



**OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION  
SERVICE**

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## How to handle school stress

It's a typical Tuesday in home-room. Tom flops into his seat and yawns, "What a boring day. I'd give anything for a cigarette."

"Me, too," Carla replies. "I've got to pass a history test in fifteen minutes." Then she's back to her notes, cramming furiously.

Jackie bounds in and tells Cheryl, "The tryouts are at three o'clock today! If I can make the team this year I might have a chance at an athletic scholarship. I've just got to make it."

"Just do your best," Cheryl says. "You have a good chance. But, I know I'm not going to college on an athletic scholarship. In fact, the way my grades are going, I may not be going to college at all."

Which student above is dealing with the most stress? Maybe you'd pick Jackie, who's facing important tryouts, or Carla, about to be quizzed in her worst subject. Sure they're under stress, but so is bored apathetic Tom, and Cheryl who's feeling frustrated and discouraged. Stress can come at you in all kinds of ways, ranging from high anxiety to a down-in-the-dumps depression.

Any situation, positive or negative, that changes your status quo will be stressful. Falling in love or getting into a top college can be as stressful, in their way, as quarreling with your best friend or failing to get a term paper in on time.

In school as in life, stress is inevitable, and that's not necessarily bad. Consider:

\*Without the pressure of an upcoming exam, few of us would buckle down and really learn a subject.

\*The tension we feel before a test or a tryout—the possibility of not succeeding or winning big—makes us try harder and

often perform better than we thought we would.

\*If there was no anxiety about succeeding, we'd never taste the joy that comes when we do realize a prized goal.

\*Even being bored can be a valuable stress. It can motivate us to go out and make life more interesting.

School is a high-stress situation. Your day is controlled by schedules, bells, and rules. Whether you're answering questions in class, taking a quiz, or facing final exams, you're being asked to perform.

As if this weren't enough, you begin junior high as a kid and graduate from high school as an adult. In between, there are all kinds of changes—in your body, your social life, your goals, and your general outlook. No wonder school can feel like such a pressure cooker!

There's no point in wishing stress away or trying to float above it all. However, there are ways you can handle the pressure, concrete things you can do to make school life more enjoyable and prevent everyday stress from piling up into distress.

**What pushes your stress button?**  
The first step is to get a clearer picture of pressures that get to you, whether it's a particular subject, a difficult teacher, unanswered questions about your future, or too many things to do in too little time.

Some stress is external; it's caused by situations outside you. If you take five tough subjects, get three hours of homework a night, and have a part-time job, that's a pretty heavy load. Maybe you're up for the challenge, but then something else happens. Maybe your dad has to go to the hospital, or your parents start arguing a lot more, or you

break up with your boy/girlfriend. Any of these problems could tip the balance, causing stress overload.

Some stress is internal; it's chummed up by feelings and attitudes you carry inside you. For example, if you bring home a report card with solid B's and your parents—or you yourself—want to see A's, those expectations will color your feelings. You'll feel more anxiety than someone who thinks B's are just fine.

Or let's say you know you'll have to choose soon between college prep and vocational electives, but you keep putting off even thinking about your future direction. Eventually, uneasy feelings will build up inside. Stress again.

### Coping Patterns

Everyone has their own ways of dealing with stress. Tom immediately wants to light up a cigarette. Unfortunately, too many people turn to smoking, snacking, drinking, TV, or even pills as a way to relax. Carla tends to procrastinate, avoiding a subject she dislikes, then cramming to make up for lost time. All of us look for quick and easy ways to escape pressure, but avoiding the issue and relying on stress activated habits are not effective solutions.

Jackie may sound jumpy about her team tryout, but she's dealing with the challenge, and psyching herself up for it. Cheryl may sound as if she's gripping, but at least she's not keeping her problems locked inside. Sharing frustrations with a sympathetic friend can be a good first step in releasing inner tensions.

### Better ways to handle stress

Here are eight positive ways to put pressure in perspective and take stress in stride:

1. Really Relax—When your heart is pounding and your hands start sweating, that doesn't mean you're about to fall apart. It's just a sign that your body has given you a shot of adrenalin, so you're revved up—maybe overrevved—for action. Your best bet for calming yourself is to take some slow deep breaths. Any activity that encourages deep regular breathing, like jogging, swimming, or yoga can help your body and mind develop the habit of keeping alert and calm.

2. Don't Be a Worry-Wart—Unlike the procrastinator, who'll do anything to avoid a problem, the worry-wart can't think of anything but the problems.

Most of the time, worrying just churns up more anxiety without accomplishing anything constructive. A typical worry-wart decides to take a study break and watch TV, but feels too guilty to enjoy the show. Physical activity, like a walk around the block, is a good antidote.

3. Stop Making Comparisons—Since school means grades, it's hard not to compare yourself to others. Sometimes you begin to feel that those grades or numbers measure you. Don't believe it? People are much more than their test scores.

Grades may be a realistic guideline of how you're doing and where you stand right now, but they shouldn't be the sole measure of yourself. "Constantly comparing yourself to others is a way of putting yourself down and that's destructive." It starts with friends who ask "Whatcha get?" or with parents who say, "Why aren't your grades as good as your brother's?" These kinds of remarks don't take your abilities or personality into account."

## Change the way you eat

How do you make it through the holiday without putting on twenty pounds and overspending your food budget? The answer is to change the way you eat.

During the holidays there are lots of meals, heavy meals, people are in a hurry, and it would be the perfect time to do some alternative kinds of meals: perhaps breakfast for dinner—pancakes and eggs are a good selection. You might want to do something that you might not

use as a full meal other times of the year. Sandwiches can be a good quick meal. Another one might be soup and cheese toast. Something light, something quick, something to take the push off the whole holiday season.

Or you could cut back to two meals a day. That way less time is required for food preparation, so more time is available to spend with loved ones, and to enjoy holiday festivities.

## Clean garden equipment for winter

When home gardening activities begin winding down in the fall, don't forget to clean and store equipment before retreating indoors for the winter.

Equipment that receives care will last longer and require less repair. In the long run, properly maintained garden tools make gardening easier and more efficient.

Clean and sharpen small hand tools before storing them. Be sure to remove rust spots as well as dirt. Apply a light coat of oil to the tools to protect them against rust.

After making sure garden hoses are completely drained, coil and hang them from a curved surface. Hanging hoses from a nail or hook causes a sharp bend to form in the hose that will weaken it and may create a leak.

McNeilan urges home gardeners to follow manufacturer's instructions when cleaning power equipment.

Gasoline engines should be drained of gas and make sure all the fuel is removed from the carburetor and gas lines. This will prevent buildup of gum from gasoline evaporation in the lines.

Engine oil that is old and dirty should be changed. Remove the engine's spark plug and squirt a small amount of oil into the cylinder. Turn the engine over by hand to make sure the cylinder walls are lubricated before putting the spark plugs back in place.

Power equipment parts that contact the soil when in use should receive a light coat of oil before going into storage. Bare metal surfaces should be repainted if the original paint has been damaged or worn away.

"Storing tools in a lockable cabinet or closet will keep them safely out of the way," McNeilan says. "Hanging them from the garage wall is another way to keep them from under foot."

## Coldframes useful for winter gardening

Don't let winter weather keep you out of the garden all winter long. Keep on gardening outdoors in a coldframe. Use of a coldframe enables the home gardener to sow summer flowers and vegetables weeks before outdoor spring planting dates. In addition, you can start annual flowers for fall and winter, and perennials for next year's growing

season in a coldframe. The coldframe will protect the plants from harsh winter weather and they will grow to transplant size quickly.

A typical coldframe is a wood frame box about three by six feet in size with the back (north side) higher than the front. The top is sloped to capture a maximum of sunlight and allow the rain to run off.

The top may be either hinged or removable and can be made of window sash, storm windows or polyethylene film in a frame. Polyethylene film may cause a few problems when used in Western Oregon because it tends to sag and collect water.

A location that is sunny, well-drained and protected from the

wind is ideal for a coldframe. Good construction will help conserve the soil heat at night. The joints of the coldframe should be as tight as possible. Soil can be banked up around the sides to keep the planting area warmer.

Paint the wood surfaces of the coldframe with a primer and one or two coats of white paint to reflect the light.

A wood preservative, such as two percent copper naphthenate, is safe near plants and can be used before painting to give protection against wood rot. Creosote and pentachlorophenol will poison the plants and shouldn't be used.

The frame should be 12 inches in the front (south side) to 18 inches in back. These dimen-

sions may be reduced if desired. Heat for the frame comes from the sun. During the night the heat is gradually lost through the cover. During the day, the temperature must be controlled so it doesn't get too high (100 degrees F in maximum). Raise the cover of the frame occasionally to reduce the temperature inside and provide good air circulation. Coldframe temperatures are sometimes not easy to control. They depend on the weather and how often the frame temperature is checked.

Poor air circulation can cause damping off, mold and botrytis. The use of a sterile seed medium such as vermiculite, sand or other disease-free planting material helps prevent these problems.

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## Fertilizers prevent moss growth

A fall application of fertilizer on home lawns will keep the turf healthy and help it resist invasions of lawn moss.

A complete fertilizer with a high percentage of nitrogen, such as 12-4-8, is recommended for the fall application, says Ray McNeilan, Oregon State University Extension home gardening agent.

Other fertilizer mixtures are used, apply about one pound of actual nitrogen per one thousand square feet.

Lawns need phosphate, and the nitrogen will keep lawn grasses green without causing undue growth that would require mowing.

Moss can give a home lawn the appearance of being in good

condition when in fact it is in a very poor state of health, according to McNeilan.

"Moss can become established in a lawn only when some condition is preventing the grass from growing in a normal healthy way," McNeilan says. "Poor drainage, low fertility, soil compaction or too much shade can all keep grass from growing normally while at the same time allowing moss to become established."

To remove moss, first rake out as much as possible. Then apply ammonium sulfate at ten pounds per 1,000 square feet. Apply the material either with a fertilizer spreader or by hand.

This chemical not only kills moss, but also fertilizes the lawn

grass. Because ammonium sulfate can permanently stain concrete, keep it off sidewalks and driveways.

Copper sulfate or ferrous ammonium sulfate are chemicals that can be used in spray form to treat moss-choked lawns. For best results, dilute the chemicals according to label directions.

Ferrous ammonium sulfate can also be used as a dry formulation. Apply it at the rate of ten pounds, per 1,000 square feet.

McNeilan cautions homeowners to remember that chemical treatment alone will not permanently rid a lawn of moss. A permanent solution lies in correcting the condition that allowed the moss to become established in the first place.

## Junk food contains too much salt

Almost all foods contain sodium, an ingredient of salt. Some Americans eat more sodium than they should. A diet that contains too much sodium may lead to a disease called high blood pressure or hypertension.

A hamburger alone has very little sodium—about 40 or 50 milligrams. But by the time a fast-food restaurant is done cooking it and covering it with special sauces and pickles, the burger you eat may contain as much as 1,000 milligrams of sodium. (Your body needs only about 250 milligrams a day.) If you ordered fries and a shake, you're getting even more sodium with your meal.

### Happy snacking

Snack foods can be satisfying and nutritious and still be compatible with the sodium and fat changes you have made in your diet if you select them carefully.

Fruits and raw vegetables are good examples of the kinds of snack foods recommended. They contain no sodium, fat or cholesterol and are low in calories which should please those who are watching their weight. On the other hand, snack foods such as potato and corn chips, chocolate candy, salty crackers, buttered popcorn and pizza contain salt and saturated fat and should be avoided.

There are many possible cho-

ices for appetizing snacks:

- \*Fruits and juices.
- \*Raw vegetables served alone or with specially prepared dips.
- \*Home-fried tortilla shells broken into chip-size pieces and served with specially prepared dips.
- \*Soda crackers without salt sprinkled on top, spread with peanut butter.
- \*Skim milk, low-fat yogurt, low-fat frozen yogurt, sherbet or ice milk.
- \*Cereal.
- \*Bread sticks or unsalted pretzels.

\*Unsalted popcorn flavored with margarine.

- \*Specially prepared homemade cookies and cakes.
- \*Sandwiches, canapes or tea sandwiches.
- \*Unsalted nuts or seeds, shelled or unshelled.
- \*Plain hard candies.

Many of the pre-packaged snack foods on your grocer's shelves contain added salt and are fried or prepared with saturated fat. Reading labels on the package is the best way to determine whether or not that particular food product is for you.

## Crafts class offered

Learn how to make attractive, easy and inexpensive Christmas presents, home decoration and tree ornament.

Monday December 3, 6-8 p.m. Warm Springs 4-H Center. Sponsored by the OSU Extension Service.

Ho Ho homemade for the holidays, nutritious, easy and inexpensive quick breads, muffins and yeast loaves will be demonstrated.

Learn how to attractively wrap these holiday treats for gift giving.

- December 3 Christmas Crafts 6 to 8 p.m. 4-H Center
- December 4 Budgeting-Putting the pieces together 7-8:30 p.m. 4-H Center
- December 6 Ho Ho Homemade For the Holidays 7-9 p.m. 4-H Center
- December 18 Share A Salad 12-1:00 p.m. 4-H Center

## Extension happenings



**Nimble fingers and concentration**

The name of the game in the Tuesday night crochet class is to concentrate and coordinate fingers with that concentration. (Pictured left to right) Donna Seyler and Roberta Queaphama two participants of the class work intently at the art of the needle work of crocheting.