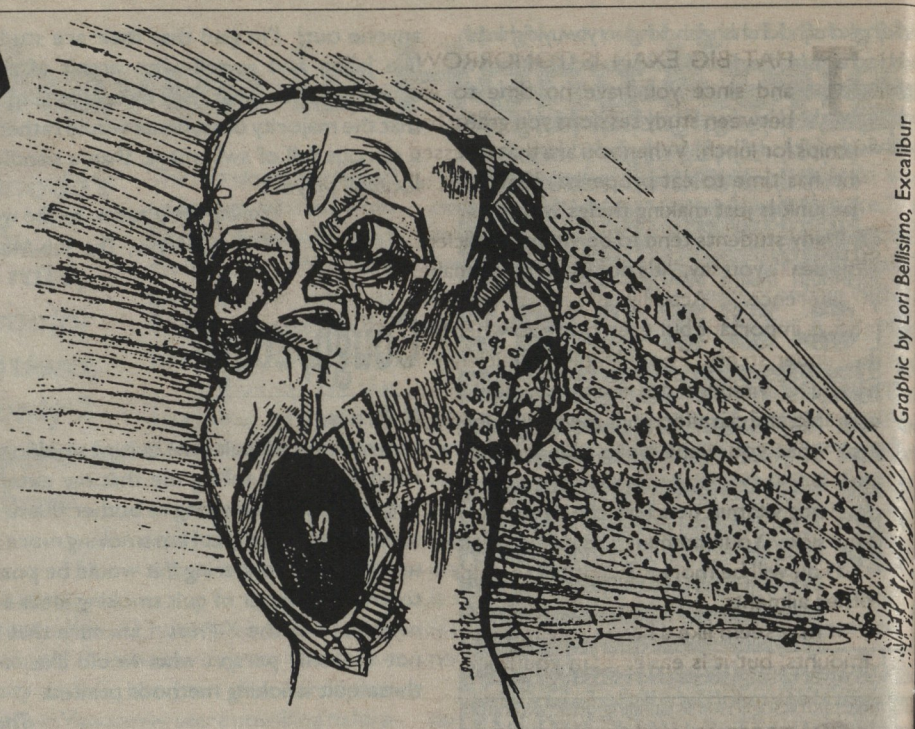


STRESS



Graphic by Lori Bellissimo, Excalibur

WE ALL DEAL WITH STRESS. SOME deal with it well and others ... need I explain? The scary thing is that stress can lower your defenses in almost every way. It can lead to fatigue, sickness, and emotional problems just to name a few. I could go into lengthy detail telling you what stress has done to me but it would just be the same old stories that you have all heard and probably experienced before.

We have two choices. We can let stress harm our lives or we can conquer it. There are many ways that we can do this and again you've probably heard of many of them. But have you honestly ever tried them? Sure maybe one day last week you decided to take a break from school but what did you do? Have a bath? Walk the dog? Exercise? Relax in front of the T.V.? Or did you worry the whole time about all the work that you had to do?

Worrying brings on stress even when we are relaxing. It is conscious stress that we can conquer. We have to learn to say "I deserve a break and the work can wait another hour". I am in no way saying that you should forget about your responsibilities, but you have to recognise when you need time out for yourself.

Tip # 1: Listen to your feelings and your body and use common sense. You know that your professor is not going to kill you because your paper is a day late. If it means sacrificing something else, like your peace of mind and the health of your body, don't do it. Put it into perspective -- ten years from now what is it going to matter that you typed your paper on the day it was due instead of the day before?

A lot of the things that stress us out can be avoided. Last week I got my car towed from the University. Yes, I think the parking situation sucks, but it was my fault for being late and not having the time to park in the lower parking lot. I parked in the first empty space I saw and it happened to not be a parking spot. Surprise! Just because there was a car there before does not mean that it was legal for me to park there. Anyhow, my point is that if I had planned to

leave my house earlier I would have been able to park in the lower parking lot, walk up to class and be on time, and not get my car towed. I was so frustrated with myself and I let it get to me. Instead I should have just recognised the mistake and gotten on with my day. If I had managed my time better I would have not had any problems. Obviously we can not plan everything, but if you plan ahead then you probably would have enough time to type your paper and go out for a beer afterwards, or get a legal parking spot!

Tip # 2: Organise! Yes we all hate this word, but try prioritising your work and other commitments (this applies to finances as well). Buy one of those annoying organizers that you see in all the A+ students' bags. Schedule your days, weeks and months - ahead of time. Mark the most important things with an A, less important things with a B, and so on. When you look at your organiser you'll be reminded that your marks (and tuition fees!) are more important than going to the pub and it'll be easier to resist the temptation. You will be sure of what you have to

do, when, and you can actually schedule in your party and relaxation time too. And for parents, scheduling will help you work around your children's schedules so that you can get as much time with them as possible. You'll be surprised to discover that yes, there are actually enough hours in the day.

Tip # 3: Pick the hours of the day that you are most productive and schedule your work for those hours. What is the point of working hard at night when you aren't getting anywhere and you could be with your friends or family? You'll find that you'll get twice as much work done in your productive hours than you would any other time of the day, whether its at 3am, 10am, or 2pm. Just do it!

Often we feel tired just because of stress and we don't realise that stress is the cause. It is unconsciously affecting our lives. In this case we have to recognise what the stressor is. Many students feel sick and tired of being in school around this time of the year. Why? The stress of trying to get everything done makes us lose sight of our goals. Or because we don't have any

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Stress: The Silent Killer

By Rebecca Moore

concrete goals yet. If you are really unhappy doing your school work ask yourself why you are here. Because you want to become an engineer, writer, or pianist? Or because you don't know what you want to do yet, but, you want to continue to learn so you can figure out what you're destined to be.

Tip # 4: What ever the reason is that you are here don't ever lose sight of it because it can provide you with great motivation when you are down.

I'll finish off with another tip that I strongly believe in but I have a hard time making it a priority. Exercise - apart from sex - is the best stress reliever around. Exercise is better than sex in some ways though, because you can do it alone and you only have to satisfy yourself. I know not everyone likes to exercise rigorously, but you don't have to sweat buckets to reap the rewards of activity. All you need to do is spend a half an hour/day, three days a week, to go for a walk, swim, skate, have a snowball fight, play basketball with your friends or just play with your kids. You'll find yourself more relaxed, healthy, and you'll even look better and feel better about yourself! For those of us who do like to sweat - go to it, it's the best way to vent frustrations. If you've never had a really hard work out head to the field house and try it out, you never know you may love it.

Tip # 5: Schedule in some exercise every week. You can't let this slide. For me it has always been one of the first things crossed off my schedule, but this year I made it a priority and I have been more successful at exercising regularly. This may work for you.

Don't eliminate all the stress in your life. We need it to motivate us and remind us that we have a purpose here in our stressful and complex, but intriguing, world.

These are by no means fool proof ways to get rid of stress in your life. They are only helpful if you commit yourself to changing a few things in your life. Do something for yourself for a change.