The “Stress” Checkup!

Take the “Stress Quiz” to find out your current stress level!

1) Have you noticed any changes in your sleeping patterns? (trouble falling asleep or staying asleep) YES or NO
2) Do you find yourself frequently irritated? YES or NO
3) Are you experiencing more headaches, stomachaches, gastrointestinal issues? YES or NO
4) Do you have frequent reoccurring colds/minor illness? YES or NO
5) Do you experience regular muscle aches? YES or NO
6) Are you experiencing an increase in generalized frustration and anger? YES or NO
7) Do you feel unorganized and “out of control”? YES or NO
8) Are you more short-tempered with others than usual? YES or NO
9) Do you have difficulty with concentration and focus? YES or NO

Minimal amounts of stress are typical, but chronic levels of stress can affect your physical and emotional well-being, while also negatively affecting your academic performance. If you answered YES to most (4+) of the questions listed above you may benefit from talking with a professional counselor to determine the causation of your stress and develop effective and healthy ways of managing stress. IUN Counseling Services offers free and confidential services to all IUN students who are enrolled on at least a part-time basis. The IUN Counseling Office has licensed professional social workers and counselors who are trained to meet the specific needs of college students!
COPING WITH STRESS!

What is stress?
Stress is typical for all college students. Deadlines on papers, presentations, projects, and a week full of exams can cause stressful symptoms. It is important to recognize symptoms of stress and develop positive coping skills for dealing with stress, before the stress becomes chronic and hard to manage.

Symptoms of stress:
Mental symptoms can include issues with concentration, attention, anxious or racing thoughts, and constant worrying. Emotional symptoms can include feelings of anger, sadness, irritability, and hopelessness. Physical symptoms can include headaches, stomachaches, muscle pain and tension, and fatigue.

Positive coping skills for dealing with stress:

• Practice good time management!
  Are you allowing yourself realistic expectations for the amount of work you need to complete? Are you engaging in procrastinating behaviors? Set an organized schedule each week to help you maintain your goals and balance your time. Stop by the counseling center if you need the tools to assist you with time management!

• Take care of yourself!
  This is extremely important and we often times forget to take care of ourselves mentally, emotionally and physically. Are you getting enough sleep? Lack of sleep can increase your vulnerability to stress and make you more susceptible to irritability. Are you getting enough exercise? Physical exercise is a great way to decrease stressful symptoms, whether it’s a short walk, yoga, running, or weight lifting. Physical exercise will increase important “feel good” neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin, both linked to an increase in positive mood!

• Deep Breathing Exercises
  Are you holding or constricting your breath throughout the day? If so, this can increase muscle tension. Practice “deep belly” breathes by slowly inhaling and exhaling. Practice short exercise for a few minutes each day.

• Thought Stopping
  Are you experiencing anxious thoughts or constant worrying? Many times the negative thoughts we produce can magnify stressful symptoms. Cognitive distortions such as catastrophizing, magnification, and all-or-nothing thinking can lead to unproductive worrying. For example: “I must do perfect on this project or I will be a failure!” Notice how this statement is illogical and unrealistic. First, how are you defining perfect? Second, why is performing perfectly so important? Actively stop these thoughts by repeating positive affirmations and replacing self-defeating statements with positive statements.

• Spending time with family and friends
  Surround yourself with positive people! Reflect on the people who add unnecessary stress and decide whether you should continue to spend time with people who add negativity to your life. As the famous behavioral psychologist John Watson would say, our environment has a powerful influence on our behavior (which also includes our mood and stress level!).
High amounts of stress can lead to mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and suicide. If you would like to speak with a professional, please contact the IUN Counseling Center. Services are FREE to IUN students enrolled on at least a part-time basis!