MANAGING STESS

**What is Stress?**  
Stress is simply the body's non-specific response to any demand made on it. Stress is not by definition synonymous with nervous tension or anxiety. Stress provides the means to express talents and energies and pursue happiness; it can also cause exhaustion and illness, either physical or psychological; heart attacks and accidents. The important thing to remember about stress is that certain forms are normal and essential.

As the body responds to various forms of physical or psychological stress, certain predictable changes occur. These include increased heart rate, blood pressure (systolic and diastolic), and secretions of stimulatory hormones. These responses to stress will occur whether the stress is positive or negative in nature. In lay terms, it is known as the "fight or flight" mechanism. Continual exposure lowers the body's ability to cope with additional forms of psychological or physiological stress.

The results of continuing stress may cause disruption in one or more of the following areas of health: physical, emotional, spiritual and/or social.

**General Exam Stress-Busting Tips:**

**Believe in yourself:** You would not have been accepted to the University if you didn't have the ability to succeed. Therefore, if you prepare for the exams properly you should do fine, meaning that there is no need to worry excessively.

**Don't try to be perfect:** It's great to succeed and reach for the stars. Remember to keep things in balance. If you think that "anything less than A means you have failed" then you are creating unnecessary stress for yourself.

**Take steps to overcome problems:** If you find you do not understand some of your course material, getting stressed out won't help. Instead, take action to address the problem directly by seeing your professor or a tutor.

**Keep things in perspective.** The exams might seem like the most crucial thing right now, but in the grander scheme of your whole life they are only a small part.

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**Tips for the review period:**

Leave plenty of time to review the material. Don’t feel that you need to cram in the last day, remember, distributive learning is best – LEARN A LITTLE EACH DAY!!!! This approach will help to boost your confidence and reduce any pre-exam stress as you know you have prepared well.

Develop a timetable so that you can track and monitor your progress. Make sure you allow time for fun and relaxation so that you avoid burning out.

As soon as you notice your mind is losing concentration, take a short break. You will then come back to your revision refreshed.

Do not drink too much coffee, tea and carbonated drinks. Eat healthily and regularly; your brain will benefit from the nutrients.

Regular moderate exercise will boost your energy, clear your mind and reduce any feelings of stress.

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**Tips for the exam itself:**

Avoid panic. It's natural to feel some exam nerves prior to starting the exam, but getting excessively nervous is counterproductive as you will not be able to think as clearly.

The quickest and most effective way of eliminating feelings of stress and panic is to close your eyes and take several long, slow deep breaths. Breathing in this way calms your whole nervous system.

If your mind goes blank, don't panic! Panicking will just make it harder to recall information. Instead, focus on slow, deep breathing for about one minute. If you still can't remember the information then move on to another question and return to this question later.