



Faculty Stress Management

Purpose

Stress impacts instructor wellness and their ability to be a positive, effective presence in the learning environment. This resource provides some insight into stress management strategies for instructors.

Background

Stress is experienced in a variety of ways. “Eustress” is a positive form of stress that influences health, motivation, performance, and emotional well-being. Eustress can be experienced when endorphins are released as we anticipate or experience events like a job promotion, preparing for deadlines on a project you are passionate about, planning a trip, etc.

Situational stress is temporary and short-term. Situational stress can result in difficulty concentrating, headaches, and other physical symptoms that are temporary.

Chronic stress occurs when you experience stressful situations day in and day out. Chronic stress can produce negative long-term health concerns like depression, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

Active stress management supports wellness in the classroom, at home, and in your community. A simple way of thinking about stress management is using The Five A’s: Avoid, Alter, Accept, Adapt, and ACC.

How To

Avoid

While we often coach our students (and ourselves) to face problems head-on, we can set ourselves up for success by recognizing which stressors are avoidable. With a little planning, we can stop unnecessary stress from impacting us. Here are some ideas:

- **Catching Stress:** Stress can be contagious. If you find your coworkers’ worries are beginning to cause you stress, set boundaries for topics of conversation that aren’t productive or highlight the finer parts of your days. Make a point to not engage in gossip or groupthink. In this situation, imagine stress as a virus you can catch from those affected – best to quarantine and avoid!



- Create boundaries with student interactions: Students understand their relationships with you through policy education, expectations, and the actions of their instructors. If you do not set clear boundaries for communication (answering emails at all hours, responding to personal matters rather than referring students to the appropriate supports, not following policy, etc.) it becomes difficult for students to understand what is ok and what isn't. Instructors may begin to feel overwhelmed as they have set an impossible standard to be always available to students, for all things.
- Create a morning routine: Plan for your morning the night before, pack your lunch or plan your outfit the night before. Add in a good audiobook or podcast to make your commute something to look forward to. Use the drive or walk to transition from home to work and from work to home.
- Taking on Too Much: It is easy to commit to extra roles within your department team or join several committees. These positions often bring a lot of joy, especially if you're contributing to a goal or project you love, but if you feel like you have too much on your plate, it might be helpful to learn to say no.
- Breaks: Too many of us skip lunch in its entirety. Though the first 'A' is avoid, making sure you are nourished, is one area of your day you shouldn't be avoiding. Nourish your body and mind by taking breaks while avoiding distractions or multitasking during your downtime.

Alter

Stress management for instructors sometimes requires creativity. Not every stressor is avoidable, so for those you cannot cross off the list, it is time to get creative.

- Work-Life Balance: Schedule your time with intention so you can enjoy your non-work life. Develop a proactive calendar that highlights your commitments (prepping, preparing, cleaning up Moodle, assessments, student emails, committee work, etc.) and supports healthy boundaries and balance for work and home.
- Priority Setting and Time Management: Time is valuable. It can help to ensure that your meetings are productive by developing an agenda for each one. You could also set aside time to "meet with yourself" in order to set your priorities for the day, week, or semester.
- Secondhand Stress: Our students sometimes face difficult situations or circumstances in their home lives. While you are a support for your students, it is important to learn how to not take on their stresses as your own and refer students to appropriate support. Start with the School [Student Success Advisor](#) as an initial referral.



- Remember, if you are experiencing chronic stress, it is important to get help as soon as possible. Speak with your supervisor about support or reach out to the Employee Assistance Plan with [Homewood Health](#).
- If the stress you are experiencing is related to instructional needs (assessments, marking strategies, teaching strategies, etc.), reach out to the [Centre for Learning Innovation](#). We have support available through the Faculty Development Coaches and Instructional Designer. Moodle support is provided via [ITS Services](#) can be found by emailing ITSTicketAlerts@Assiniboine.net.

Accept

There are some pressures in life we have to learn to accept. Focus on managing what you can control by strengthening your coping skills, remaining positive, and recognizing that frustration only further depletes your energy.

- Adjusting to Newness or Top-Down Initiatives: Change is hard. Uncertainty and anxiety are common emotions when dealing with a switch up. Whether it be an unfamiliar curriculum or brand-new leadership team, practice managing your emotions and expectations, and commit to providing and receiving feedback.
 - Remember, change management is a skill that can be developed. Reach out to your supervisor or Homewood Health for concerns and support or the Centre for Learning and Innovation for instructional needs.
- Meeting Students' Needs: Instructors have a lot of pressure in a world that keeps changing. Students' needs may look different to you than they did 10 years ago, technology keeps evolving and so does the field of education. The College has student services to [support](#) students' needs outside of the classroom. Inside the classroom there are strategies and resources that build positive learning environments. Connect with [CLI](#) to see what might work for you.
- Mistakes: We all make them. Start by practicing positive self-talk. Then commit to learning from your mistakes. Reach out to the supports you need to in order to reflect and correct.
- A Shared Experience: You're not alone in dealing with the unique stress that comes with teaching. Find a mentor, a faculty coach, your manager, or a colleague to connect with.

Adapt

With some stress, it's a matter of reflecting, being honest with ourselves and being open to adjusting to a shifting learning environment.

There has been a fair amount of research in the area of [mindset](#). Mindset is important, it provides a map of how you respond. If the way you are responding is not helpful (is it moving

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you forward in your goals?), then you might consider what type of a mindset you are responding to situations with:

A fixed mindset:

- assumes abilities and understanding are relatively fixed.
- those with a fixed mindset may not believe that intelligence can be enhanced, or that you either “have it or you don’t” when it comes to abilities and talents.

A growth mindset:

- a growth mindset is more likely to see every environment as a learning environment and scan for opportunities to improve their skills and enhance their knowledge.

ACC and Local Resources

No one should have to handle stress alone. ACC has a number of resources to support you, as does the local community:

[Homewood Health](#) is the college’s Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). The program offers private, confidential support related to a number of issues not limited to job stress; relationships; eldercare, childcare, parenting issues; harassment, personal issues (stress, depression, anxiety, self-esteem, anger); substance abuse; separation and loss; balancing work and family; financial or legal consultation; trauma and family violence.

The [Library Guide for Mental Health & Wellness](#) is a living collection of mental health information including important phone numbers, links to pertinent community supports, calming exercises, videos, and – of course – books!

[The Stress Experts](#): Louise and Elaine Sanders are sisters, Stress Consultants, and co-founders of The Stress Experts based in rural Manitoba. They teach people how to confidently handle challenges and decrease stress so that they can be happy, feel fulfilled, and love life.

[7th Street Health Access Centre](#) operates from 10am-6:00pm seven days a week (except on statutory holidays) and provides the following services nurse practitioner, service navigator, community nurse, community mental health worker (adult), housing resource worker, addictions services (AFM), rapid access to addictions medicine (RAAM), Manitoba HIV Program Clinic, community social worker, cultural facilitators, consumer peer support facilitator, community volunteer income tax program (CVITP) from March to September.

[Brandon Friendship Centre Inc.](#) is an urban Indigenous service delivery agency administering and implementing programs to meet the needs of people either migrating to cities or living in them. Programs and services include adult upgrading, Aboriginal Head Start – Little Teaching Lodge, Aboriginal Healing & Wellness, Aboriginal Youth Activity Centre, Brandon

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Access/Exchange Service, Brandon Friendship Housing Authority, community liaison worker, cultural worker, four directions employment services, GAP Youth Outreach, In A Good Way – Resource Centre, Kokum’s Early Enrichment Program – KEEP and KEEP2, Project Hope, Stepping Out On Saturdays.

[The Women’s Resource Centre](#) (TWRC) is a non-profit organization with services available to self-identifying women and their families in the Westman community. Composed of a team of specialists that provide trauma-informed, low barrier and accessible services, TWRC is committed to ensuring mental, physical and emotional well-being to those that seek their support.

[The Men’s Resource Centre](#) offers a safe and supportive space for men and their families to access resources and information. The centre provides programs, services and individual support on issues affecting men and their families.

[SERC](#) offers affirming and supportive programming for Two-Spirit, Transgender, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning (2STLGBQ+) individuals, families and friends in Brandon and Western Manitoba.



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