoy life? Your body and mind know how to relax — you just need to give them “permission” to do so, according to respected meditation expert Mary Maddux.*

3. Sleep Well: *When we sleep, the stress hormone, cortisol, is lowered, but when we are sleep deprived, cortisol levels rise. Further, your energy levels will go down and you'll be less able to cope with any setbacks during your day.*

4. Proper Nutrition: *Fortifying your body with the nutrients it needs is key to reducing stress (and staying healthy while you're feeling it), as stress can actually rob your body of nutrients. This means eating plenty of fruits, vegetables and other antioxidant-rich foods while avoiding junk foods. Also take advantage of these foods that help you de-stress quickly.*

Foods That Relieve Stress... and are Healthy Too

- Dark Leafy Greens - vegetables like spinach, kale and Swiss chard are good for so many things, there's really no excuse not to eat them. Calming your nerves just happens to be one of them, as these veggies contain lots of the B-complex vitamins. These vitamins are crucial for preventing stress because they're needed to make serotonin, a chemical that helps boost your mood.
- Asparagus - is rich in folates, a B vitamin that is necessary to prevent irritability fatigue, depression and even confusion. “Unlike folate, folic acid isn't found in nature, so we don't know the effect of the excess.” says folic acid researcher David Smith, PhD
- Whole Grains - also help to soothe your mood because they're rich in B vitamins. Make sure you're really eating something with whole grains, though, and not just “whole wheat” bread that's actually mostly refined flour.
- Beef - Yes, red meat CAN be good for you! Beef is a great source of B vitamins and mood-stabilizing zinc and iron. To get the most health benefits, stick to organic, grass-fed beef.
- Berries - are rich in antioxidants like vitamin C, which is known to help keep the stress hormone cortisol steady.
- Nuts - Almonds are rich in vitamin E, which helps to fight some of the damage caused by stress. Brazil nuts, meanwhile, contain lots of zinc and selenium, which also fight free radicals.
- Salmon - The omega-3 fats found in salmon may help to reduce feelings of stress.
- Chicken Breast - Chicken is a great source of tryptophan, which can help you sleep better and elevate your mood (as a bonus, it can even help to regulate your appetite!). Contrary to popular belief, chicken breast actually contains slightly more tryptophan than turkey.
- Avocados - Add some avocado slices to your sandwich or salad or whip up a batch of guacamole for a quick boost in your B vitamins (plus, avocados can help prevent cancer and they're great for your heart!).

How do you respond to stress?

It's important to learn how to recognize when your stress levels are out of control. The most dangerous thing about stress is how easily it can creep up on you. You get used to it. It starts to feel familiar even normal. You don't notice how much it's affecting you, even as it takes a heavy toll. The signs and symptoms of stress overload can be almost anything. Stress affects the mind, body, and behavior in many ways, and everyone experiences stress differently.

Stress doesn't always look stressful

Dr. Connie Lillas describes the three most common ways people respond when overwhelmed by stress:

- **Foot on the gas** – An angry or agitated stress response. You're heated, keyed up, overly emotional, and unable to sit still.
- **Foot on the brake** – A withdrawn or depressed stress response. You shut down, space out, and show very little energy or emotion.
- **Foot on both** – A tense and frozen stress response. You "freeze" under pressure and can't do anything. You look paralyzed, but under the surface you're extremely agitated.

Signs and symptoms of stress overload

The following table lists some of the common warning signs and symptoms of stress. The more signs and symptoms you notice in yourself, the closer you may be to stress overload.

Stress Warning Signs and Symptoms	
Cognitive Symptoms	Emotional Symptoms
● Memory problems ● Inability to concentrate ● Poor judgment ● Seeing only the negative ● Anxious or racing thoughts ● Constant worrying	● Moodiness ● Irritability or short temper ● Agitation, inability to relax ● Feeling overwhelmed ● Sense of loneliness and isolation ● Depression or general unhappiness
Physical Symptoms	Behavioral Symptoms
● Aches and pains ● Diarrhea or constipation ● Nausea, dizziness ● Chest pain, rapid heartbeat ● Loss of sex drive ● Frequent colds	● Eating more or less ● Sleeping too much or too little ● Isolating yourself from others ● Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities ● Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax ● Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

How much stress is too much?

Because of the widespread damage stress can cause, it's important to know your own limit. But just how much stress is "too much" differs from person to person. Some people roll with the punches, while others crumble at the slightest obstacle or frustration. Some people even seem to thrive on the excitement and challenge of a high-stress lifestyle.

Things that influence your stress tolerance level

- **Your support network** – A strong network of supportive friends and family members is an enormous buffer against life's stressors. On the flip side, the more lonely and isolated you are, the greater your vulnerability to stress.
- **Your sense of control** – If you have confidence in yourself and your ability to influence events and persevere through challenges, it's easier to take stress in stride. People who are vulnerable to stress tend to feel like things are out of their control.
- **Your attitude and outlook** – Stress-hardy people have an optimistic attitude. They tend to embrace challenges, have a strong sense of humor, accept that change is a part of life, and believe in a higher power or purpose.
- **Your ability to deal with your emotions** – You're extremely vulnerable to stress if you don't know how to calm and soothe yourself when you're feeling sad, angry, or afraid. The ability to bring your emotions into balance helps you bounce back from adversity.

Random Facts About . . .Stress

1. While it is a myth that stress can turn hair gray, stress can cause hair loss. In fact, hair loss can begin up to three months after a stressful event.
2. In 2009, the top most stressful jobs were a surgeon, commercial airline pilot, photojournalist, advertising account executive, and real estate agent. The least stressful jobs were actuary, dietitian, astronomer, systems analyst, and software engineer.
3. Stress alters the neurochemical makeup of the body, which can affect the maturation and release of the human egg. Stress can also cause the fallopian tubes and uterus to spasm, which can affect implantation. Stress in men can affect sperm count and motility and can cause erectile dysfunction. In fact, stress may account for 30% of all infertility problems.
4. Stress can make acne worse. Researchers say stress-related inflammation rather than a rise in sebum (the oily substance in skin) is to blame.
5. Laughing lowers stress hormones (like cortisol, epinephrine, and adrenaline) and strengthens the immune system by releasing health-enhancing hormones.
6. Research has shown that dark chocolate reduces stress hormones such as cortisol and other fight-flight hormones. Additionally, cocoa is rich in antioxidants called flavonoids.
7. The stress hormone cortisol not only causes abdominal fat to accumulate, but it also enlarges individual fat cells, leading to what researchers call “diseased” fat.
8. Stress can alter blood sugar levels, which can cause mood swings, fatigue, hyperglycemia, and metabolic syndrome, a major risk factor for heart attack and diabetes.
9. Stress is linked to the six leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, liver cirrhosis, and suicide.
10. Chronic stress can impair the developmental growth in children by lowering the production of growth hormone from the pituitary gland.
11. Pupils dilate during stress much the same way they dilate in response to attraction: to gather more visual information about a situation.
12. Chinese stress balls (Baoding balls) were created during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) in Baoding, China. Originally made of iron, the balls are thought to relieve stress because they touch pressure or acupuncture points on the hand.
13. Chronic stress floods the brain with powerful hormones that are meant for short-term emergency situations. Chronic exposure can damage, shrink, and kill brain cells.
14. Scientists suggest that stress is part of the evolutionary drive because it has enabled humans to survive. Specifically, stress temporarily increases awareness and improves physical performance.ⁿ
15. Stress makes the blood “stickier,” in preparation for an injury. Such a reaction, however, also increases the probability of developing a blood clot.^d
16. Chronic stress worsens irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), a condition that irritates the large intestine and causes constipation, cramping, and bloating.
17. Chronic stress decreases the body’s immune system’s response to infection and can affect a person’s response to immunizations.
18. Stress can result in more headaches as a result of the body rerouting blood flow to other parts of the body.
19. When cells shrink due to exposure to stress hormones, they disconnect from each other, which contributes to depression.
20. Men are more likely than women to develop certain stress-related disorders, including hypertension, aggressive behavior, and abuse of alcohol and drugs.
21. Chronic low-level noise and low-frequency noise below the threshold of human hearing provoke stress hormones that interfere with learning and elevate blood pressure, degrade the immune system, and increase aggression.
22. Stress creates hormonal changes in the human body that can decrease libido and sex response.
23. Extreme or sudden emotional trauma can lead to “broken heart syndrome”, or stress cardiomyopathy (severe heart muscle weakness).

Student life is exciting. But it can also be very pressured and stressful. A lot has to be achieved in the limited time available.

This article is aimed at students and their families. It focuses on some of the anxieties that they are likely to encounter as student life begins, and suggests ways of coping.

Student life is a transitional period. You do a course because you think it will enable you to do or have something that you want, such as increased job opportunities or enhanced enjoyment of life. Studying is part of a process of change and, sometimes, change can cause a lot of anxiety.

Leaving home

If you go to university straight from school, you are facing the challenge of leaving home, separating from your parents and beginning the process of finding your identity, as an adult, and your place in the world. This is a big psychological upheaval. It also involves many challenges at a practical level. You will need to practise housekeeping, manage a budget and find your way around a strange place. This all demands energy, just as you are beginning to take on the work requirements of your course and build a new social life.

Mature students

If you are a mature student you may already have left home, but will still have many changes to deal with. You may have less money to spend, less free time, and experience a change in your social status, for better or worse. You may have a partner and children; your new life will have an impact on them, and your relationship with them will be affected.

Changing identity

When you become a student you may feel differently about yourself, and other people may react to you differently. You will be making new friends, and have a chance to make a fresh start. You may be working with peers who are your intellectual equals, for the first time in your life. You may find you are cleverer than you thought – or not so clever! It takes time to adjust to this new sense of who you are.

New opportunities

There may be sports, social and political activities open to you now, which you've never tried before. This has two aspects: it can be very exciting, but it can also be terrifying. It can be easy to take on too many things, because you don't want to miss out on any new opportunities. But it would be unwise to go on your first pot-holing expedition, for example, on the same weekend that you are moving into new lodgings and handing in your first essay. Recognise how much you are dealing with at once, and go at your own pace. Be prepared to feel terrified sometimes.

Family relationships

Relationships with your family will change too. This can be especially difficult if you are the first one ever to go to college, or the first of your gender. Other family members can have complicated feelings about this. They may secretly envy you, or be afraid that your new experience will change you too much and make you no longer 'one of us'. Their reactions

may cause you to feel insecure, lacking in confidence or guilty about having this opportunity.

But there can also be problems if everyone in the family has been to college. Can you live up to their standards? Do you have to work in the same field as them, or do they feel threatened by your choice of subject? Could they be concerned that you could, in fact, be too successful?

The most important thing with family situations of this kind is that these feelings need to be acknowledged, by being talked about. Only then can everyone involved move towards creating a more supportive environment.

Managing stress and university

Going to university or college is exciting – and stressful. You'll want to meet new friends, get good grades, and, perhaps most importantly, feel good about yourself. That can put a lot of pressure on you.

Studying is more than cracking open a textbook and reading. We offer a few tips for studying smart.

- **Ask questions.** Ask your instructors about which areas are most important to review.
- **Make a plan.** Give yourself time to review all material and more time for the areas you have identified as more difficult.
- **Organize yourself.** Put sticky notes on the pages you need to study more carefully and lay out the material so you can easily review.
- **Don't rush.** Be sure not to move on to new topics until you feel confident with the material you just covered.
- **Take breaks.** Go for a walk and get away for just 10 to 15 minutes every hour or so.
- **Sleep.** If you're tired, nothing is really going to sink in so be sure to get a good night's sleep. Maybe take a short nap if you need to.
- **Ensure no distractions.** Study where you know you won't be interrupted. Shut off the TV and avoid studying around other distractions.
- **Join a study group.** Joining a group will help you with difficult areas and challenge you to keep up with the group.
- **Avoid caffeine.** Coffee, pop and energy drinks like Red Bull contain caffeine. While caffeine helps you stay awake, it also increases feelings of anxiety and restlessness. So if you feel yourself getting tired, just take a short nap and avoid the caffeine fix.
- **Do not put off today...** If you feel overwhelmed with material you need to study, break it down into manageable steps. Putting it off will not help.
- **Create study sheets.** Write down the major concepts in point form for quick reference (like flash cards for reviewing).
- **Plan your answers.** Sometimes it helps to think of questions that might be on the exam and create an outline of the answer.
- **Stop the inner critic.** One of the most important things to do is to tell the negative voice in your head to be quiet. If someone else compliments you DO NOT listen to that little voice in your head causing doubt, just say thank you for the compliment and be proud of yourself. Talk to yourself as you would talk to a friend.
- **Think logically.** Don't assume negative reasons are always the cause of an event. If someone walks by and doesn't smile at you, don't assume it's because they don't like you or think you're weird. It's not always about you!
- **Practice self-care.** Put yourself first, eat a healthy diet, exercise, get enough sleep and take care of your appearance. You are worth the effort.
- **Give yourself credit.** Speak clearly and loudly, especially when you have something you want to say. Your opinions are just as important as the next person's. If you disagree with someone, tell him or her in a positive way. It may be hard to do at first but once you do, you'll feel better about yourself and people will listen to what you have to say.
- **Take risks.** Don't be afraid to fail or embarrass yourself. Try new things and consider them opportunities to learn and grown.
- **Have fun.** Get out and do something you are good at and enjoy doing: Activities like shopping, playing a sport, listening to music, watching a movie or reading a book.
- **Forgive yourself.** If you don't do as well as you had hoped, so what! Let it go, you can't win 'em all. Just know you tried your best and had fun.
- **Get support.** Talk to your friends. It's ok to "vent" once in a while; that's what friends are for.
- **Be positive.** No matter what, think of something positive in every situation!

Coping With Stress at University

By [Peter Miles](#)

Stress affects us all at some points in our lives. It can come from many different areas, finance, relationships, work, studying and a variety of other forms. At certain times, pressure can build up and stress can be difficult to deal with.

For young academics, the effects of stress can be felt from a tender age. Pressure to do well in exams, GCSE's and A Levels to gain a place at a good university can have a serious impact on the health of students. The fear of being a failure can override rational thoughts and lead to unhealthy behavior and bad coping mechanisms.

Whilst studying in school and sixth form the main causes of stress are coping with work load, worry about university entry and anxieties branching from relationships with friends, family and girlfriends or boyfriends. Once at university, new pressures develop as students have to learn to manage independently with finance, new environments, a different approach to learning and the loss of their childhood comfort zones.

Along with many other problems, it has been said that the major source of stress for university students are debt and having too little money. Around half of the UK's students work part-time to help pay their way through university. Most institutions advise not to work whilst studying and that if it really is necessary, to only work a maximum of 16 hours per week.

For students living in expensive cities like London, who don't receive financial help from their families, part-time work is the only option to keep their heads above water. The problems that arise from this burden can have a domino effect. Having to juggle the responsibility of a job, stay committed to a degree, have a healthy social life and find time to rest can add to the original source of stress.

Everyone has different levels of stress tolerability. It is linked to your personality, diet, emotional maturity and up-bringing. We have different methods of dealing with stress too. Some one who is more prone to stress and anxiety may have more trouble dealing with it. It is common to try to avoid the source of the problem and use something else to mask it.

For example, a student who has been suffering financially may take on a part time job in a bar to help pay the rent. This brings a new realm into the student's life; they are meeting new people with different focuses and pastimes. Some of these will be beneficial to the student but there is also the chance that these new people will cause more of a distraction from the student's main focus; the degree. Not only this, the job will take over time in the student's life that should be used for socializing, resting or studying.

As mentioned above, when there is a pressing concern; an essay deadline for instance, it is quite natural for a stressed person to use avoidance as a coping mechanism. In the case of a student with less time on their hands, the essay is ignored but the stress of it will continue to prey on the student's mind. It seems easier to avoid doing the university work than to attempt it and fail.

There are two factors here that are diminishing the student's self esteem, the pressure to afford to be at university and the pressure to achieve what should be achievable whilst suffering from fear of failure that has been induced by the financial stress, lack of rest and general chaotic lifestyle that a poor student has to endure.

Avoidance only complicates and feeds the stress into a downwards spiral. The problem has to be dealt with at some point and leaving it to build up and explode at the last minute is much more stressful than doing it bit by bit over time. The only effective technique is to confront the source of the issue and resolve it. To start with, don't bottle up, talk to friends and family about problems. Everyone suffers the same concerns and feels the same problems but on different levels.

Many people who find it hard to deal with stress bury their heads in the sand and hope their problems will go away. It is becoming more and more common for young people to turn to drugs and alcohol to assist in this oblivion technique. Intoxication, whilst it can be fun is certainly not healthy especially if substances are being used to cope. In most circumstances it will only lead to further financial, emotional and academic stress and anxiety. Instead, a healthy relationship should be built with alcohol and drinking as a reward for finishing coursework would be wise.

Young people dealing with the stresses of student life can also be prone to developing eating disorders as a form of coping. Anorexia, Bulimia and over-eating are all ways to exert control of life when everything else

seems to be chaotic and out of hand. Again, this will only cause the student further difficulties. It is very hard to overcome eating disorders and the disease has a knock on affect on all areas of the person's life. Eating three meals a day and having a healthy diet is very important for a healthy mind and healthy body. A recent survey of student mental health showed a drastic increase in the amount of students suffering with emotional problems, anxiety and depression. More and more students are seeking counseling for their problems and 10% of those students are suicidal. It seems to be a very dark statistic but it is important to highlight the seriousness of the issue. For many people, student years are the times of their lives, but for those who find it difficult to cope, it can be very very hard.

To prevent some of the troubles that may be encountered at university, prospective and new students should do a little preparation and research. The most important thing to consider is the course itself. As soon as there is a timetable available, it should be studied and a realistic life timetable be made so it is known how much time is going to be available to study, work, rest and play. Keeping on top of workload is key to having an enjoyable time at university.

Making the best out of home life is also very important. It is advisable to most students to take a place in student accommodation for the first year. It is important to make friends and to be eased into university life this way. Living in private accommodation can isolate people from other students. If it isn't possible to live in halls then it would be good to consider joining a sports team or club to integrate in that way.

It is important to make the most of the help that is available to students. There is extra funding available from charities and organizations that many students aren't aware of. For students who struggle with finance and have emotional difficulty there is a lot of help at hand. Student welfare officers, student counseling services and the students union are there to support all sorts of issues.

Stresses and problems aside, university life is over all very rewarding and very worthwhile. Skills learned and friends made at university shape lives and build careers. There are plenty of good times to be had despite the pressures.

Who is most vulnerable to stress?

Stress comes in many forms and affects people of all ages and all walks of life. No external standards can be applied to predict stress levels in individuals -- one need not have a traditionally stressful job to

experience workplace stress, just as a parent of one child may experience more parental stress than a parent of several children. The degree of stress in our lives is highly dependent upon individual factors such as our physical health, the quality of our interpersonal relationships, the number of commitments and responsibilities we carry, the degree of others' dependence upon us, expectations of us, the amount of support we receive from others, and the number of changes or traumatic events that have recently occurred in our lives.

Some generalizations, however, can be made. People with adequate social support networks report less stress and overall improved mental health in comparison to those without adequate social support. People who are poorly nourished, who get inadequate sleep, or who are physically unwell also have a reduced capacity to handle pressures and stresses of everyday life and may report higher stress levels. Some stressors are particularly associated with certain age groups or life stages. Children, [teens](#), working parents, and [seniors](#) are examples of the groups who often face common stressors related to life transitions.

Teen stress

As one example of stress related to a life transition, the teen years often bring about an increase in perceived stress as young adults learn to cope with increasing demands and pressures. Studies have shown that excessive stress during the teen years can have a negative impact upon both physical and mental health later in life. For example, teen stress is a risk factor for the development of depression, a serious condition that carries an increased risk of suicide.

Fortunately, effective stress-management strategies can diminish the ill effects of stress. The presence of intact and strong social support networks among friends, family, and religious or other group affiliations can help reduce the subjective experience of stress during the teen years. Recognition of the problem and helping teens to develop stress-management skills can also be valuable preventive measures. In severe cases, a physician or other health-care provider can recommend treatments or counseling that can reduce the long-term risks of teen stress.

Stress in College: What Causes it and How to Combat it

It's no secret that many college students spend most of their time on campus stressed out. Balancing classes, tests, projects, extra-curricular activities and work is enough to make anyone feel overwhelmed,

especially with final exams right around the corner.

“College life has become a lot more competitive—it’s much harder to get into schools, it’s gotten a lot more expensive,” says Elizabeth Scott, stress management expert. “There are a lot of things that are factors that have made society more stressful, and that really translates to college life as well.” Having stress in your life is unavoidable, but there are steps students can take to mitigate its effects on their lives and health.

Why College is Stressful

Going off to college involves significant adjustments to your daily routine; your sleeping and eating habits, time-management skills, and stress levels will be altered in one way or another. And even though it’s been barely three months since you left high school, you are now expected to be more independent and self-sufficient. Adapting to this new life stage and the inevitable stress that comes with it (both good and bad) affects students differently.

“A lot of people are going away to school, so they’re moving away from their social support network and that’s a pretty huge change right there,” Scott says. “At the same time, they have a lot of new things they have to navigate—not just getting around campus and living on their own, but choosing their classes, choosing what direction they want to go in their lives and choosing who to hang out with.”

Striking a balance between school and personal life takes discipline and strong time-management skills, something that not every student comes equipped with as a freshman.

Relationships can also be a source of stress for students. Wishy-washy friends who are supportive one minute and negative and insulting the next adds unnecessary stress, and according to Scott, can be worse for your health than having a completely conflicted relationship with an enemy.

“Knowing who is toxic to you and safe guarding a little bit [can] keep the stress from happening,” she says.

“There’s going to be conflict in every relationship at some point. Working on conflict resolution skills and communication skills in yourself can really help you manage the conflicts that come along.”

Chronic Stress

While it is perfectly normal, and even healthy to feel stressed out from time to time, there is a point where stress crosses the line into what experts call “chronic stress.”

“Chronic stress diminishes the amount of time you spend in the sleep cycles that we need to stay in [and] affects our digestion and our bodies,” he says.

Scott says that chronic stress is aggravated by not allowing your body to recover and return to a normal, relaxed state. “It can either be because your body is being triggered over and over again in a period of time, or it can be a constant stream of stress and you never recover from it,” she says.

In addition to strain on your body, Jantz points out that under chronic stress, you may subside to unhealthy behaviors. “If they’re under chronic stress, maybe they’re going to drink more or use [drugs],” he says. “We tend to look for more destructive outlets alternately.”

How to Relieve Stress

De-stressing techniques vary, and what works for one student might not work for others.

Jantz says to restore your sanity, some people may only need something as simple as taking themselves out of their normal setting. Going outside and sitting under a tree can help regroup thoughts and let out some stress. Taking care of your body is also a simple, yet efficient way to curb anxiety and stress overload. Students should schedule in exercise so it becomes a part of your daily routine. If you can, avoid processed foods, too much sugar, and energy drinks, which the experts unanimously agree can agitate stress levels.

“The body can get dehydrated, so [hydration] is another way of helping your mind,” says Jantz. “Water improves concentration.” If projects, papers and tests are the main source of your stress, Rubel recommends not procrastinating and keeping a tight schedule and organized notes and work area.

Although it may seem impossible to reinforce the good things in your life when you feel like tearing your hair out, constructive thinking can help you see the proverbial glass as half-full.

Positive thinking: Reduce stress by eliminating negative self-talk

Is your glass half-empty or half-full? How you answer this age-old question about positive thinking may reflect your outlook on life, your attitude toward yourself, and whether you’re optimistic or

pessimistic — and it may even affect your health.

Understanding positive thinking and self-talk

Positive thinking doesn't mean that you keep your head in the sand and ignore life's less pleasant situations. Positive thinking just means that you approach the unpleasantness in a more positive and productive way. You think the best is going to happen, not the worst.

Positive thinking often starts with self-talk. Self-talk is the endless stream of unspoken thoughts that run through your head every day. These automatic thoughts can be positive or negative.

Some of your self-talk comes from logic and reason. Other self-talk may arise from misconceptions that you create because of lack of information.

If the thoughts that run through your head are mostly negative, your outlook on life is more likely pessimistic. If your thoughts are mostly positive, you're likely an optimist — someone who practices positive thinking.

The health benefits of positive thinking

Researchers continue to explore the effects of positive thinking and optimism on health. Health benefits that positive thinking may provide include:

- Increased life span
- Lower rates of depression
- Lower levels of distress
- Greater resistance to the common cold
- Better psychological and physical well-being
- Reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease
- Better coping skills during hardships and times of stress

Identifying negative thinking

Not sure if your self-talk is positive or negative? Here are some common forms of negative self-talk:

- **Filtering.** You magnify the negative aspects of a situation and filter out all of the positive ones. For example, say you had a great day at work. You completed your tasks ahead of time and were complimented for doing a speedy and thorough job. But you forgot one minor step. That evening, you focus only on your oversight and forget about the compliments you received.
- **Personalizing.** When something bad occurs, you automatically blame yourself. For example, you hear that an evening out with friends is canceled, and you assume that the change in plans is because no one wanted to be around you.
- **Catastrophizing.** You automatically anticipate the worst. The drive-through coffee shop gets your order wrong and you automatically think that the rest of your day will be a disaster.
- **Polarizing.** You see things only as either good or bad, black or white. There is no middle ground. You feel that you have to be perfect or that you're a total failure.

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Focusing on positive thinking

You can learn to turn negative thinking into positive thinking. The process is simple, but it does take time and practice — you're creating a new habit, after all. Here are some ways to think and behave in a more

positive and optimistic way:

- Identify areas to change. If you want to become more optimistic and engage in more positive thinking, first identify areas of your life that you typically think negatively about, whether it's work, your daily commute or a relationship, for example. You can start small by focusing on one area to approach in a more positive way.
- Check yourself. Periodically during the day, stop and evaluate what you're thinking. If you find that your thoughts are mainly negative, try to find a way to put a positive spin on them.
- Be open to humor. Give yourself permission to smile or laugh, especially during difficult times. Seek humor in everyday happenings. When you can laugh at life, you feel less stressed.
- Follow a healthy lifestyle. Exercise at least three times a week to positively affect mood and reduce stress. Follow a healthy diet to fuel your mind and body. And learn to manage stress.
- Surround yourself with positive people. Make sure those in your life are positive, supportive people you can depend on to give helpful advice and feedback. Negative people may increase your stress level and make you doubt your ability to manage stress in healthy ways.
- Practice positive self-talk. Start by following one simple rule: Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to anyone else. Be gentle and encouraging with yourself. If a negative thought enters your mind, evaluate it rationally and respond with affirmations of what is good about you.

Here are some examples of negative self-talk and how you can apply a positive thinking twist to them.

Negative self-talk	Positive thinking
I've never done it before.	It's an opportunity to learn something new.
It's too complicated.	I'll tackle it from a different angle.
I don't have the resources.	Necessity is the mother of invention.
I'm too lazy to get this done.	I wasn't able to fit it into my schedule but can re-examine some priorities.
There's no way it will work.	I can try to make it work.
It's too radical a change.	Let's take a chance.
No one bothers to communicate with me.	I'll see if I can open the channels of communication.
I'm not going to get any better at this.	I'll give it another try.

Practicing positive thinking every day

If you tend to have a negative outlook, don't expect to become an optimist overnight. But with practice, eventually your self-talk will contain less self-criticism and more self-acceptance. You may also become less critical of the world around you. Plus, when you share your positive mood and positive experience, both you and those around you enjoy an emotional boost.

Practicing positive self-talk will improve your outlook. When your state of mind is generally optimistic, you're able to handle everyday stress in a more constructive way. That ability may contribute to the widely observed health benefits of positive thinking.