

TOP 12 STRESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS

* **SLEEP** - Sleep because it makes a huge difference for the vast majority of people, as exemplified by the title of the article “The Simplest Way to Drastically Improve Your Life: More Sleep; Sleep deprivation is the invisible ceiling to how good life can be.”
* **APPRECIATION** - Beginning each day with thankfulness for people we care about and who care for us, and things we have been fortunate to accomplish or experience is always a good way to establish a healthy mindset and sets a positive tone for the day.
* **PREPARATION** - How can you do well at something if you don’t prepare? Most people can’t, and few actually thrive with spontaneous improvisation. Reviewing the upcoming week on Sunday evening and each day the night before, helps stay on top of responsibilities, be aware of important events, and understand how to pace yourself.
* **ORGANIZTION** - Putting keys, cell phone, purse, etc. in a consistent and safe place and packing your material for the next day the night before helps reduce unnecessary stress and frustration due to disorganization.
* **BREAKING PROJECTS INTO SMALLER CHUNKS** - This is a classic that everyone should use. The Pomodoro technique is a time-management approach in which one breaks the day into “intervals of 25 minutes, with five-minute breaks in between — 25 minutes on, five minutes off, over and over again. Navy Seals focus in 5 minute chunks to maintain focus and accomplish tasks.
* **SOCIALIZING** – Humans are very social creatures, and most of us need to be around and interact with others on a regular basis, introverts less so. Having regular social activities that are not related to school, work or other obligations is very helpful to minimizing the build-up of stress.
* **SETTING LIMITS WITH YOURSELF** - A former colleague Bill Ford noted he liked the Scarlet Ohara quote, “Oh, I can’t worry about that right now, I’ll worry about that tomorrow” and added that, “tomorrow you probably won’t remember because there will other things on your mind.” Stress is external and you don’t need to add to that by internally working yourself up with anxiety; getting tag-teamed by stress and anxiety is a truly unpleasant and counterproductive as it will sap you of your energies.
* **NATURE** - Being in nature helps people relax. At RSU, we are lucky, there is a great bunch of trails just south of University Village A, and it seems like you are strolling through the country. I highly recommend people take advantage of this.
* **DEEP BREATHING** - Deep breathing is an excellent and well-documented way to destress quickly and effectively. Good posture, breathing slowly through your nose into your abdomen for 4 seconds, slow exhalation through your nose again for 6-8 seconds and repeat 2-4 times. This is a straight-forward version that works for most people, even those who say it doesn’t work. Adding self-massage of your scalp, shoulders and neck can be even more relaxing.
* **EXERCISE** - While exercise isn’t a panacea for life’s issues, it certainly comes close in many ways, as exercise improves blood pressure, sleep, energy, mood, concentration, and memory. One of the greatest discoveries is that exercise helps create new brain cells, previously believed to have stopped happening after age 25. Exercise breaks when studying and before tests is highly recommended.
* **MINIMIZE SUBSTANCES** – Caffeine, sugar, alcohol and drugs all create overstimulation and a crash afterwards. This up-an-down rollercoaster makes it difficult to maintain sustained attention and effort. Some caffeine and a healthy snack can be necessary at times but please be careful about how much you are taking in.
* **STRETCHING** - Daily stress results in body tension, and that tension can contribute to you being on edge. Stretching before bed can be particularly helpful to destress at the end of your day.
* **GIVING YOURSELF CREDIT** - This is a great bookend to appreciation at the end of the day. Give yourself credit for 3 good acts at a minimum. Writing the good acts down legitimizes the experience and provides a concrete reference for the future when we are wavering with our confidence. Recognizing past successes the night before a challenging day can be particularly helpful.

Counseling Services address a wide range of issues including Depression, Anxiety, Stress Management, Anger Management, Self-Esteem, Relationships, Substance Use and Abuse, Study Skills, Adjustment to University Life, Grief and Loss, Conflict Mediation and others. We also provide referrals to other agencies and specialists in the community.

**All counseling sessions are confidential and FREE to RSU students.**

**Please call 918 343 7845 to arrange an appointment.** If no one answers, please leave a message with your name and phone number (please speak slowly), and Trevor or Caitlin will call you back as soon as either is able to.