LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Thinking about stress -

Everyone experiences stress at some point in his or her life. Moderate amounts can be good for you and can improve your performance, your productivity and your sense of well-being. Too much stress can lead to anxiety, tension or difficulty in thinking clearly.

It is important to recognise the differences between these stresses, to understand what causes stress and to know what action you can take to prevent it.

Certain factors will, from time to time, cause stress in your life. These factors may include people, situations, life crises, or your own personality factors, opinions and attitudes. It is important that you know and can identify the factors that cause stress in your life. You can learn to anticipate the reactions, which are specific to you. This is the first step in working out your personal strategy for dealing with stress.

"Think about your own warning signs"

What happens when we are stressed -

Everyone’s pattern of responding to stress is unique, yet there are some common effects on the way our body functions, how we feel, how we think and how we behave when we are under stress. These include:

Body
Headache, back-pain, digestive problems, sleep disturbance, sweating, rashes, shaking

Emotions
Anxiety, depression, negativity, low self-esteem, feeling worthless, anger, apathy

Thinking
Loss of memory, poor concentration, difficulty setting priorities, poor decision-making

Behaviour
Withdrawal, hostility, eating problems, substance misuse, increase in risk taking

"Think about your own warning signs"

Some Ways to look after yourself -
Diet
“We are what we eat and drink.” In order to wash away stress hormones (which are released during the ‘stress response’) you can drink plenty of water, avoid taking in additional toxic substances and try to have a healthy diet.

Exercise
Exercise clears the body of stress chemicals and releases endorphins (mood enhancing chemicals) into the brain. Why not try an exercise class, the Fitness Suite, or the squash courts at Aberdeen Sports Village or a swim in the King’s pool?

Mind and Body Classes -
Pilates – this mind-body workout will develop your strength, flexibility and endurance while challenging your core. The combination of controlled breathing and co-ordinated movements will improve your posture and muscle tone, and re-engage you with muscles you had long since forgotten!

Yoga – General Level
A traditional style yoga class, aimed at maximising each individual’s physical capabilities, with lots of fun! Incorporates stress release, co-ordination and balance techniques and partner work. Allow the mind and body to become one in this challenging and relaxing class.

Tai Chi
A Chinese Martial Art that utilises the body in a moving meditation with the mind focussed on inner and outer aspects of the movements. Practice helps combat stress, improve balance, flexibility and ultimately results in increased health and longevity.

Further information on these classes and other facilities which are available at Aberdeen Sports Village, please see their website www.aberdeensportsvillage.com

Self-help action tips -
You can help prevent stress by:
Accepting that you can be vulnerable
Being honest with your self
Taking action wherever you can
Knowing when you are taking stress from one area of life into another
Identifying the factors that are causing you stress and deciding to work on them
Expecting some good things to happen
Telling someone you trust how you feel, expressing yourself through dance, art or music
Asking yourself if your perception of an event might be biased

Accentuating the positive and not letting negative thoughts take over

Monitoring your life crises and changes...paying attention to what your body and mind are telling you...answer your warning signs for stress

Not letting stress accumulate...analyse the factors that lead to stress and work on them

Not letting frustrations and conflicts affect you negatively...meet them head on and search for solutions.

Learning to say ‘no’ assertively

Having some emergency coping devices to hand and using them

**On Campus Relaxation Suggestions** -

**If you have 10 minutes to spare you can try:**
- Closing your door, taking the phone off the hook and imagining yourself in your favourite place
- Starting a crossword
- Writing a list of positive things in your life
- Listing the things you’d like to change
- Walking around the outside of your building

**If you have half an hour to spare you can try:**
- Getting into the fresh air
- Walking through Cruickshank Gardens.
- Swimming in the pool at King’s Pavilion
- Sitting quietly in the King’s Chapel for 15 minutes
- Looking at the starglass in St Machar’s Cathedral
- Walking around King’s playing fields

**If you have a whole hour to spare you can try:**
- An exercise class at the Aberdeen Sports Village
- Walking in Seaton Park
- Have lunch/coffee with a friend who makes you feel good

**For further information on available resources, please see our website**
[www.abdn.ac.uk/counselling](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/counselling)