HELP GUIDE TO LIVING WITH STRESS
WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is a normal, natural, physical and mental response that helps you cope effectively with any situation. Stress causes your body to produce chemicals that increase your heart rate, blood pressure and your mental focus, enabling you to perform well for a short time in a challenging situation.

Too much or regular stress that doesn't go away may cause a build-up of the harmful chemicals in your body that may end up impacting on your physical and mental health.

COUNSELLING SERVICE

The Counselling Service at Melbourne Polytechnic provides a free, confidential and short-term service to support students.

Counsellors can help you to deal with personal issues, course and career guidance, job seeking skills, financial challenges, grievances or complaints, and bullying or harassment.

Counselling can help you to gain a greater awareness and understanding of your thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

To make an appointment with a Counsellor phone Learning Support Services on 03 9269 1314.
Why do we feel stressed?

Stress affects all of us in different ways, and what leads one person to become stressed may have little effect on another person.

Some of the things that can lead to increased stress include:
- relationship difficulties
- moving to a new place
- peer pressure or being bullied
- new or changed responsibilities
- grief and loss or other trauma
- becoming chronically ill or developing a disability
- demands placed on you by yourself, friends, family members or society
- abuse (physical, sexual or emotional)
- exams, assessments or poor time management
- problems at school or work.

Signs of stress

Learn to identify some of the early warning signs and triggers of stress to improve your mental health and wellbeing.

If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms and they are starting to interfere with your ability to get on with your normal life, then you may be stressed and need to do something about it:

Mental health symptoms
- Feeling overwhelmed and out of control.
- Feeling moody or tearful.
- Low mood or sadness.
- Anxiety or worry.
- Anger, irritability, or hostility.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Low self-esteem, lack of confidence.
- Burnout.

Physical symptoms
- Headaches, or other aches and pains.
- Muscle tension, tensing your jaw, grinding your teeth.
- Sleep disturbance, insomnia.
- Fatigue and constant tiredness.
- Increased heart rate or high blood pressure.
- Eating too much or too little.
- Smoking or using alcohol or other drugs.
- Upset stomach, indigestion, constipation, diarrhoea.
15 TIPS TO HELP YOU STRESS LESS

LISTEN TO MUSIC
Listen to soothing music to help slow your pulse and heart rate and reduce levels of stress hormones. Music not only helps you relax but can foster your creativity, increase your motivation, allow you to express yourself and lead to social connection.

CONNECT WITH FRIENDS
When we connect with friends, we tend to enjoy ourselves. This gives us the opportunity to have fun, laugh and feel supported by the people we care about. So make time to connect: face to face, text, email or via social media.

Get involved with social events: join a club or participate in SLAM events on your campus.
LAUGH AND MAKE TIME FOR FUN

It’s said that Laughter is the Best Medicine! Laughing increases your breathing rate, releases dopamine (the feel good chemical in your body) and lowers your blood pressure.

CELEBRATE WHEN THINGS GO WELL

It’s important to reflect on what you have been able to achieve and succeed at. By identifying the positives and acknowledging your achievements you can build inner strength, confidence and self-belief. Rewarding yourself can boost your motivation and drive to help you reach your goals and ambitions.

CAUTION: LAUGHTER IS CONTAGIOUS!
ASK FOR HELP

You may find it helpful to speak with someone who is not involved in the problem. That way, you may gain a different perspective to find a solution together. Counselling creates a space where you can stop and reflect on the things that are happening in your life; a space where you can be heard and listened to non-judgementally and where you can increase your level of awareness and insight. It is also a sign of strength that shows you care about yourself to seek help.

Make an appointment to see a Student Counsellor – it’s free and confidential, call 03 9269 1314

LET GO OF WHAT YOU CAN’T CONTROL

Can you realistically control every aspect of your life? To reduce feelings of frustration and helplessness, focus on the things that are within your control. By doing this, you are helping to promote your sense of empowerment.

Try reciting this useful quote to help reduce anxiety and stress:

May I be granted the Serenity to accept the things I cannot control, the Courage to change the things I can, and the Wisdom to know the difference.
– Reinhold Niebuhr
TALK POSITIVELY TO YOURSELF

Have you ever caught yourself being negative and found yourself stressed out more than you need to be? Try balancing negative thoughts with positive affirmations. Collect and recite some helpful quotes or phrases to assist you get through tough situations – this is called positive self-talk. Apply an affirmation each day to help increase your positivity.

GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Getting a good night’s sleep is essential to help your body regenerate itself. It is recommended that adults have an average of 7–8 hours of sleep per day. However, each individual may be different with the amount of sleeping time they need. The best sleeping pattern is regular and unbroken. If appropriate, allow yourself to have short naps (15–20 minutes) during the day.
WRITE IT DOWN

Sometimes if you write things down it helps to take it off your mind and gain another perspective. It can also help to express yourself and release the emotion of what you’re feeling. Keep a note of your thoughts and feelings each day to reflect on what’s going on in your life.

DO ONE THING AT A TIME

Simplify your life. Create a To-Do List and set priorities to help you focus and concentrate. By doing so, it will help to improve the quality of what you do. Avoid multi-tasking, at times, to reduce your stress.
TAKE A FEW DEEP BREATHS

Even just a few deep breaths helps to release tension and relax your mind and body. Deep breathing brings greater clarity, relieves emotional problems and physical pain, and elevates your mood.

Find a comfortable position and follow these simple instructions:

- close your eyes or focus on a spot on the floor or wall
- breathe in and out gently through your nose
- keep your breathing smooth and regular
- as you exhale, allow your body to relax
- tell yourself to ‘relax’ or ‘calm’
- let any thoughts come and go
- stay in the present moment and bring all your attention to your breath
- to end, bring your awareness back to your body – stretch, move and open your eyes.

GO FOR A WALK

Get some fresh air, activate your body and clear your mind. Exercise is so helpful for dealing with stress because it increases your resiliency, releases other natural feel-good chemicals (endorphins) from your brain and enhances sociability. So, go for a walk (it’s free!), ride a bike, go dancing or swimming, do Yoga, Tai Chi or Pilates, play soccer, football, or tennis.

Join Melbourne Polytechnic’s Fitness Centre on the Preston campus or one of their exercise classes.

MAKING TIME TO PRACTICE DEEP BREATHING FOR 5 TO 10 MINUTES EVERY DAY WILL ENHANCE YOUR ABILITY TO RELAX AND DEAL WITH STRESSFUL SITUATIONS.
Research now shows that practicing Meditation on a regular basis helps:

- keep you stress-free
- get a good night’s sleep
- improve brain functioning
- increase your attention span
- reduce ageing
- improve immunity function and metabolism
- you feel happier and more connected to appreciate life.

To find out more about meditation and relaxation, talk to a Student Counsellor – call 03 9269 1314

**TAKE TIME OUT**

We all live busy lives. By taking time out you are focussing on what is important to you. Make the time to do what you enjoy: read a book, listen to music, go for a walk or connect with friends. Taking time out helps you to gather your thoughts and gain a greater perspective on things.

**BE IN THE PRESENT MOMENT**

By being in the present moment you are practicing Mindfulness. Mindfulness can be defined as a moment-to-moment awareness of your experience without judgment. Using all five senses to see, hear, smell, taste, and touch means you focus less on worrying about the future or feeling sad or regretful about the past. Similar to practicing Meditation, when you are mindful, your risk of depression is lowered, anxiety is reduced and your cognitive function and sleep improves. Basically, mindfulness helps with your body awareness, self-awareness, regulation of emotion and attention; all things that will help you in your life, not just while you’re studying.
Check out our social media sites

facebook.com/melbournepolytechnic
twitter.com/melbpoly
instagram.com/melbpoly
youtube.com/melbpoly