

HELPFUL HINTS FOR THE STRESSED COLLEGE STUDENT-ON- THE- GO

1. **WHAT IS STRESS?** Stress is the “juice” (actually they are stress hormones) that initiates us to act to something that is new, challenging, thrilling, threatening and /or dangerous.
2. **IS ALL STRESS BAD?** Stress is neither positive nor negative. Whether or not stress is good or bad for us has more to do with its duration and our outlook on the events or issues that “stress” us. Under optimal conditions stress gives us that burst of energy to accomplish our goals, handle emergencies, solve problems, reach new levels physically, mentally and emotionally. In order to grow we need both stress and relaxation. Stress gives us the motivation while relaxation gives us the opportunity to take in all the information and stimulation.

When stress is prolonged or when we haven’t had the time to rest or get it out of our system it can have negative effects to our mind, body and spirit. Stress by definition is a constraining force. When there is no outlet for our stress we can develop muscle pain, fatigue, insomnia, lowered immune system, loss of appetite or the desire to eat too much, depression and heart disease to name a few. It can also antagonize almost any preexisting chronic condition.

3. **HOW WILL I KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “GOOD” STRESS AND “BAD” STRESS?**

Bad stress signs to watch out for are: prolonged fatigue, trouble sleeping, restlessness, irritability and crankiness, easily bothered, quick tempered, inability to concentrate or focus, poor digestion, change in eating habits, easily susceptible to sickness, untrusting of yourself or others, body pain usually in the neck, back and shoulders.

Good stress signs to look for are: sound sleep, when life feels challenging and full of potential, reaching goals may be difficult but you are aware of the light and relaxation at the end of the tunnel, you are focused on what you are doing, enjoy the process toward your goal, have a keen sense of when to push harder and when to take a break, you find peace in the eye of the storm, have the ability to see the humor in all your responsibilities, can laugh and see the positives.

4. **WHAT DOES MASSAGE DO?** Although there is no magic way to be 100 % “bad” stress free, there are tools out there to help you along the way. Massage Therapy is one of the best ways to relieve stress. **Massage improves circulation**, which helps bring more nutrients and oxygen to your muscles and bones and rid the body of unwanted metabolic waste. A major cause of muscle pain is oxygen deprivation. **Massage helps to unlock tight painful knots.** When muscle fibers remain in a state of contraction, due to overuse or stress they often get “tied up” and can’t untangle on their own. Massage helps to loosen up those muscle fibers knots. **Massage allows you to allow someone else to take care of you.** It gives you the time to feel your body move from the stresses in your life to the relaxation of the moment. It can help you stay present in your body. It’s the perfect antidote to counteract the effects of too much stress. **It aids in the balance we need of tension and relaxation.** In our high tech over stressed lifestyles many of us feel overwhelmed. So many gadgets and tools have been invented to free our time. In reality we’ve created more free time but are

5. using it to accomplish more tasks and responsibilities in a shorter duration. Therefore creating more pressure and stress. Remember we need both stress and relaxation in our ever changing fast pace world not only to cope but also to flourish.
6. **WHAT CAN I DO BETWEEN MASSAGES?** As a college student there are many new challenges and stresses. Major changes both good and bad can cause stress. Often when we begin college we move from home, our old friends aren't close to us anymore, we're making new friends, college course work can be a lot more demanding than it was in high school, maybe you have to work in order to support yourself through college. Any one of these can cause stress and a combination of these together can be quite challenging.

Reduce the "bad" stresses of studying by minimizing your distractions, use time management, give yourself a break, do some physical activity everyday, set realistic goals, listen to yourself, pace yourself- don't cram, seek help when needed.

Use a hot water bottle on chronic sore aching muscles. If you have recently hurt yourself seek professional care. Ice helps inflammation while moist heat softens muscle tissue.

Learn how to breathe properly expanding the abdomen when inhaling, pausing for a moment and emptying the diaphragm when exhaling.

Stretch your muscles. Stretching is like life. A little tension challenges you and your body to reach new levels. It aids you in meeting life. Allow gravity to pull you down into the positions rather than forcing it. Too much tension or stretching to the point of pain does not allow you the growth you need. You can hurt yourself and be in worse condition than when you started. When stretching keep in mind the breathing techniques discussed earlier. An easy way to do this is to lie down on your back, if your low back hurts place a pillow under your knees or bend your knees with your feet flat on the floor. Place your hands on your belly, feel your belly go up as you slowly and intentionally breathe in and feel your belly go down as you exhale. Remember to pause for a moment between breaths. Use this breathing technique with your stretches. Spend time doing your stretches. They are just as important as your exercise

The following stretches can be done to help increase range of motion, prevent injury and/or speed up the recovery process. If you do have an injury or condition consult with your healthcare provider before using any of these techniques.

Although you may wish to do all the stretches, the stretches circled are the ones your Massage-On-The -Go Licensed Massage Therapist recommends for your muscle tension and trouble spots.

Proper posture- knowing how to hold yourself up properly gives your body the sense of how it would feel without muscle tension.

Stand with arms on either side. Feet forward, a little less than shoulder width

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apart. Curl your toes up so that you are balancing on the heels and balls of your feet. Place toes back on to floor with your weight evenly distributed on the balls and heels of your feet. Lift your torso and chest up while allowing your shoulders to fall. Hips relax by slightly bending your knees. Let your head and neck feel as if they are floating on top of your shoulders.

NECK

NS1: Standing in proper posture position. Let your ear fall to shoulder. Let shoulder drop to side and relax. The goal is not to touch your ear to your shoulder. If it happens that's fine. The goal is to simply feel the stretch. Remember to use the breathing exercises. Stay in position for 8 deep breaths. If the position is uncomfortable slowly come out of it. Repeat on other side.

NS2: 1. Turn head to side at a 45-degree angle.

2. Drop chin to chest

3. Rotate chin away from body looking up

If you feel a lot of tension simply hold at the step where you feel the stretch without overdoing it.

NS3: Neck Rolls start with ear to shoulder. Let chin lead the way, slowly going around to the front of your body, then to the other side. Stop with ear to other shoulder. Never roll your head all the way back Begin to roll head around the front, back to where you started. Remember slowly and intentionally. 5-8x

NS4: Roll a small towel up as if it were a scroll. Lie down on back with towel underneath your neck.

SHOULDERS

SS1 Shoulder rolls- with arms at either side roll shoulders up, back and around. Let arms fall using only the muscles of the shoulder. 5-8x Reverse going up, forward and around.

SS2 Stretch one arm straight above the head. Bend at the elbow reaching behind your neck and shoulders. Other arm comes from behind your back. Hand reaches up to grab other hand. If hands don't reach each other do not force it hold in that position for 30 seconds. Switch to other side with opposite hand reaching down and the other up.

SS3 Standing or sitting straight, cross arms in front of you. Right arm crosses over the left. Reach your hands to one another, elbows should be bent. Once you are holding your hands raise them up toward the sky. You should feel this stretch in the back of your shoulders. Repeat by crossing left arm over the right.

CHEST- Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Arms are straight in front of you parallel to the floor. Open arms up and reach behind yourself. Inhale on your way back; exhale when bringing your arms in front. Next bring your arms up to a 45-degree angle, repeat motion and with arms straight above your head. Repeat 3 positions 3 times. Breathe between each stretch.

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LOWER BACK- Side bends feet a little more than shoulder width apart. Arms are above the head. Bend slightly to one side. Only slightly lift up reaching for the sky as you bring your body back to the center. Bend to other side repeating movement on either side 3x. Between stretches bring arms down on either side and take a deep breath. Although there is little movement this can be an intense stretch.

LBS2 Sit in a straddled position. Bend one leg in so that sole of foot is touching inner thigh. Look at one leg, cross arms in front of yourself placing your arms on your legs. The arms, which are crossed closest to the leg, should be the same-sided arm as the leg. Lean forward allowing gravity to pull your body toward your leg. If you are feeling too much tension in the back of your leg bend it slightly. The emphasis is on the low back not the hamstrings of the leg.

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