

STRESS IS THE SPICE OF LIFE . . .

By Beth Gaiser

According to Dr. Hans Selye, the leading pioneer of stress research, "A certain amount of stress is needed to tune you up for action and keep you on your toes." Seyle goes so far as to call stress "the spice of life." In looking at it this way, the meaning of stress needs to be further delineated. There are actually three types of stress: normal stress, the body's rising to meet the demands of ordinary existence; distress or stress that is chronic in nature; and eustress—or good stress. Distress is debilitating and eustress is facilitative; the point where one becomes the other is a matter of individual perception. Situations that are exhilarating to one individual may be earth shaking to another.

Interestingly, studies have been conducted in various career populations and believe it or not, corporate executives suffer less stress-related illnesses than secretaries, house wives, assembly line workers and

salespersons. These findings tie in the idea that there is a psychological variable mediating how one performs under stress and that a great deal of stress can be okay—given it's the right kind: eustress.

So what are those variables? According to Susan Kobasa of the University of Chicago, the key to stress management lies in committing, control and challenge. People who view change as a challenge and an opportunity; who feel in control of their lives; and who are committed to what they are doing will experience less distress and the negative effects thereof. Dr. Paul Rosch, president of the American Institute of Stress proclaims that

"A certain amount of stress is needed to tune you up for action and keep you on your toes."

ment, control and challenge. People who view change as a challenge and an opportunity; who feel in control of their lives; and who are committed to what they are doing will experience less distress and the negative effects thereof. Dr. Paul Rosch, president of the American Institute of Stress proclaims that

the key to healthy stress survival is to love what you do and to be good at it. The crux is not avoiding stress, but "reframing" it so it becomes a positive motivator.

"High strung but fine tuned..." the concept is feasible but it requires some thinking to identify what the sources of negative stress—distress—are.

One big distressor may be your own "self talk" that picks away at self esteem, telling you you're never good enough and never will be. How realistic are your perceptions of yourself? Perhaps it's time to lower perfectionist standards.

Many people have found great relief from stress through open communication. Letting others know what your needs are and offer feedback provides a more accurate mirror of "you" than you may be giving yourself. Through communication, support is gained and a "debriefing" that lets you know you're

not alone. It's also a relief to share worries rather than bottling them up inside. What it all comes down to is that no one is 100% together 100% of the time!

Cognitive restructuring is another avenue to distress management. Often we catastrophize things or look at a glass of water as half empty rather than half full. Are you highlighting the bad parts of stressful situations or looking for what can be gained or learned?

In taking time to examine your past brushes with stress and how you can better manage it in the future, it is possible to jump into the thick of things and operate safely. Taking time to evaluate stress in your life is the proactive approach to stress management. Included in this issue is a referral guide and booklist providing resources and more information. Rather than tooling along until stress jumps out and stresses you out, prepare yourself—and have a eustressful year!

Anxiety is secretive. He does not trust anyone, not even his friends: Worry, Terror, Doubt, and Panic. He has a way of glooming onto your skin like smog, and then you feel unclean. He likes to visit me late at night when I am alone and exhausted. I have never slept with him, but he kissed me on the forehead once. and I had a headache for two years. He is sure a nuisance to get out of the house. He has no respect for locks or curtains or doors. I speak from experience. It takes cunning to get rid of him, a combination of anger, humor and self respect. A bath helps too. He does not like to get wet. As a last resort, if you are not near a bathtub, wet your face with tears—

J. Ruth Gendler
The Book of Qualities:
Turquoise Mountain Publications, 1988

STUDY HELPS

Cindy VanDomelen

How much would you pay for an easy-to-follow, absolutely reliable method for getting good grades? How much would you pay if that method required no significant work on your part? Unfortunately, "there's no such thing as a free lunch," (and besides, you'd get nothing from your education!). Succeeding in college requires discipline and work, but it needn't be a temporary phase of horrendous stress and sleepless nights. Discipline isn't demonstrated by staying awake for 48 hours straight or by studying, studying, studying, and doing little else. There are some general principles one can follow to get the most out of school and still enjoy "quality" time with friends and loved ones. While these principles seem "common-sensical", give them a try! You might bring up your grades while having some fun.

1 Don't skip class. No book can substitute for a personalized explanation by a professor or GTF. Relearning is the most powerful form of human learning. This means hearing it in class, reading it in the text book and reducing the study time devoted to wading through texts figuring out what was missed in class. Most courses don't follow the text exactly and many texts need clarification through class discussions. Hints and preparation materials for tests are often given in class prior to exams and many tests emphasize lecture notes.

2 Go to class prepared. Preparation before class can be the key to understanding the lecture. Unfortunately, many students simply take notes

with little or no understanding of the material. Twenty minutes of reading prior to a lecture might save an hour of studying later in an attempt to put it together on your own. Preparation enhances efficiency in and out of the classroom.



3 Take notes and lots of them. Following principle number two, the more you prepare for a lecture by reading, the easier note-taking will be since you will basically be familiar with the vocabulary. In technical courses you need to copy almost everything written on the board plus any helpful explanation. If you've read ahead, you will recognize certain equations and fill them in later, concentrating on the explanation. In liberal arts or social sciences, jot down key ideas and phrases. Again, if you're

prepared, you should recognize many of them.

4 Allot time to study for each class. Many of us operate on the "squeaky-hinge" principle. The hinge that squeaks gets the oil. Or in student terms, you put the effort where you sense the greatest pressure. Such a cycle can be avoided by regularly working on each course. Instead of only studying when preparing for a test or completing an assignment, spend a little bit of time each day on each course—and lighten the cram load later.

5 Do your homework. Often times homework assignments relate directly to the exam, especially in sciences or technical courses. Remember, the point of your study is both learning something and passing the class. Often we overlook the former and just squeak by the latter.

6 Start early on projects and papers. Whether it's a book report, term paper or project, the earlier you begin, the easier your work will be. An early start leaves plenty of time for creativity, neatness, thoroughness and sleep and leisure in the process!

7 Ask for help. In the referral list included in this issue, there are several resources available for academic assistance. Don't be afraid to ask for help. That's what office hours are for. You should be able to tell how you're progressing by about one third of the way through the term. When visiting an instructor, have specific questions ready so you don't leave feeling as lost as when you came.

Are You Eating For The Wrong Reasons?

EVENT → Perception → STRESS

Lynne Gordon

Most of us believe that a want for food is due to a physical hunger. But most of the time we eat in response to our minds. Most of the time we feed our bodies without consulting our bodies. And most of the time when we eat has little to do with what we are eating for physical nourishment, satisfaction, a healthy body—and why we are eating—social participation, real hunger, or STRESS. Eating when we're hungry implies trusting the wisdom of our bodies; ultimately, it necessitates believing that our bodies know their appropriate weight better than we.

Think back to the last time you ate. Did you look at your watch to see if it was time to eat? Did you have an appointment for lunch or dinner? Did you pass by a window with something luscious displayed and decide you couldn't pass it up? Were you hungry? How did you know?

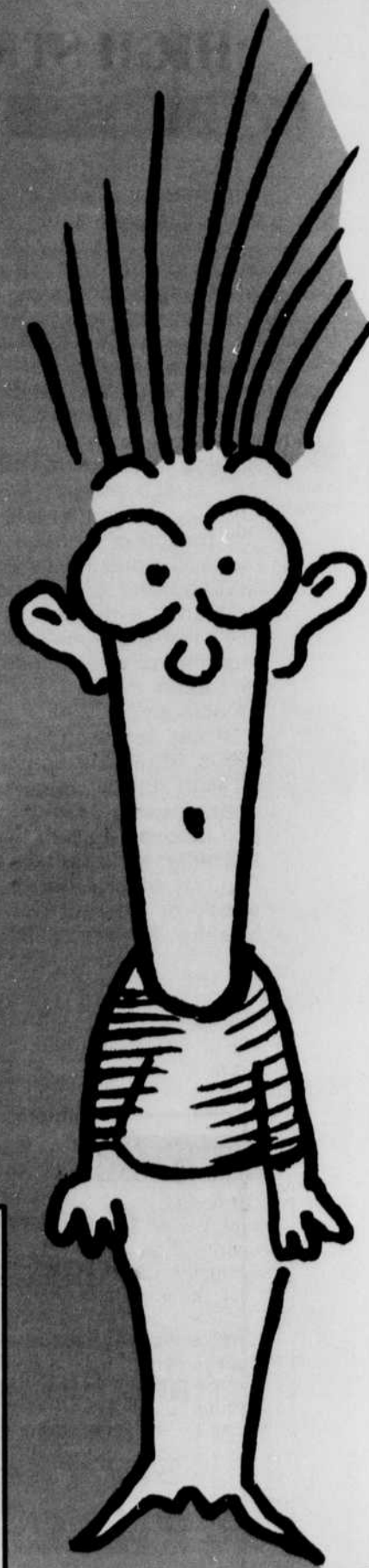
Many people eat for the wrong reasons, thus sometimes leading to an eating disorder known as bulimia (cycles of dieting, bingeing, and purging). People usually develop bulimia because they are overwhelmed by problems and stress. They turn to or away from, food to escape emotional pain, to release anger and hurt, and to comfort themselves when emotional nurturing is needed. In times of stress, dieting lends a sense of control and accomplishment. Bingeing and purging provide a temporary escape from hunger, anger, loneliness, anxiety, and boredom.

In today's society, where being thin is symbolic of success, beauty, happiness, and self-confidence, being overweight can be extremely traumatic for some people. The bulimic gets caught up in a cycle: stress leads to over-eating, over-eating leads to being

over weight, being over weight leads to a perceived life of failure, and as this perception leads to additional stress, the cycle continues. People with bulimia soon discover a method of intervening this cycle. They realize that they can "have their cake and not have it too." This means that they can consume high quantities of high caloric food for the purpose of stress reduction and then purge themselves with self-induced vomiting, laxatives, and diuretics. By getting rid of the food in their bodies, bulimics feel that they are also getting rid of their anxiety and guilt. With this lifestyle of bingeing and purging, it appears that they have control over their weight and their life. But what at first seems to be a simple weight control method eventually leads to a compulsive habit that, itself, takes control over their life. This type of lifestyle is inevitably full of guilt, fear, loneliness, and depression. And, in addition to the emotional problems that exist, serious physiological problems including kidney failure, liver damage, tooth decay, esophagus rupture, and heart attack can occur. Moreover, if left untreated, death may occur.

For those who believe that they have bulimia, or other eating disorders, it is important for them to realize that there is hope for recovery, that they are not alone, and that there are people who care and understand. Numerous organizations and contacts are available for help but help can not be obtained if the disorder is kept a secret. Having an eating disorder is a serious matter. Don't fool yourself into thinking otherwise. Make a plan of action today that will lead to a lifestyle of eating for the right reasons.

Pricilla Freeman



Interested in a good book on stress or a stress-related topic? The following are available at the Health Education Center in the Student Health Center.

"The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook, by Davis, Eshelman and McKay.

"Thoughts and Feelings: The Art of Cognitive Stress Intervention, by Davis, McKay and Fanning.

"Mind as a Healer; Mind as a Slayer, by Pelletier

"Pulling Your Own Strings, by Dyer

"Chop wood, Carry Water, by Fields, Taylor, Weyer and Ingrasci.

"Talking To Yourself, by Butler

"The Stress of Life, by Selye

"I Can't Face Tomorrow, by Kier

If you're looking for a copy you can keep, browse through the "Health" and "Self Help" sections on the second floor of the U of O Bookstore.

STAFF

EDITOR: Beth Gaiser
LIFESTYLE PLANNING PROGRAM DIRECTOR:

Ellen Ryan

HEALTH EDUCATORS: Laurene Shields, Beth Gaiser, Raymond Boyle

PEER HEALTH ADVISORS: Lynne Gordon, Ann Reeves, Lori Novich, Carson Jacobi, Rene Lee, Cindy VanDomelen, Sara Louis, Paula Mishicla, Priscilla Freeman, Gina Diamond

LAYOUT DESIGN: Scott Thorkildson and Beth Gaiser

PRODUCTION: Ronwin Ashton, Ingrid White, Sandra Daller, Stephanie Holland, Ellen Cross, Wendy Morris