

WELLNESS TIPS

MANAGING WHEN YOU'RE OVERWHELMED

We all have had times of feeling overwhelmed. For some of us, these feelings may be brief and rarely occur, while for others it can be more frequent or constant. At these times one can feel immobilized, that circumstances are unmanageable.

Becoming overwhelmed can happen when events such as a major stress, traumatic event, or relationship problems occur. A small incident can also become the tipping point for becoming overwhelmed if it occurs on top of numerous other stressors.

WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOU FEEL OVERWHELMED

- + Try to figure out the source of feeling overwhelmed. If, for example, it's your anatomy course, what about it is overwhelming? This can help you decide how to proceed. Do your study strategies or time management need to be adjusted? Are you unsure? Talk with the MSCC learning specialist for assistance in creating a plan.
- + Make your goals realistic. It may be more productive to set a goal to work for 30 minutes to moderate your anxiety and challenge perfectionistic self-expectations.
- + Take breaks. Working harder and longer often isn't the solution. Brief exercise can help you clear your head and reenergize. 10 minutes decluttering your apartment can help you feel less stressed (and you are physically moving).
- + Seek assistance and support. Talk with course directors, professors, peers, tutor groups, family, friends, MSCC counselors.
- + Focus on the here and now. Focusing on what might happen in the future isn't helpful – it increases stress and anxiety.
- + Meditation, relaxation exercises, and relaxation breathing techniques help you refocus to the here and now. They can reduce your level of stress and help your concentration and memory. (see the MSCC site listed below for specific exercises).
- + Is your inner conversation with yourself further increasing your stress?

Try replacing unhelpful thoughts with:

“I'm not the only one. There are others who are overwhelmed.”

“keep a steady pace – rushing won't help”

“I can accomplish this in the next 30 minutes.”

Replace self-critical thoughts (which increase discouragement) with encouraging thoughts, recognizing your efforts and progress (no matter how small)

Avoid comparing yourself negatively with other students in your class.

- + Writing in a journal can help you express your feelings and move on
- + Maintain a regular sleep schedule so that you will be rested, have enough energy, and will be cognitively sharp for tackling stressors
- + Follow a healthy diet
- + Try to maintain an exercise routine.

CONCLUSION

There is no easy solution to managing feeling overwhelmed. If it isn't readily resolved or tends to be prolonged, take additional steps, such as seeking assistance to avoid becoming more stressed and even more overwhelmed.

If you are feeling overwhelmed or excessively anxious or would like to talk with an MSCC counselor about other questions or concerns, feel free to schedule an appointment.

Stay well and stay healthy!

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If you would like to review previous Wellness Tips, check the CCOM Medical Student Counseling Center Website: <https://medicine.uiowa.edu/md/student-support/student-counseling/mscc-wellness-programs-and-resources>