

Now is the time for rest and relaxation

Stress Awareness Week is a chance for students to learn to manage time and responsibilities

By Michael Hines
Student Activities Reporter

Check your pulse because there are only seven weeks left until finals.

For those students who aren't aware of their stress level, today is National Stress Awareness Day.

Students grapple with a distinctive kind of stress. If it's not midterms, it's finals. If not a paper, then a class project. The list goes on. Stress is often compounded until it reaches an unbearable level, said Jarrett Horibata, a counselor at the University Health Center.

"It's definitely a cumulative thing," he said. "Stress levels do increase based on the time of year and the time of the term."

In addition to the rigors of school-related stress, students deal with relationships, friendships, time away from the family and, in some cases, culture shock.

To combat the feeling of being overwhelmed, Tomoko Nakamura, a health center peer educator, recommends that people change their perspectives.

"Some people feel lots of stress, some people don't," she said. "It depends on perception."

Nakamura is a Japanese exchange student who has been at the University for a year and a half. She has often felt the stress of being a student compounded by cultural and language differences.

"Just believe that you can find something else," she said. "You have another way."

As a basic stress reliever, Nakamura and Horibata suggest using a calendar to prepare days in advance. Writing schedules down gives people a chance to prioritize.

"It feels like piling a mountain," Horibata said. "Break it down into sections of a mountain."

Using drugs, alcohol or tobacco as a way to deal with stress is dangerous and can worsen problems, Nakamura said.

"It leads to another problem," she said. Chemical dependence adds more psychological — and even financial — stresses.

Students should use exercise, friends and campus activities to create social networks and deal with stress. Nakamura said she used the international student organizations to acclimate herself. Students should avoid "wallowing," Jarrett said.

When stress does become unbearable, students have options to help deal with it. The health center's peer health education and the counseling center are available to students.

Jarrett is one of more than 20 counselors at the health center, and he sees about eight students each week.

"Everybody at some point in their life needs help," he said. "We're here to help. Don't feel like you need to do it by yourself."

In addition to counseling, Jarrett said some students work on breathing exercises and muscle relaxation techniques in their sessions. These are techniques students will be able to use throughout their lives, he said.

The University also offers a relaxation class taught by Elizabeth Glover every fall, winter and spring.

Glover's class concentrates on neuromuscular relaxation, which is a method of locating muscle tension and specifically relaxing that area of the body.

People can use this technique before especially stressful situations to relax their muscles, she said.

"You can release that tension, and it helps you respond," Glover said.

The University has a crisis phone line available 24 hours every day. From 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays, the line is forwarded to the counseling center. During all other hours, calls are routed directly to the crisis line.

The crisis line is 346-4488, and the counseling center's phone number is 346-3227.

Signs of stress

- Problems eating or sleeping
 - Increased use of alcohol or other drugs
 - Increased boredom and fatigue; a general sense of "the blahs"
 - Problems making decisions; increased procrastination
 - Becoming anxious and confused over unimportant events
 - Inability to concentrate or pay attention
 - Inability to get organized
 - Weakness, dizziness and shortness of breath; "anxiety attacks"
 - Persistent hostile or angry feelings; increased frustration with minor annoyances
 - Nightmares
 - Overpowering urges to cry or run and hide
 - Changes in your exercise habits
 - Frequent headaches, backaches, muscle aches or tightness in the stomach
 - Frequent indigestion, diarrhea, or urination
 - Frequent colds and infections
 - Frequent accidents and minor injuries
- SOURCE: American College Health Association pamphlet, "Stress in College: Stretching the Rubber Band?"

Safety: Ordinance would ban violators

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"I think it would be prudent to go slow with this to see what other problems arise," said Polly Nelson of the ACLU. "Unfortunately, summer is coming up and it is a greater concern."

Nelson continued that the citations would immediately outlaw the violator from the mall, thereby punishing the person without a trial.

Police said the ordinance isn't a violation of the person's rights, however, and that it is a necessary step to maintain safety at the mall.

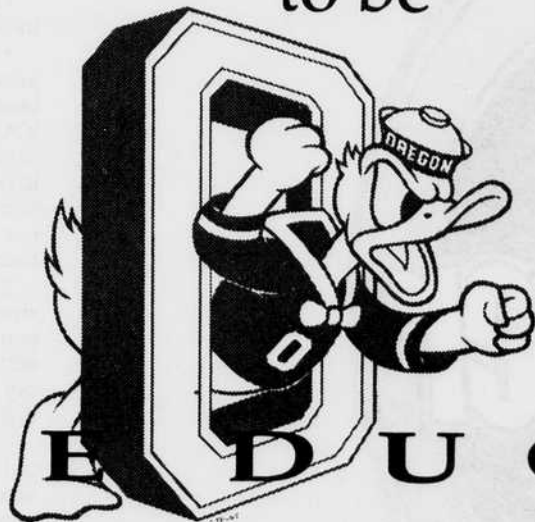
Officer Scott Fellman said he saw a definite need for the ordinance. "I cited a guy this Tuesday and again on Thursday," Fellman said. "He was a drug user, thief ... and has been convicted of all of these things."

If the council enacts the ordinance, anyone who violates the mall regulations repeatedly would be excluded from the area. The people cited would then have an option to appeal.

Laue said he doesn't think the ordinance is a solution to all mall problems but that it would be important to further discussion at the council level.

"I support the move forward on with this," Laue said. "This is one piece of what has to happen."

Dare to be



T H E D U C K

Mandatory Informational Meeting

Wednesday, April 22 • 6:30 p.m.

Casanova Athletic Center at Autzen Stadium

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