



STRESS REDUCTION TECHNIQUES

Progressive Relaxation:

Progressive relaxation of your muscles reduces pulse rate and blood pressure as well as decreasing perspiration and respiration rates. Deep muscle relaxation can be used as an anti-anxiety pill. The body responds to anxiety-producing thoughts and events with muscle tension which in turn increases the anxiety. Muscle relaxation reduces tension and is incompatible with anxiety. Typically, it involves tensing individual muscle groups for several seconds and releasing the tension -- allowing the muscles to gradually relax.

Deep Breathing:

Proper breathing is essential for good mental and physical health. The next time you feel a surge of stress, try a few moments of deep breathing. Sit in a comfortable position and take deep, measured breaths, e.g., inhaling while counting up from 1 to 4; exhaling while counting down from 4 to 1. Do this 20-30 times and you're sure to feel refreshed. Deep breathing assists in relaxation by increasing the amount of oxygen in the body.

Visualization:

If you think anxious thoughts, you become tense. In order to overcome negative feelings, you can use the power of your imagination to refocus your mind on positive, healing images. Get into a comfortable position, close your eyes and visualize a scene or place that you associate with safety and relaxation. It doesn't matter what you visualize, as long as it's calming to you. As you relax your mind, your body also relaxes.

Thought Stopping:

Thought stopping helps you overcome excessive worry, repetitive thoughts, and negative thinking, which may take the form of self-doubt, fear, and avoidance of stressful situations. Thought stopping involves concentrating on the unwanted thoughts and after a short time, suddenly stopping and emptying your mind, by using the mental command "stop" or a loud noise to interrupt negative thinking. Then, you may use thought substitution to focus on positive thoughts and outcomes. If the thoughts can be controlled, stress levels can be significantly reduced.

Assertive Skills:

Being assertive can reduce stress as you express personal thoughts and feelings. You are behaving assertively when you stand up for yourself, express your true feelings, and do not let others take advantage of you. Be specific and clear about what you want, think, and feel; deliver your message in a clear and non-blaming manner; make personal statements such as, "I want ... , I think ... , I feel ..." etc; Ask for feedback and cooperation. Being assertive means being able to express yourself openly, honestly, and directly, while being considerate of others' feelings. Being assertive increases self-satisfaction, respect from others, self-esteem and confidence.

For more information or assistance:

USF students may call 974-2831;

Faculty and staff may call 974-5469