# Stress: The Basics [1]

Stress is a normal psychological and physical reaction to the demands of life. Work, school, relationships, and daily hassles can often serve as stressors, or sources of stress. Stress isn't necessarily a bad thing. Good stress, or eustress, pushes us to work harder. When this stress becomes overwhelming or hard to manage, it's called distress and can impact your health.

Another important aspect regarding stress is the differentiation between acute and chronic stress. Acute stress is a response to a specific situation or event, in which stress hormones are released to handle the issue. Examples of acute stress can be a job interview or getting a speeding ticket. Repeated exposure to stress, in which stress hormones are constantly being released in the body, is chronic stress. Chronic stress can wear down the body both physically and mentally. High levels of chronic stress are associated with an increased risk of depression, anxiety, heart disease, obesity, and sleep difficulties.

## Managing Stress

Everyone experiences stress differently. Responses to stress depend on a complex set of factors including temperament, health, life experiences, beliefs and ideas, and coping skills. It's important to be able to recognize high stress levels and take steps to handle it in healthy ways — managing stress is a learned behavior and takes practice. Here are some tips to get you started:

- **Understand how you experience stress.** How do you know if you're stressed? Some people may experience difficulty concentrating or making decisions. Others may feel frustrated, overwhelmed, or irritable. Headaches, muscle tension, or lack of energy are also common symptoms of stress.
- **Identify the source(s) of stress.** What events or situations trigger stressful feelings? Are they related to your family, schoolwork, health, finances, work, relationships, or something else?
- **Recognize how you deal with stress.** Are you using healthy or unhealthy behaviors to cope with stress? Which unhealthy behaviors would you like to change?
- **Find healthy ways to manage stress.** Trade in your unhealthy stress coping techniques (overeating, excessive alcohol use, etc.) for some healthier ones (physical activity, meditation, getting a massage, talking things out with your friends and family, etc.). Some techniques may be more effective for you depending on the stressful situation you are facing.

- **Take care of yourself.** Get enough sleep, engage in regular physical activity, eat a balanced diet, take breaks, listen to music — do the things you need to do to ensure you have a healthy mind and body.
- **Reach out.** Asking for and accepting help from supportive friends, family, or health care providers can go a long way in improving your ability to manage stress.

If you continue to feel overwhelmed by stress, reach out to a counselor, who can help you come up with a plan to manage and reduce stress.

Last reviewed/updated: July 30, 2015

# Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [2]

CPS supports the psychological and emotional well-being of the Morningside campus community by providing counseling, consultations, and crisis interventions — all of which adhere to strict standards of confidentiality. Drop-In Counseling Offices offer the opportunity for students to meet with CPS counselors, without an appointment, when immediate support, resources or referrals are needed.

## Phone

(212) 854-2878

## Website

Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [3]
Read more [2]

# Mental Health Services (CUIMC) [4]

The Mental Health Services offers services from social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists to provide confidential services including short-term psychodynamic psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, pharmacotherapy, and couples counseling.

## Phone

(212) 305-3400

## Website

Mental Health Services (CUIMC) [5]
Read more [4]

# Medical Services (Morningside) [6]

Provides a full range of primary care services for students on the Morningside campus.

## Phone

(212) 854-7426

## Website

Medical Services (Morningside) [7]
Read more [6]

# Medical Services (CUIMC) [8]

Medical Services within the Student Health Service provides a full range of primary care services for students at the Medical Center campus.

## Phone

(212) 305-3400

## Website

Medical Services (CUIMC) [9]
Read more [8]

# Footer menu

- ▾ Contact Alice!
    - ⚙ Content Use
    - ⚙ Media Inquiries
    - ⚙ Comments & Corrections
- ▾ Syndication & Licensing
    - ⚙ Licensing Q&As
    - ⚙ Get Alice! on Your Website
    - ⚙ Full Site Syndication
    - ⚙ Link to Go Ask Alice!

**Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.**

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

---