Tips for Coping with the Everyday Stress of College Life

In the last year, over 30 percent of college students were so stressed out that their school work suffered. You know yourself best and are probably aware of what activities help relieve your stress, and you should keep those skills in tact. Below are some additional tips and suggestions to help you cope with the everyday stressors of your active college life.

- **Plan carefully.** Buy a new day planner and organize your days. Whether you only have a few hours of class a day, or are juggling a job or athletics, it can be hard to balance schoolwork with other activities.

- **Get to sleep.** Staying up until 2 a.m. to finish that paper seems like a great idea at the time, but when that alarm goes off at 8 a.m., you will regret it. Sleep deprivation sneaks up on college students and really takes its toll. So put your laptop away and go to bed!

- **Watch your drinking.** If you choose to drink, set limits for yourself. It may be tempting to use alcohol to relieve your stress, but remember that it is a temporary fix. In the end, you will feel worse, since alcohol is a depressant. It is also more likely that binge drinking will increase your stress rather than decrease it: more than 25 percent of college students report academic problems linked to alcohol use. It won’t be any less demanding to make up for that study time you lost due to a hangover.

- **Get involved.** Attend your school’s student activities fair and consider joining some extracurricular student groups, if you haven’t already. Not only will you make new friends and spend time doing something you enjoy, these groups can be a great way to alleviate some of the stress of schoolwork by giving you something else to think about.

- **Communicate with your roommate(s).** So your roommate left dirty dishes in the sink for four days…again? Living with other people is stressful and small things can grow into friendship-breakers. To help avoid anger and resentment, talk to your roommate now about setting up some rules and sticking to them. Talk it out when you are frustrated. When other parts of your life seem overwhelming, at least coming home won’t add to your stress.

- **Watch your spending.** Like most college students, you are probably on a tight budget. Keep track of how much you spend on certain activities each month so you know where your money is going. If you are working part-time, try to set up direct-deposit accounts so you aren’t tempted to cash that check and head to the mall. Be wary of credit cards. The average undergraduate has $2,200 in credit card debt, so avoid the lure of plastic now… It will pay off in the future.

- **Don’t be afraid to ask for help.** It’s hard to admit you’re struggling when you think you’re expected to have your life in order. You aren’t the only one. College is a difficult time with many challenges. In a 2000 UCLA study, over 30 percent of freshmen reported feeling stressed and “frequently overwhelmed” by everything they have to do. It’s great to have activities and people in your life to help relieve the stress, but when it gets to the point where you feel you’re in a pressure-cooker, it is time to reach out to someone who can give professional guidance.

For more information or additional resources, contact Mental Health America of Illinois (MHAI) at (312) 368-9070 ext. 10, or visit our website at www.mhai.org

---


