

Your Health

A newsletter dedicated to student health issues at Minnesota State University

Spring 2003


The Stress of War



The war in Iraq can be adding stress to the lives of already stress-overloaded students. If you're looking for ways to cope or adapt to this stress, the American Psychological Association offers tips:


1. **Talk About It.** Talk with your friends and parents. Don't be afraid to express your opinion, even if your friend or parent takes the opposite view. Ask questions and understand answers. And, understand that some people may express hatred for people from a certain country or religion--it doesn't mean that you have to.
2. **Turn It Off.** Although you want to stay informed, try to limit the amount of news you take in. Watching a news report once informs you; watching it over and over again just adds to the stress and contributes no new knowledge.
3. **Cut Yourself Some Slack.** The stresses of war may heighten daily stresses. Your emotions might be all over the map. The uncertainty of war can make mood shifts seem more extreme. Be prepared for this and go a little easy on yourself, and your friends.
4. **Create a No-War Zone.** Home should be a haven, free from the stress and anxieties associated with war. Make your room or apartment a "no war zone."
5. **Stick To The Program.** Spending time on campus means more choices; so let home be your constant. Don't forget the routines that give you comfort, whether they are things you do before class, going out to lunch or having a nightly e-chat with a friend.
6. **Take Care of Yourself.** Be sure to take care of yourself--physically, mentally, and spiritually. And get some sleep.
7. **Take Control.** Make sure you are included in emergency planning at home, school, and work. If you've got a family member in the military, get as much information as you can about where that person will be, how long they'll be gone, and how often they'll be able to contact you.
8. **Express Yourself.** War can bring up a bunch of conflicting emotions, but sometimes, it's just too hard to talk to someone about what you're feeling. If talking isn't working, do something to capture your emotions, such as starting a journal or creating art.
9. **Help Somebody.** Nothing gets your mind off your own problems like solving someone else's. Try volunteering, cleaning up around the room or apartment, or helping a friend with homework.
10. **Put Things Into a Positive Perspective.** War may be all anyone is talking about now. But, eventually, war ends. If you're worried about what it takes to get through this, think back on times when you faced your fears. Learn some relaxation techniques. Think about the important things that have stayed the same, even while the outside world is changing.

Source: Resilience in a Time of War: Adapting to wartime stress; American Psychological Association, 2003.



Find yourself eating on the run?
Try this Mix 'n' Match Trail Mix.

In a large ziplock bag, mix one ingredient from each of the following categories:



1 Cup Cereal	1/2 Cup Dried Fruit	1/4 Cup Nuts or Seeds	1/4 Cup Fun Stuff
Cheerios	Raisins	Almonds	Mini-Pretzels
Crispix	Mixed Fruit	Roasted Soynuts	"Light" Popcorn
Spoon-sized Shredded Wheat	Apricots	Walnuts	Marshmallows
Oat Squares	Apples	Peanuts	M & M's
Low-Fat Granola	Craisins	Sunflower Seeds	Skittles
Kix	Pineapple	Pumpkin Seeds	Chocolate chips

A Guide to Smart Snacking

Looking for a quick and satisfying snack that's healthy too? Check these out:

- ~fruit-flavored low-fat yogurt and 2 fig bars
- ~string cheese and a medium apple or pear
- ~medium tortilla with 1/2 cup fat-free refried beans & salsa
- ~toasted english muffin with 1 tablespoon peanut butter
- ~assorted cut-up veggies with fat-free ranch dressing
- ~"lite" microwave popcorn spiced up with chili powder, garlic powder, or Parmesan cheese
- ~bowl of whole-grain cereal (Cheerios, Wheaties, Mini-wheats) dry or with low-fat milk and a banana
- ~half of a bagel with 1 tablespoon cream cheese
- ~low-fat granola or breakfast bar & a glass of skim milk
- ~fruit-smoothie: blenderize 1 cup low-fat yogurt, 1/2 cup frozen strawberries, 1/2 cup skim milk
- ~medium slice of thin-crust cheese or veggie pizza

Choose water, skim milk, or 100% fruit juice to wash down your snacks.

Feeling Irritable? Cranky? Depressed? Impatient? Maybe you need more sleep!!

National Sleep Awareness week is being held March 31 to April 6 this year. Every year this observance coincides with the clock change of daylight savings time. Most of us feel the effects of losing an hour of sleep when the clocks "spring ahead" in April, but many students are sleep deprived year round and some suffer from sleep disorders such as insomnia, sleep apnea and others.



Recent research shows that many students get less sleep than they need and getting less than the necessary amount of sleep can lead to lowered academic performance and productivity.

So what are some sleep strategies time-strapped students can use? Napping is one way to improve alertness. According to the experts at Alertness Solutions, a nap up to forty-five minute is a good time to shoot for. Any longer than that and your body will enter a deep sleep pattern and you may feel groggy and disoriented when you awaken. Another strategy is sleep-time recovery: making up for a loss of sleep one night by catching up the next night with good, deep sleep, or stretching a nap to over two hours so you get through at least one sleep cycle. Preventing sleep deprivation, of course, is the most desirable and the National Sleep Foundation offers the following tips for improving your sleep:

- +Limit your bedroom use to sleep and sex.** Remove the television, desk, computer workstation and other objects that make sleep more difficult.
- +Sleep in a comfortable bed with a comfortable pillow.** Find a comfortable sleeping temperature. Temperature extremes can make falling asleep difficult or can waken you from sleep.
- +Establish a regular bedtime and bedtime routine and follow them even on weekends.** Avoid bright lights in the evening--this stimulates the body to stay awake. Try a warm shower or bath before bedtime. This may help by relaxing the body and signaling the body that it is time to sleep.
- +Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol in the late afternoon and evening.** Nicotine and caffeine can delay your sleep and alcohol interferes with your ability to sleep deeply, a key to feeling rested in the morning.
- +Do not nap during the day if you are having trouble falling asleep at night.** The nap may interfere with your ability to fall asleep.
- +Exercise regularly, 20 to 30 minutes each day if possible.** Exercising earlier in the day is best as exercise before bed can raise your body temperature--an internal signal to your body to stay awake.
- +If you cannot fall asleep after 30 minutes, get up and go to another room.** Read something entertaining or listen to soothing music until you feel sleepy, then return to bed.
- +Let the sunlight help awaken you.** Leave curtains open, if possible, or use bright lights when you wake up. The bright lights helps the body to reset its biological clock.

Some sleep problems are best addressed with the help of a professional. See a health care provider if:

- +Sleep problems seriously interfere with school, work or relationships.*
- +You rely on pills to make you sleep or keep you alert.*
- +You have depression, chronic anxiety, pain or a change in medication.*
- +You snore heavily, or stop breathing at intervals during the night. You may have sleep apnea. If your roommate, spouse or partner complains about your snoring it's worth checking out.*

UP-TO-DATE SARS INFORMATION

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is a respiratory illness that has recently been making the headlines. The illness typically begins with a fever greater than 100.4 degrees F. The fever is sometimes associated with chills or other symptoms, including headache, malaise, and body aches. After 3 to 7 days, the person may develop a dry, nonproductive cough that might be accompanied by or progress to the point where insufficient oxygen is getting to the blood. Some patients require mechanical ventilation.

Information about this illness, it seems, can change daily. Two accurate sources of information about SARS are as close as a mouse click away.

For those looking for up-to date, accurate information about SARS in the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control has created a link: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/

For those looking for up-to-date, accurate information about SARS worldwide, the World Health Organization has created a link: www.who.int/csr/sars/en/

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www.mnsu.edu/healthsv/

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