

## **Stress management** – taken from Study Skills Clifton Press 1999-2000

### **Stress management**

- Most people suffer from minor symptoms of stress at one time or another.
- The first thing to do is learn how to recognise it.
- Stress can cause tiredness, weakness, nausea, headaches, or a sinking feeling in the stomach.
- It also causes muscular cramps - especially in the back, shoulders and neck.
- Many people can't relax properly because of stress.

### **Sleep**

- This is one of the most important forms of relaxation available.
- It allows the body to recuperate by switching off completely.
- Most people need between six and nine hours sleep each night.
- Some make do with less, but 'top up' with brief naps in the day.

### **Quality sleep**

- The sleep needs to be of good quality.
- It is not effective when broken into brief periods.
- Do not retire at night in an agitated or over-stimulated state.
- Approach sleep in a state of tiredness and relaxation.

### **Diet**

- You will tend to become sluggish (and over-weight) if you eat too much.
- Heavy and fatty food makes us less efficient metabolically.
- People often eat more if they feel anxious or stressed.
- Avoid very big meals, and eat lighter foods such as salads.
- Over-indulgence with alcohol gives most people spiritual as well as physical hangovers.

## **Exercise**

- This is one of the best ways to relax and relieve stress.
- Physical exercise promotes an uplifting sense of wellbeing.
- It will prevent you from becoming physically tense and will dispel feelings of lethargy.
- It will also help you to have good quality sleep.
- Take some sort of exercise every day.
- Go for a walk, go swimming, running or cycling.
- This will form an ideal break from your studies.
- You will be able to return to them feeling more refreshed.

## **Breath control**

- This is one of the most rapid ways of lowering stress.
- Stop what you are doing, sit or stand up straight, and take several deep breaths.
- Breathe in fully and then exhale slowly, dropping your shoulders and allowing yourself to relax.
- Count down from ten to zero whilst you are breathing out.
- This process can promote an immediate feeling that your stress is draining away.

## **Meditation**

- Adopt a relaxed and comfortable position with your back straight.
- Close your eyes, and concentrate on some fixed point of reference.
- This might be a word or phrase which you say over and over again.
- You might visualise a particularly restful scene.
- Some people do this with a background of calm and soothing music.
- After twenty minutes or so you should achieve a state of deep relaxation.
- It is a way of calming yourself and promoting a sense of tranquillity .

## **Muscle relaxation**

- Lie on your back on the floor, then take some minutes to become comfortable.
- Breathe in deeply and regularly.
- Concentrate on one part of your body at a time.
- Start with your foot and work up towards your head.
- Concentrate on the whole of your foot for instance - toes, sole, instep and heel.
- Let it go completely limp, and let it stay limp.
- Do the same with the other foot, then work on your legs, your stomach, chest, and so on.
- Go round all your body, including your head, then you should feel quite relaxed.