

Stressed-out students can learn coping strategies

A recent survey by the Student Health Center showed classwork to be the main cause of stress

By Jenny Cherrytree
Freelance Reporter

It's 4 a. m., and you still haven't finished your paper. You have 100 pages left of reading and a midterm to study for. Does this sound familiar? If you feel stressed, you're not the only one. A Student Health Survey showed schoolwork is the leading cause of stress for college students.

"We are finding more students stressed out over classwork," health center counselor Annie Dochnahl said. "Students often say, 'My professor thinks their class is the only one I am taking.'"

Senior Josh Greene agreed: "I often feel overwhelmed. I have three professors who are assigning over 150 pages a week of reading. How do they expect me to retain all that information? Professors should consider alternative methods. Assigning excess reading is only asking us to skim."

There are two common profiles of students who suffer from stress: individuals who are physi-

cally depressed and sleep all the time, or individuals who are vigilant, anxious and wake up during the night with their minds racing.

"Not all stress is negative," Dochnahl said. "Stress can be a positive motivator." It's the extra burst of adrenaline that helps you finish your final project or win the game, she said. Stress is a short-term physiological tensing that ends when the challenge is met.

"If you can't return to a relaxed state, this stress becomes negative," Dochnahl said. "When a person feels no relief, stress inhibits a person from functioning. The changes in your body include stomach and muscle tension, increased heart rate and higher blood pressure."

Dochnahl encourages students to be proactive and take classes that complement each other.

"Balance out your schedule so you are not taking all classes that require lots of reading," she said.

Peer health educator and University student Kate Payne said: "Time management skills are important. Procrastination does not control stress. If you have a huge project, break it down, take it section by section so it doesn't feel so intimidating. Stress will al-

Time Management Suggestions

■ **BUY A CALENDAR:** Plan a schedule for yourself. Allow time for class, study, leisure, exercise and important activities.

■ **KEEP A TO-DO LIST:** Prioritize your tasks and try to finish them on time.

■ **ASK FOR HELP:** Contact the Student Health Center for support.

■ **ENJOY LIFE:** Spend every day doing something to rejuvenate your mind, body and spirit.

ways be in your life, but students need to learn how to control it."

Payne also encourages students to breathe. "Try spending 10 minutes a day working on your breathing," she said. "Taking deep breaths will help relieve stress."

"Finding an activity that releases stress is important," Dochnahl said. "Using food, tobacco, alcohol, sleeping pills or other drugs is dangerous and not the way to unwind."

"Overeating or watching TV

may relieve stress momentarily, but it does not solve the problem. Cigarette smoking is a stimulant; it increases anxiety and in the long run is stress producing."

Dochnahl has two main stress-relieving tips for students: "First, have realistic expectations on how much you can really do and plan appropriately. Second, develop some kind of daily activity that helps rejuvenate the mind, body and spirit."

For students who want to try a more physical experience, massage can also relieve stress, said Richard Cave, a licensed massaged technician at the Eugene Downtown Massage Therapy Clinic. Massage therapy is a systematic way of touching the body.

"One part of stress management is regular massages," Cave said. "Massage increases circulation in the body and lowers the cortisol hormone, which is activated when people are stressed."

"Lowering the cortisol hormone rids the body of waste products, which are constrained when people are under stress. Stress also breaks down the immune system, which is why people under stress often get sick."

The average local rate for an

hour of massage runs between \$40 and 50. "The investment is worthwhile," Cave said. "You'll save money in the long run by staying healthy."

If you can't afford to get a professional massage, don't be afraid to do it yourself. There are many books available if you want to learn how to give yourself a massage. Clare Maxwell-Hudson's "The Complete Book of Massage" is an informative book on massage techniques. Knowing how to touch your own body in ways that will relieve stress can be beneficial to stress management.

If you're feeling tremendously overwhelmed and are uncertain how to balance out school, work, exercise, time to sleep and a social life, then ask for help Dochnahl said. It might seem impossible, but Dochnahl said anyone can manage stress with the right skills.

The Health Education Program at the health center offers a free relaxation series. Students are invited to join anytime during the term on Tuesdays from 4 to 5 p.m. at the health center.

Students can also call 346-4456 and make an appointment with Payne to talk about a stress management routine designed to meet their personal needs.

Washington voters reject medical marijuana initiative

By Hunter T. George
The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Voters on Tuesday defeated a proposal to make Washington the third state in a year to reject federal drug policy and approve the medical use of marijuana.

With 10 percent of precincts reporting, Initiative 685 was failing 61 percent to 39 percent. Final results may not be available for days, since one-third of Washington voters were expected to cast their ballots by mail.

Opponents, led by Lt. Gov. Brad Owen, saw it as a giant step toward drug legalization, noting

that the initiative also covers heroin and LSD and was funded by three out-of-state millionaires.

Owen said the initiative's broad focus frightened voters, adding that the outcome is "a tremendous message that the people of Washington are not going to be manipulated by out-of-state money, and that people care about the danger of desensitizing people to the dangers of drugs."

The measure's sponsor, Dr. Rob Killian of Tacoma, wasn't ready to concede, but said something good came out of the debate. "I think we've changed the discussion in Washington state, and I think that was part of my

motivation," Killian said.

Killian, who runs an inner-city health clinic, had appealed to voter compassion, saying the measure would provide some relief to cancer patients and others suffering from serious illnesses.

Had it been approved, the measure faced an uncertain future anyway.

The federal government prohibits any use of marijuana, medicinal or otherwise. The initiative would have legalized possession by the ill, but didn't create a lawful way for them to obtain the drug. And a provision not cited in Killian's TV ads apparently

would have paved the way for release of about 300 prison inmates incarcerated for non-violent drug crimes.

Initiative 685 was based on the Arizona referendum approved nearly 2-to-1 by voters in 1996, only to be blocked later by legislators. Californians also approved medicinal use of marijuana last year.

The Washington state measure would have legalized possession of marijuana, heroin, LSD and other "schedule I" drugs by people who are seriously ill, with two conditions: A written recommendation from two physicians, and the doctors would have to

cite scientific research supporting use of the drug.

The initiative also would have altered state sentencing policies to require treatment rather than prison for people convicted of non-violent drug crimes. An estimated 300 inmates serving time for drug possession could have been released under this provision.

A third element denied early release to anyone convicted of committing a violent crime while under the influence of drugs, though it's unclear whether that could have been established in many cases.

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