

Stress and Anxiety



Stress is a natural, unavoidable part of life and is not inherently good or bad. Stress can originate from an upcoming exam, disagreement with a roommate, grad school applications, unrealistic expectations (our own and others), transitioning to a new experience, etc. While stress may not be pleasant, a certain level of it can actually motivate us to work harder and do better in a given situation. However, when stress is not managed effectively or when it gets to be too intense, our ability to handle situations can be reduced.

Anxiety is also a natural and unavoidable part of life. It is an evolutionarily developed system in our body that alerts us to **potential** threats. Much like a car alarm, our internal alarm system (also known as anxiety or "fight or flight") goes off when a possible danger is perceived. Our alarm goes off to help prepare us to assess the situation and take steps to protect ourselves if needed. In the event of a real threat, this alarm system can be life-saving! However, also just like a car alarm, our internal alarm system sometimes sends out "false alarms" (think: shopping cart bumping into a car in a parking lot and setting off the car alarm). The problem is, if you don't know that the alarm can sometimes be set off by mistake, it's easy to believe that every alarm is a real threat.

The consequences of stress and anxiety are often very similar. People who have experienced high levels of stress and anxiety often describe a persistent feeling of worry or dread. They may experience physical aches and pains, moodiness, difficulty sleeping, changes in appetite, decreased motivation, or trouble relaxing. When left unchecked, stress and anxiety can take a substantial toll on your physical and emotional well-being and also affect other areas of functioning such as academics and social relationships.

Fortunately, there is much that can be done to keep stress and anxiety at a manageable level. Keeping a healthy ?baseline? is the cornerstone to managing stress and anxiety. Consistent sleep (insert hyperlink), regular exercise, good nutrition (insert hyperlink), healthy relationships (insert hyperlink) and regular periods of relaxation and fun are vital components as well.

When it comes to anxiety, knowledge is power. Understanding how to identify real vs. false alarms can help keep you out of ?high alert? mood. There are also easy-to-learn skills for managing anxious thoughts, feelings and behaviors that can help you to tackle anxiety as it arises.

Resources for managing stress:

- [10 Quick Strategies for Stress Management](#) [1]
- [Anxiety Management](#) [2]
- [Stress Management through Time Management](#) [3]

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Links

[1] <https://caps.unc.edu/self-help/stress-and-anxiety/10-quick-strategies-stress-management>

[2] <https://caps.unc.edu/self-help/stress-and-anxiety/anxiety-management>

[3] <https://caps.unc.edu/self-help/stress-and-anxiety/stress-management-through-time-management>