

Contents

Acknowledgements	vi
About this book	viii
How to use this book	ix
Shape new habits and ways of thinking	x
What is stress?	xi
Why is stress an important issue for students?	xiii
Levels and causes of student stress	xv
Other typical causes of stress	xvi
The effects of prolonged stress	xvii
Vicious cycle of stress	xix
Virtuous cycle of stress	xx
The potential negative effects of stress	xxi
Your own experience of stress	xxii
Using advice and support services	xxiii
50 Ways	2–103
Habits shaper: Track your good intentions	104
My progress so far	106
List of 20+ things I appreciate, enjoy or am grateful for ...	108
Where to find out more	110
References and bibliography	114
Index	121
Notes	125

50 Ways

1.	Appreciate 'helpful stress'	2
2.	Harness the benefits of stress	4
3.	Know the signs of excess stress	6
4.	Recognise your own stress triggers	10
5.	Take signs of stress seriously	12
6.	Take charge!	14
7.	Get physical!	16
8.	Talk it through!	18
9.	Get enough (good) sleep	20
10.	Combat homesickness	22
11.	Laugh more!	24
12.	Get well organised	26
13.	Practise mindfulness	28
14.	Get outdoors into nature	30
15.	Watch nature on screen	32
16.	Know your limits	34
17.	Start the day right!	36
18.	Make time work for you	38
19.	Get social!	40
20.	Take stress out of meeting new people	42
21.	Music to your ears!	44
22.	Park your troubles!	46
23.	Create a realistic study schedule	48

24.	Change scene and break routine	50
25.	Relax with breathing exercises	52
26.	Develop good study skills and habits	54
27.	Write it out	56
28.	Sort your finances	58
29.	Take a walk!	60
30.	Eat good mood food	62
31.	Devise a good exam strategy	64
32.	Manage your 'mind exposure'	66
33.	Relax jaw and fists	68
34.	Avoid task-switching stress	70
35.	Benefit from the power of touch	72
36.	Trigger the 'happy' chemicals	74
37.	Reduce the pressure on assignment deadlines	76
38.	Make decisions	78
39.	Accept your emotions	80
40.	Change your relationship with social media	82
41.	Express yourself creatively	84
42.	Help someone else	86
43.	Befriend your mistakes	88
44.	Cultivate a balanced perspective	90
45.	Have a good cry!	92
46.	Accept yourself	94
47.	Use relaxation techniques	96
48.	Create a calming sanctuary	98
49.	Recharge your energies	100
50.	Enjoy a little distraction	102

2

Harness the benefits of stress

Make helpful stress work for you

How can this help?

We can all learn to make stress work for us – and that is especially important for students. Learning to use stress helps us to reduce its negative power whilst enhancing our performance, energy and strength. Doing this properly is important, so that stress is experienced for short spells rather than all the time.

Considering your responses

If your responses to the questions above indicate that you could benefit from harnessing the energies and abilities that are enhanced by stress, but are not sure how to do so, then the suggestions opposite provide a starting place. The most important thing is to understand that we can manage the levels of stress we experience, such as through the way we exercise our minds and body. We can make stress work for us.



Do I ...?

1. Do I use the energy that comes from stress to achieve more?
Yes **No**
2. Do I know how to make stress work for me?
Yes **No**
3. Do I miss out on opportunities or under-achieve because I avoid stress?
Yes **No**
4. Am I open to working with stress so that I feel more in charge of it?
Yes **No**



See also

Ways 1, 3, 4, 5, 6



To do. I will ...

Use stress as an asset

Below are some actions you can take to harness stress. Select ✓ those you consider would be useful and manageable for you.

- Embrace stress as a potentially helpful aspect of life.
- Recognise your body's stress response as a helpful sign of energy you can use.
- Recognise the 'fight, flight or freeze' response and decide to 'fight'.
- Recognise that stress shows you care – use that as motivation.
- Recognise that taking on stressful situations can make you stronger and better at coping with future challenges.
- Give yourself a 'pep' talk to motivate yourself.
- Remind yourself of how you have already grown through adversity.
- Decide to feel excited about, and to welcome, challenge.
- List the skills or benefits you can gain from each challenge.
- Regard yourself as someone who can cope and learn from the stressful situation.
- Recognise stress affects everyone, and isn't 'proof of failure'.
- Take care of yourself, so you are better able to use stress.

7

Get physical!

Feel good through more movement

How can this help?

When we feel stressed, we are less likely to exercise.³³ Research shows students who exercise 20 minutes three times a week are less likely to report mental health concerns. Physical activity that increases the heartrate triggers release of BDNF; this acts as a 're-set' mechanism so that we feel clearer, refreshed and happier after exercise. We can also feel more relaxed and happier from the endorphins released during exercise, and from using up excess energy and adrenaline. Exercising with other students is especially good for stress.²⁹

Considering your responses

If your responses suggest you are moving about too little in the day, consider how you could build the number of minutes each day that you are doing exercise, moving, or just standing! There are many ways to build exercise into your day on a student budget. See some opposite.



See also Ways 14, 24, 29, 49



Do I ...?

- Do I get exercise for at least 20 minutes three times a week?
Yes **No**
- Do I build physical activity into my daily routine?
Yes **No**
- If I am feeling stressed, do I tend to stay in, missing out on social exercise?
Yes **No**
- If I am feeling anxious, do I make a point of doing some strenuous exercise?
Yes **No**



To do. I will ...



Devise a personal menu of physical activity



Join a student sport team

Exercise whilst making friends, being part of a team, and getting advice from coaches.

Dance

Put on music that makes you want to dance around your room. Go out dancing. Join a dance class.

Join the campus gym

There are usually reduced rates for students.

Use a Personal Trainer App

There are lots to try out – such as Nike+ Training Club or MyFitnessPal.

Clean your room!

You gain exercise and the room feels much nicer to be in afterwards!

Green fingers physical

Join a 'Green fingers' or environmental group on campus or in the local community.

Exercise at your desk

Try out stretches you can do without leaving your desk!³⁴

Go for a wander

Give yourself a break. Cycle, run or walk around the area.

Use online resources

Check out the huge range of keep-fit, exercise, yoga and dance videos free on YouTube.

Walk or run every day

Cheap and easy. Great for some thinking time alone. Or form a group (or join one) at your level.

Index

- Academic pressures xiii, xv, 54–5
- Acceptance – emotions, self 80–1, 88–9, 94–5
- Action lists 15, 89
- Addiction xv
- Adrenaline xii, 3, 16, 76
- Age-related stress xv
- Aggression 8, 69, 92
- Alcohol xiv, xv, xvii, 15
- 'All-nighters' xiv, 21
- Anger 81
- Animals 73
- Anxiety x, xi, xviii, xix, xxi, 12, 16, 28, 47, 63, 66, 67, 72, 80, 94
- Appreciation 2–3, 94, 95, 108–9
- Apps 17, 110
- Aromas 99
- Ashwagandha 99, 120
- Aspirations 34–5
- Assignments xiii, xv, 13, 76–7, 88–9
- Attention, paying xviii, 20–1, 29, 70–1
- Balanced approach 3, 5, 19, 23, 34, 45, 46–7, 49, 66–7, 88–9, 90–1
- BDNF 16
- Bedtime blues xix, 66–7 (see also Sleep)
- Behaviours 8
- Belonging 75
- Benefits of stress xii, 2–5
- Bereavement xvi, 10, 18, 80
- Blood pressure xii, 8
- Body scan 96
- Boredom 50
- Brain xii, xviii, 49, 51, 70, 74, 81
- Breaks 17, 49, 61, 97, 101, 102–3
- Breathing exercises 52–3
- Caffeine xiv, 20, 21
- Calm xvii, xix, x, 28–9, 44, 53, 72, 78, 96–9
- Catastrophising 67, 90
- Challenge xiii, xx, 4–5, 34–5
- Change, coping with xiii, xvi, 10, 22–3
- Change, making a change x, 50–1, 61, 81, 82–3
- Chemicals xii, xvii, 70, 74–5
- Chewing gum 63
- Chocolate 63
- Choices ix, 15, 50, 78–9
- Choir 45
- Clutter (see De-clutter)
- Cognition xvii
- Colouring 84
- Commitment ix, x
- Community groups 17, 87
- Community, sense of 87
- Concentration xviii, xix, xxi, 3, 8, 71
- Confidence xx, 40–3, 65
- Confidentiality xxii, xxiii, 18, 57
- Contentment 32
- Control xiii, xx, xxiii, 2
Taking charge 10–15
- Coping mechanisms/
strategies x, 15
- Cortisol xvii, xviii, 24, 92
- Creative expression xviii, xxiii, 30, 50, 84–5, 103, 110
- Crisis support 110
- Critical appraisal 88, 89, 91
- Criticism 89
- Crying 8, 92–3
- Cycles xix, xx, 88
- Dance 16–17
- Decision-making xviii, xxi, xxii, 8, 15, 78–9
- Deadlines xiii, 36–7, 76–7
- De-clutter 26–7, 99
- Dehydration 93, 101
- Denial/dismissal xxii, 8, 12–13, 19, 23, 80, 93
- Diary skills 39, 113
- Digestion xvii
- Discovery, importance of 75
- Discrimination xvi

- Distraction xviii, 48, 102–3
 Dopamine xvii, 75
 Dread, sense of xvii, 8
 Eating patterns/ disorders xv, xxi, 7, 8
 Eating well xxiii, xiv, xv, 7, 111
 Eating with others 23, 41, 51, 59
 Emotional energy 91
 Emotions xvii, xxi, 30, 32–3, 56, 80–1
 Endorphins 16, 75
 Energy, low energy xix, 62
 Energy, recharging xii, xx, 2–5, 26–7, 100–1
 Enjoyment 8, 17, 23, 24–5, 30–1, 54, 65, 75, 84–5, 96–103, 108–9
 Exams xiii, xv, 13, 64–5, 90
 Excitement xi, xii, 3, 5
 Exercise xxi, 14–15, 64, 75, 113
 Expectations, realistic 13, 34–5
 Experience, making sense of 56–7
 Failure, fear of xvii, xix, xxi, 5, 9, 54
 Family xv, xvi, xx, xxi, 19, 22–3
 Fear/frightened xxi, 8
 Feedback from others 88–9
 Feelings xi, xxiii, 8, 9, 13, 23, 29, 30, 56–7, 80–1, 85
 ‘Fight, flight, freeze’ response xii, 5
 Finances xiv, xv, 10, 58–9, 111
 Fists 68–9
 Flexibility/adaptability 49, 50–1
 Food xv, xxi, 23
 Friends, help 11, 19
 Friendship xv, xvii, 17, 19, 22, 41, 59
 Future, preparing for xiv
 Games 21, 66–7
 Goal-setting 34–5, 78
 ‘good enough’ 34–5, 79, 94
 Grades xiii, xviii, 20, 54, 88, 90
 Habit, forming new habits ix, x, 36–7, 53, 57, 62, 82, 104–5
 Habits, bad 50
 Happiness/unhappiness xv, xvii, 16, 22, 32, 56, 84
 Happy chemicals 74–5
 Harnessing stress xi, xii, xxii, 2–5, 65
 Headaches xvii, 8, 68, 96
 Health x, xi, xvi, xvii, xviii, xxi, 2, 8, 15, 32, 34, 61, 93, 110, 111
 Help, finding support x, xvi, xxii, xxiii, 18–19, 59, 110, 111
 Helping others 86–7
 Herbal remedies 99
 Homesickness xiii, xv, 8, 22–3
 Hugs 73
 Humour, sense of 8, 24–5
 Identity 94, 95
 Immune system xvii, xviii, xxi
 Impermanence xxii, 12, 13, 81
 Independent study xiii, 38
 Indigestion 8
 International (stress) xv, xvi, 32
 International students xv, 111
 Introversion 40–2
 Irritability 8, 92
 Isolation xxi, 8, 40
 Jaw-clenching/relaxing 8, 68–9
 Joining in 41
 Journal 57
 Kindness (to self) 22–3, 94–5, 101, 102–3
 Laughter 24–5, 68
 Lavender 99, 101
 Learning xii, xviii, xix, xxi, 50, 88, 89, 98
 Lifestyle xiv, xiii, xxiii, 10, 13, 20
 Limits, knowing your 34–5, 48–9
 Loneliness xxi, xxiii, 8, 40–1

- Marks (see Grades)
- Massage xxiii, 69, 72, 73, 97, 112
- Meditation xxiii, 21, 28, 61
- Meeting new people 40–3
- Memory xviii, xix, xxi, 20
- Mental ‘clutter’ 26–7, 28–9
- Mental health xv, xviii, xxii, 16, 28, 58, 86–7, 111
- Migraines xvii, 8
- Mind, exposure 66–7
- Mindfulness 28–9, 53
- Mistakes, making mistakes 88–9, 94
- Money (see Finances)
- Mood, effect on xviii, 20, 32, 36, 62–3, 66, 98–103
- Motivation x, 2, 3, 5
- Multi-tasking 69–70
- Music 21, 23, 44–5
- Names (learning names) 43
- Nature xx, 17, 30–3, 45, 61, 99, 112
- Negative comparison 95
- Nightline 22, 110
- ‘No’, saying 34
- Nutrition xiv, xv, 10, 59, 62–3, 64, 101, 111
- Omega-3 oils 62–3, 99
- Option-listing 15, 87
- Organised, being well 26–7, 39
- Oxytocin xvii, 73, 75
- Panic xviii, 77
- Panic attacks xviii, 8
- ‘parking’ stress 46–7
- Perfectionism 39, 89
- Personal response xi, xxii, 8–9, 10–13
- Perspective 65, 83, 90–1 (see Impermanence)
- Physical activity xxi, 16–17, 64, 75, 97, 103, 110
- Planner 39
- Planning 37, 39, 64–5, 77, 113
- Play 84–5, 101
- Positive thinking 35, 66, 79, 80, 95
- Power naps 21
- Pressure xi, xiii, xiv, xv, 9, 38, 76
- Prevention, of excess stress 6–9, 34–9, 54, 58, 62, 70
- Pride, value of self- 75, 77
- Prioritising 13, 39, 71
- Problem-solving xii, xviii, 14–15, 46, 47, 50
- Progress, tracking x, 106–7
- Queues 41
- Reality checks 83, 94
- Reducing stress xx, 24, 36
- Reflection ix, 79
- Relationships 10, 18–19
- Relaxation exercises 28, 72–3, 96–7
- Relaxing xvii, 21, 44–5, 96–103, 112
- Resilience xii, xiv, 2–5, 15, 30, 34, 66
- Responsibilities xiii
- Rest 96
- Revising for exams 64–5
- Routine, establishing routine 21, 25, 31, 36–7, 48, 49, 53
- Breaking routine 50–1
- Sadness 92
- Samaritans 110, 111
- Sanctuary (of calm) 98–9
- Scheduling 48–9, 65, 77
- Self-awareness ix, 6–13, 94–5
- Self-care xxiii, 5, 10–11, 13, 34–5, 64, 95
- Self-harming behaviours x, xxiii, 8, 15
- Self-worth 86, 94–5
- Serotonin xvii, 72, 74, 75
- Sharing 54, 55, 59
- Signs of stress xvii–xviii, xxiii, xix, xx, 6–9
- Singing 43, 44
- Sleep xiv, xvi, xvii, xix, xx, xxi, 20–1, 37, 45, 46, 47, 65, 67, 68, 93, 112
- Smiling 40, 41
- Social exercise 16, 17, 29, 61
- Socialising xv, xvii, xxi, 22, 40–1, 75
- Social learning 40, 65
- Social media 10, 43, 82–3, 99
- Social pressures xiv, xv, 40–1

- Solution-finding xii, xviii, 14–15, 46, 47, 89, 90–1
- Stimulants xxiii, 20, 21, 98, 99
- Stress
 Causes of xiii–xiv; xv–xvi, 12, 26–7
 Cycles xix, x
 Effects of prolonged stress xvii–xviii, xxi, xxii
 Excess stress xvii, xviii, ‘Good stress’ 2–5
 Inoculation to stress xii, 3
 Physiological response xii, xvii
 Stress balls 69
 ‘Stress Response’ xi, xii, 3, 5
 What is stress? xi, xii
- Stressors (see Triggers)
- Student lifestyle xiii, xiv, 87
- Students and stress xiii, xiv, xv, xviii, xxi, xxii, 54, 64
- Student services x
- Study, impact of stress xviii, xix–xx, xxi
- Study skills 54–5, 64–5, 113
- Success xiv, 2
- Support x, xvi, xxii, xxiii, 19, 58, 111, 113
- Survival mechanism, stress as xii, 46, 93
- Symptoms (of stress) xxi, xvii–xviii, xix, xx, 6–9, 24
- Tai chi 97, 103
- Talking, useful for stress x, xvi, xxiii, 14, 18–19, 61, 91, 92
- Task-switching 70–1
- Tea 63, 101
- Technology 21, 70–1
- Teeth-grinding 68
- Thinking xviii, 50, 57, 76, 98
 Binary thinking 90
 Thinking time 17
- Thought patterns xviii, 9
- Threat xii
- Time, giving things time 22–3, 61
- Time management xiii, xviii, xix, xx, 26–7, 36–7, 38–9, 48–9, 55, 64, 71, 76–7, 113
- Tiredness xiii, xix, 3, 8, 10, 20–1, 22, 66, 100–1
- Touch, value of 72–3
- Triggers 10–11
- Uncertainty 9
- Values 94, 95
- Visualisation 96–7
- Volunteering 86–7
- Vulnerable, feeling xvii, 98
- Walking 17, 21, 31, 60–1
- Water 93
- Well-being x, xvii–xviii, xxi, 16–17, 20–1, 30–3, 80, 96, 110–12
- Winding down 21, 31, 98
- Workload xiii, xvi
- Worrying xviii, xix, 7, 8, 9, 46–7, 88, 90–1, 102
- Writing it down 11, 27, 56–7, 79, 91, 93
- Yawning 69
- ‘Yet’ 89
- Yoga 97