Working Together for Student Success

STRESS MANAGEMENT

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Why Discuss Stress?

- The emotional health of college freshman has declined to the lowest level in 25 years (since data collection began).
- Research indicates serious stress began before college.
- Levels of high school seniors indicated feeling “frequently overwhelmed” rose last year.
- Research found that students “emotional stability” was a significant predictor of college achievement, behind conscientiousness (including traits like dependability, perseverance, and work ethic).
Importance of Good Stress Management

- Poor stress management can lead to the following:
  - Depression
  - Poor concentration
  - Irritability/Hostility
  - Memory problems
  - Disrupt sleep and eating patterns
  - Withdrawal/isolation
  - Problems with peers or abrupt change in peer group
  - Physical complaints (i.e. chronic headaches)
Types of Stress

- **Acute Stress**
  - Most common form
  - Short-term
  - Can cause physical symptoms

- **Episodic Acute Stress**
  - Frequent Acute Stress
  - “Type A”
  - “Worry warts” /Pessimists
  - Physical symptoms likely

- **Chronic Stress**
  - “Grinding stress” (APA, 2011)
  - No way out of a situation
  - Definite physical symptoms, probably requiring medical treatment
Understanding Behavior

- The Behavior Iceberg: Understanding behavior
Understanding Behavior

What’s Underneath?

- School interactions (grades, run-ins with teachers, peers!, picking a track/major, applying for scholarships, extracurricular activities)
- Peers (peer pressure, wanting to fit in, internet)
- Health factors (sick, sleep deprived, hungry)
- Mental health factors (depressed, anxious)
- Socio-cultural factors (racial, cultural, economic stressors.)
- Household factors (stability of family system, sibling interactions, stressors)
- Cognitive factors (magical thinking: “it won’t happen to me”, heightened self-consciousness- everyone is looking at me, poor planning ability)
Healthy Teenage Behavior

- How can we use this to better understand our scholars both at home and in the Academy?

- Are there times when we overlook some of these factors?
  - Reminder: It’s ok to overlook these factors and encourage them to look for solutions, manage stressors appropriately, using good coping skills, etc!
Stress By the Numbers

- Who experiences more stress? (Women or Men?)
- Who experiences more physical symptoms of stress? (Women or Men?)
- Who experiences more stress over finances? (Women or Men?)
- What percentage of parents report family responsibilities as a significant source of stress?
- Does your stress level have an effect on your child(ren)/family?
- What percentage of tweens and teens are bothered by their parents stress levels?
Stress By the Numbers

- Who experiences more stress? (Women or Men?)
  - Women!

- Who experiences more physical symptoms of stress? (Women or Men?)
  - Women!
    - 65% reporting irritability and 57% reporting fatigue

- Who experiences more stress over finances? (Women or Men?)
  - Women!
    - 83% of women vs. 78% of men

- What percentage of parents report family responsibilities as a significant source of stress?
  - 73%

- Does your stress level have an effect on your child(ren)/family?
  - Over two-thirds of parents surveyed think their stress level has slight to no impact on their child’s stress level

- What percentage of tweens and teens are bothered by their parents stress levels?
  - 86%
Additional Gender Differences

- Girls may be more likely to talk about feelings, while boys may be more likely to act out physically.
  - A recent study found that women make up 60% or more of campus counseling center clients.

- Males are more likely to engage in stress-relieving leisure activities than females.

- Some research also suggests that women are more affected by how their teachers treated them than are men.
Learning Stress Management

- Evaluate
  - What are your stressors?
  - How do you experience stress?
  - How do you manage stress?

- Talk
  - As a family, to a doctor, clergy member, mental health professional, etc.
  - “Low levels of parental communication have been associated with poor decision making among children and teens.” (APA)
  - Give age-appropriate information to children, but don’t be afraid to share

- Create
  - Healthy routines and environments
  - “Research shows that children who are sleep-deficient are more likely to have behavioral problems.” (APA)
  - An arsenal of coping skills

- Model!!!
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- Just ask ????
  - Communicate!!
  - Involve yourself
  - Stay connected with their life, friends, teachers, school, extracurricular activities

- Sudden changes in behavior, mood, sleeping and eating patterns or dress should be noted and addressed. We are here to help you.
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Resources:

- American Psychological Association (www.apa.org)
  - APA’s 2008 Stress in America Survey
  - APA online survey 2010


- Sparks, Sarah D. Education Week: “Experts Begin to Identify Nonacademic Skills Key to Success.” Dec. 23rd, 2010