Guide to Effective Stress and Anxiety Management

1. Learn to recognize what triggers stress for you
   - Internal Triggers
     - Lifestyle choices (i.e., poor diet, smoking)
     - Negative self-talk (i.e., “I can't do this.”)
     - Stressful personality traits (i.e., impatience, chronic worrying)
     - It is important to note that most of our stress is self-generated
   - External Triggers
     - Physical Environment
     - Social Interactions with Others
     - Organizational
     - Major Life Events
     - Daily Hassles

2. Learn to recognize your individual symptoms of stress
   - Physical
     - Fatigue
     - Headache
     - Insomnia
     - Cold extremities
     - Sweating
     - Muscle aches or tension
     - Heart palpitations
     - Stomach cramps
     - Nausea
   - Psychological
     - Decreased memory
     - Difficulty concentrating
     - Indecisiveness
     - Mind racing
     - Confusion
     - Anxiety
     - Depression
   - Behavioral
     - Pacing
     - Fidgeting
     - Nervous habits
     - Increased/Decreased appetite
     - Drinking
     - Crying
     - Yelling
     - Physical Violence
   - Interpersonal
     - Nervousness
     - Anger
     - Frustration
     - Worry
     - Fear
     - Irritability
     - Short temper
     - Withdrawal

3. Tips for Daily Stress and Anxiety Management
   - Keep a positive attitude.
     - Much of our stress is generated by negative self-talk (internal dialogue).
     - Replacing negative self-talk with positive self-talk will improve your self-confidence, decrease stress and improve overall well-being.
     - Repeat positive phrases to yourself such as: “I can do this”, “I can achieve my goals”, “People will like me for who I am”, “I am in control of my life”, “I learn from my mistakes”, “I am a good & valued person”.

Contact SIUE Counseling Services for more information or to make an appointment to get help managing your stress at (618) 650-2842 or online at www.siue.edu/counseling
• **Utilize relaxation strategies**
  o Access and utilize the exercises at [Calm.com](http://Calm.com)
  o Deep Breathing
    o Focus your attention on your breathing.
    o Inhale slowly through the nose and exhale slowly through the mouth.
    o Concentrate on deep breaths in and out.

• **Imagery**
  o Create a mental image of a pleasant and relaxing place in your mind.
  o Involve all your senses in the imagery: see the place, hear the sounds, smell the aromas, feel the temperature, and the movement of the wind.
  o The more intensely you use your imagination to recreate the relaxing place, the stronger and more realistic the experience will be.
  o Enjoy the location in your mind and know that you can return to that place at any time.
  o Use this positive imagery to relax yourself during times of stress, anxiety, or anger.

• **Eat a well-balanced diet**
  o Avoid:
    ▪ Caffeine: it is a stimulant that induces “fight or flight” response.
    ▪ Alcohol: it depletes your body of B vitamins that help you cope with stress.
    ▪ Nicotine: Most ex-smokers report feeling much more relaxed on a general basis.
    ▪ Sugar: Sugar-rich foods raise energy in the short term but cause “crashes.”
    ▪ Skipping meals
  o Make sure your diet includes:
    ▪ Whole Grains
    ▪ Fruits and Vegetables
    ▪ Drinking water in place of sugar and/or caffeine filled drinks

• **Exercise**
  o Releases neurotransmitters that increase feelings of happiness and decrease depression and anxiety.
  o Improves sleep, self-image, and overall health.

• **Manage your time**
  o Set priorities with a to-do list.
  o Mark tasks according to what is most pressing or essential and then work your way down the list to tasks that realistically can be put off.

• **Make time for yourself and use your support system**
  o Always make time for fun activities/hobbies that you enjoy.
  o Talk with your partner, friends, or family. Don’t bottle feelings up inside.

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