



Welcome!

Greetings, TEACH El Camino Members!

What an eventful past month it has been. We hope you have taken some time to reflect and take care of yourself to ease stress and anxiety. We know that some of you serve as essential workers who help keep our world spinning. We appreciate what you do and are grateful for your service.

While many of the TEACH campus events we planned for this semester are cancelled, we were able to salvage two events to be held as virtual Zoom events. The Future Teachers' Club and TEACH El Camino program have decided to continue on with The Educators' Panel [T.E.P] as a virtual professional development event on **Saturday, May 16, 2020**. There will be two sessions: a morning session from 10:00a.m.-12:00p.m. and an afternoon from 1:00pm-3:00pm. Please continue to check your e-mail for event updates and details.

The second virtual event is an information session hosted by representatives from Cal State Los Angeles. You should attend this event if you are interested in transferring to CSULA in the fall or Spring 2021 semester. The virtual meeting will take place Thursday, April 23 at 2:00p.m. **Interested attendees please contact teach@elcamino.edu.**



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Future Teachers' Club

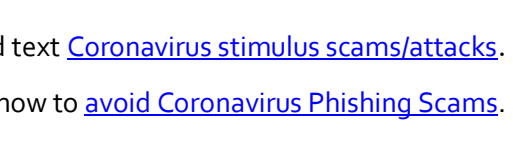
We've gone virtual!
 Our next virtual club meeting is set to take place on Tuesday, May 5.
 Club meetings will take place bi-monthly.
 Please check our social media accounts and your e-mail for meeting announcements and Zoom meeting I.D.

Current Helpful Information and Resources

Learn about the most recent ECC updates here:

[El Camino College Student FAQ's](#)

The California Community Colleges Teacher Preparation Program created a [resource/referral page](#) on the statewide TPP site to aid in accessing assistance in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Link to help in identifying new online and text [Coronavirus stimulus scams/attacks](#).

Link to help ion how to [avoid Coronavirus Phishing Scams](#).



Coming in May!

The Los Angeles regional TPP community college partners are collaborating to organize a virtual conference in May 2020.

Please check back on the TEACH Los Angeles Regional Collaborative website (<https://www.teachlarc.org/>) and the statewide CA Community Colleges Teacher Preparation Programs website (<http://teacherprepprogram.org/events-and-calendar/>) for more information on registration for individual sessions.

Article / Resource for the Quarter

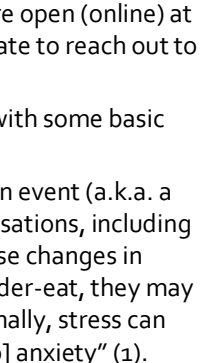
"Are our preschool teachers worth more than they were two months ago?"
 -Andres Bustamante (Published on Monday, April 13, 2020)

"Let's use the Covid-19 as a wake-up call that teachers and child care professionals are the backbone of our economy."

Counselor's Corner

Coping With Stress During the Covid 19 Pandemic

"I am really under a lot of stress right now," is a comment I am hearing from quite a few of my students these days. As we listen to dire newscasts each night, watch loved ones struggle with illness or unemployment, learn to manage online course delivery systems, and face heretofore unprecedented levels of social and physical isolation -- to name but a few of the stressors confronting us during the Covid-19 pandemic -- it is not at all surprising that so many of us are experiencing the physical and/or emotional effects of stress.



Thus, I thought it might be helpful to compose an article highlighting some tried and true strategies for coping with, significantly reducing, and/or eliminating stress altogether. Do know that both the Counseling Center and the Health Center are open (online) at this time, so in addition to practicing what you learn below, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. We are always here for you.

Because stress has been around far longer than the pandemic itself, let's start with some basic information about it, beginning with a definition.

What, exactly, is stress? Stress is both a physical and emotional response to an event (a.k.a. a "trigger" or "stressor"). Physically, "stress manifests itself through [certain] sensations, including shortness of breath, heart palpitations, and muscle tension" (1). It can also cause changes in physical behaviors. For example, highly stressed individuals may overeat or under-eat, they may have difficulty sleeping, and they may not be able to concentrate well. Emotionally, stress can cause one to feel any number of unpleasant emotions, ranging from "anger [to] anxiety" (1).

What are some common triggers (or stressors)? In truth, because stress is actually caused by a reaction to an event rather than by the event itself, anything can constitute a trigger for anyone. Thus, one person's trigger (e.g., an airplane flight) may not cause someone else to feel any stress at all. However, researchers have identified a number of common stressors or triggers, including "job loss or pressures, financial problems, [an] unexpected illness or death" (1), or a major transition in life, such as getting a divorce, moving, or starting a new venture. Given this description, certainly the Covid 19 pandemic would qualify as a significant stressor.

What happens to people who don't manage their stress levels? To best comprehend the answer to this question, it is important to understand what causes the aforementioned physical manifestations of stress. When an individual is under stress, either short-term (e.g., being followed by a stranger down a dark street) or long-term (e.g., an ongoing situation at work), the body reacts just as it did when our "prehistoric ancestors" experienced the "fight or flight response that helped [them] survive in a dangerous world" (1). Concretely, this means the body releases certain "stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol [into] the bloodstream... [speeding] the heart rate, increas[ing] blood pressure, [tensing] the muscles, [raising] blood sugar levels, and [activating] immune cells" (1). When truly needed, the periodic release of these hormones is not a problem, "but if the stress response is activated too often or left running too long, these emergency functions [can] actually turn against the body... causing or worsening many health problems, including heart disease, atherosclerosis, hypertension [i.e., high blood pressure], suppressed immunity [to illnesses], autoimmune disorders, allergies, diabetes, colitis, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, depression, and memory problems" (1). Because a number of these conditions can be very difficult to control and/or potentially life threatening, learning to effectively manage stress is absolutely essential.

How can stress be controlled or eliminated? By consistently applying the following strategies:

Change your eating habits: Insofar as it is possible, eliminate foods containing sugar, flour, and starch from your diet since these substances actually serve to aggravate the physical and emotional effects of stress. Also be sure to consume "healthy fats . . . such as those found in cold-water fish" (1) and eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. Last but not least, make certain that you are consuming important vitamins and minerals, including "calcium, zinc, iron, magnesium, folic acid, and vitamins B6, B12, and D . . . [all of which] . . . affect your energy, bones, heart, mental acuity, and mood" (1). There are many additional benefits to this type of diet (e.g., weight loss and increased energy), but most importantly, it really will help your body combat the dangerous effects of stress.

Commit to a daily exercise program: Exercise is a vital component when it comes to stress management because it actually counters many of the physical effects of stress, including high blood pressure, heart palpitations, and increased blood sugar and cholesterol levels (1). Try to exercise for one hour per day, although even thirty minutes of daily exercise will be very beneficial. In truth, the commitment to a daily program of exercise is probably more important than the actual minutes clocked. Incidentally, eating well and exercising will also help you feel a lot better about yourself, and the better you feel about yourself, the more in control of your stress you will be. Yes, eating a carton of ice cream in response to stress may feel good at the moment, but monitor how you feel physically and emotionally thereafter and how these feelings and sensations serve to exacerbate rather than ameliorate your stress levels.

Take some time out for yourself every day: This particular stress-management technique can be accomplished via exercise, of course, but it is best to do it in addition to exercise. Specifically, taking time out for yourself means doing something you enjoy every day – even if it is only for five to ten minutes. During this pandemic, such activities can include reading, listening to or playing music, praying and/or meditating (see below), taking a hot bath, gardening, etc. Taking time for yourself will not only help you reduce your stress levels but it will also help you to feel more balanced and relaxed during these very unsettling times.

Meditate and/or pray every day: It does not matter how you meditate or pray. All that matters is that it is a "quiet and peaceful" activity (2). Multiple studies have shown that meditation and/or prayer significantly reduce all of the aforementioned physical manifestations of stress. Not sure how to meditate? Numerous books have been written on the subject, but you can also try the following technique:

- Sit upright or lie on your back
- Place your hand just beneath your navel, so you can feel the rise and fall of your belly as you breathe deeply through your nose
- As you inhale, count slowly, saying to yourself 'one, two, three, four.' Exhale slowly, counting back down from four to one (3).

This particular meditation can be adapted any number of ways – you may choose to use words such as "peace" or "tranquility" instead of numbers, and you can combine this technique with specific visualizations wherein you imagine yourself inhaling peace and exhaling each of your stressors. You can even take it a step further using more advanced visualizations wherein you mentally place yourself on a secluded beach, list your triggers on a piece of paper or sketch them on the sand and then imagine yourself throwing the paper into a large bonfire or imagine the waves gently washing your stressors away. Engaging in these types of visualizations prior to retiring for the evening will greatly enhance your sleep in addition to reducing your stress levels.

Have a good laugh: "There is healing power in laughter," a good friend once told me, and I have found this statement to be very true. Whether you use the Sunday comics or a Steve Martin video, laugh deeply, laugh heartily, and laugh often. It's good for the body, it's good for the soul, and it's very good for stress reduction, especially because stress often causes us to become overly tense and serious. Yes, this is a very sad time for many people and laughing may seem like an insensitive act, but it is actually a tremendous gift that you can give to both yourself and others. It is a form of compassion, and you deserve this compassion every bit as much as your neighbor.

Consider spending a little more time with your pet (if you have one): Believe it or not, research has shown that "people with pets [have] significantly lower heart rates and blood pressure levels when exposed to stressors than those who [are] petless. In fact, . . .pets [work] even better than spouses at buffering stress" (2).

Ask for Help: In his daily Covid 19 update, the governor of California recently stated that the strongest people he knew were the ones who asked for help, and I absolutely agree with him. One of the most insidious effects of stress is that it tends to make us feel as if we are completely alone. We may believe no one shares our experience or that no one will understand how we feel. I can assure you that nothing could be further from the truth. When it comes to stress, we are all in it together and not a single one of us is walking this road alone. Many, many resources are available to you during this difficult time. Please do not be afraid to access them. There is no reason to feel ashamed for seeking assistance when you feel completely overwhelmed.

Consider making an attitude adjustment: Since stress is caused by your reaction to an event rather than by the event itself, this last suggestion for stress management is perhaps the most important of all, and here it is in a nutshell: First, always remember and never forget the old adage that "This, too, shall pass." No matter how much stress you may feel, do try to keep in mind that very few things in life last forever, so you really will get through this difficult period. Secondly, always remember and never forget that you deserve to adopt the stress management techniques outlined above. They are not self-indulgences or luxuries; rather, they are acts of self-love and self-care, and only by loving and caring for yourself can you truly love and care for others. You cannot help others if your tank is empty or your well is dry, so be good to yourself when under stress and do everything you possibly can during this pandemic to seek and to find rest for the spirit and renewal for the heart.

- Cheryl Kroll, TEACH Counselor

References

- (1) Harvard Women's Health Watch. "Three for 2003: Reducing the Burden of Stress." January 2003. Volume 10. Issue 5.
- (2) National Women's Health Report. "Stress-busting Techniques and Scientific Findings." June 2003. Volume 25. Issue 3.
- (3) Alice Domar. *Self-Nurture: Learning to Care for Yourself as Effectively as You Care for Everyone*

TEACH El Camino Program

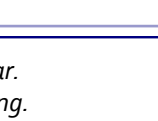
COME JOIN US!

To learn about job opportunities and workshops/conferences, please follow us on:



[teach_el_camino](#)

facebook.com/TEACHelcamino



Email: TEACH@elcamino.edu

Website: <http://www.elcamino.edu/academics/behavioralsocial/teach-elcamino/>

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