Chronic Stress
Deeper issues such as poor self-esteem may fuel chronic stress. The methods above are helpful for dealing with chronic stress but you may need to complement this work with a “healing relationship,” such as a counselor, mentor, or supportive friend.

References:
http://ccvillage.buffalo.edu/vpc.html
(Massey Univ, Univ of Oregon, Texas A&M Univ, Princeton, Univ of Florida, Tulane Univ, Univ of Illinois)

Recommended Readings:
• The Artist’s Way: by Julia Cameron
• Journal to the Self: by Kathleen Adams
• Feeling Good - The New Mood Therapy: by David Burns, M.D.
• The Anxiety & Phobia Workbook: by Edmund Bourne, Ph.D.
• The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook: by Davis, Eshelman, McKay

For more information, contact us at:
Georgia Tech Counseling Center
353 Ferst Drive, Suite 238
Student Services - Flag Building
Atlanta, Georgia 30332
404-894-2575
Website: www.counseling.gatech.edu

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Twitter at GTCounseling
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Office Hours
Monday - Friday
8 am - 5 pm

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**Emotional outbursts**
**Pessimistic thinking**
**Appetite changes**
**Increase**

**What is Stress?**
Stress refers to one’s response to events, not the events themselves. Thus, you can have active control over how you cope with stress.

**How to Deal with Stress**
Learning to deal with stress can actually help you enhance your quality of life as it requires constantly being mindful to take care of all aspects of you: physically, emotionally, socially, mentally, spiritually. Creating a balanced life will contribute to feeling like life is manageable. This balance comes from:

- **Healthy Diet:** have lots of fresh foods; limit caffeine, tobacco, alcohol, and junk food; always have breakfast; don’t skip meals; keep well hydrated.
- **Regular, Vigorous Exercise:** exercise releases endorphins, which help us feel better.
- **Consistent Amounts of Sleep:** sleep allows the body time to repair, provides the mind time to consolidate information, & allows you to get new insights through dreams.
- **Daily Check-ins With Yourself:** people who write about their stresses & difficult emotions recover faster & have stronger immune functions. Writing can serve as a container for your stresses.
- **Doing Something Nice:** giving to others often helps people feel better about themselves.
- **Learn/Try Something New:** strive to try something you expect to fail at so you can focus on enjoying the experience, not the outcome.
- **Practice Relaxation, Deep Breathing, Meditation, Yoga, & Positive Imagery:** these are skills that must be regularly developed so they can be effective during intense times you need them. Oftentimes these types of breaks are more recharging than naps.
- **Nurture Your Senses:** surround yourself with a pleasing environment & different opportunities to engage your senses (e.g., warm shower, massage, walking in nature, finger painting, listening to music)
- **Allow Space for Your Creativity:** write, dance, paint, or any other expressive activity. Feed your soul.
- **Prioritize:** to reduce the sense of feeling overwhelmed, learn to focus on one task at a time. Make a written to-do list to help contain ruminations. Let go of the things you cannot control and instead focus on what you can.
- **Ask for Help:** the ideal world involves everyone taking turns giving & receiving help. This includes you!
- **Set Realistic Goals:** Break down intimidating tasks into more manageable pieces.
- **Set a Realistic Schedule:** give yourself time to do regular self-care, commute, socialize, & rest. Allow yourself enough time to get to places at a comfortable pace. Build in some scheduling wiggle room for interruptions, unexpected obstacles, etc. If you can’t fit all of this into your day, you need to re-evaluate if you have over committed yourself or are expecting perfection in everything. If you over commit, give yourself permission to say, “no.”
- **Congratulate Yourself for Your Progress in Keeping Balance:** you have to praise yourself for this, as others will likely not.
- **Stop Comparing Yourself Against Others:** you are more than the sum of your parts so a piece-meal comparison is unfair.
- **Don’t Dwell On The Past:** view mistakes & setbacks as learning experiences. If you are not making a mistake somewhere, you are probably not taking enough risks in life.
- **Eliminate Clutter:** sometimes our home, computer, bag, etc. reflects how we are feeling. Taking control of your environment can help you feel empowered elsewhere.
- **Express Feelings:** keeping emotions bottled up often increases our experience of stress. Remember, how you feel about something does not have to dictate your behaviors. You don’t have to fear your feelings.
- **Challenge Negative Thinking:** replace your negative internal dialogue with more helpful words that nourish & inspire. Imagine speaking to yourself in the way you’d speak to a good friend. Or, think of someone who inspires you & imagine what they might say or think about your situation. Watch out for all-or-nothing thinking, “should” language, perfectionist standards, and catastrophizing.
- **Build Positive Social Support & Limit Your Exposure to Negative People:** cultivate people in your life who build you up, not pull you down. If you must be around negative people, stick to a time limit & have a recharge plan in place for recuperating.
- **Keep a Gratitude List:** record what you like about yourself, compliments you received, the beauty you see in this world, and anything else that lifts your spirit.