



STRESS is necessary when seeking development and progress!

- How to identify?
- How to control?
- Exams and stress





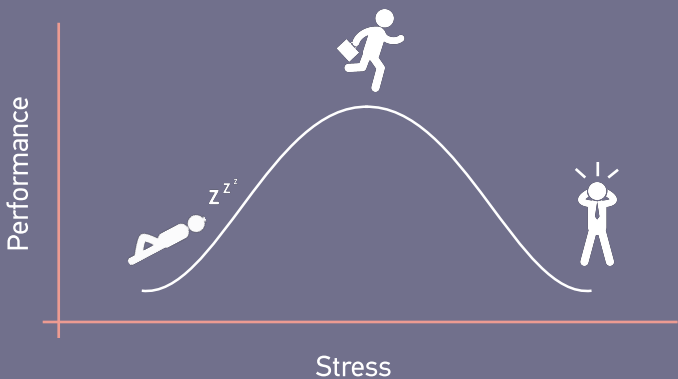
New discoveries and challenges play a huge role throughout the study years. The process of becoming a student goes hand-in-hand with unavoidable changes – so much is yet not discovered, understood and developed, not to mention the studies, homework and upcoming exams... The fast pace of life, changes and new ordeals often impose stress.



What is **stress**?

Stress is an integral part of our lives, a necessary condition for development and progress. It is a **natural body reaction** to the present situation, physical, emotional or environmental factors – **stressors**.





A certain amount of stress level is necessary and adds more colour to your life. Stress prepares our organism to confront certain challenges, encourages us to seek improvement. In this way our physical and emotional resources are mobilized, we tend to concentrate, keep our motivation high and pursue our objectives. Stress that is beneficial for us is called **eustress**.

If stress is too intensive and lasts for a long period of time, stressful situations occur very often – it is **distress**. This kind of stress can have a negative impact on physical and mental health, productivity and academic results.


Three-stage bodily response to the stressor (H. Selye):

Alarm reaction. It is an immediate reaction to a stressor, body reacts with “fight-or-flight” response and sympathetic nervous system is activated. Hormones such as cortisol, adrenalin and noradrenalin are released into the bloodstream. It increases heart rate, blood pressure and respirations, one can feel the tension of the muscles. The body’s resources are mobilized.

Resistance. When the level of the stress does not exceed the body's ability to adapt to changes, the body resists stress/stressors, anxiety and tension disappear.

However, the resistance and adaptation to stress required for the body's resources are limited, so if a source of stress is not removed, you experience **exhaustion stage**.

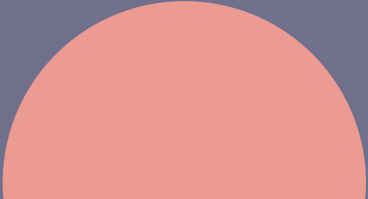




When talking about stress, **individual differences** play a huge role here. It may seem a simple task for some, for others – a huge challenge. A lot of factors may influence that: personality traits, self-confidence, emotional state, social support, etc.

According to R. S. Lazarus, stress is experienced when a person perceives that the “**demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilise.**” The effects that stress has on a person is based more on persons feelings of threat, vulnerability and ability to cope than on the stressful event itself.

For example, if a student finds his homework as a task which is beyond his abilities it is expected that this task will cause stress, whereas for a student who finds the task manageable it is an opportunity for self-improvement.



Possible stressors/causes of stress:

Change in the place of residence

Change of lifestyle

Noise

Entering university

Exams

Communication problems

New relationships

Breakups/divorce

Financial difficulties

Perfectionism

The lack of time management skills

Academic challenges

New job

Work and study harmonisation

Marriage

Pregnancy

Losses

Health issues

Etc.

It is a common belief that only adverse events or situations cause stress. **All changes** you need to adapt trigger physiological stress reaction. Positive changes can also lead to experiencing stress, for example, entering university – in such situations we experience **eustress**.

How to identify if I experience too much stress?

Physiological factors

Muscle tension

Weakened immune system

Headache, neckache,
backache

Digestive system disorders

Cold feet and hands

Chronic fatigue

Cognitive factors

Inability to concentrate

Memory problems

Difficulty in making
decisions

Low self-esteem

Fear about the future

Fear of failure

Suicidal thoughts

Emotional factors

Increased level of
anxiety

Increased irritability

Impulsiveness

Aggression

Sense of guilt

Sense of hopelessness

Sense of loneliness

Depression

Behavioural factors

Changed eating habits,
appetite

Poor sleep quality,
insomnia

Changed sexual attraction,
behaviour

Increased alcohol
consumption

Increased consumption of
tobacco products

Teeth grinding

Skipping classes

Delaying tasks
(procrastination)

Decreased work
efficiency, working longer
hours with a little
progress



How to lower the level of stress?

How to maintain optimal stress level?

Physical activity. Exercise, go for a walk, commit to physical activity regularly;

Healthy nutrition. Eat balanced meals always at the same time. Don't forget to consume a decent amount of liquids, avoid products containing caffeine;

Work and resting regime. Regardless of heavy workloads and academic challenges it is essential to keep the balance of work and resting regime, optimal sleeping time. When we are well-rested, we tend to make rational decisions and control our emotions;

Laugh. Many research show that humour and laugh have a positive impact on our body, improves the resilience to stress;

Massage and aromatherapy are also effective when trying to relax after work and relieve stress;

Learning various relaxation techniques and regular practice may help to activate body's natural relaxation response, get rid of negative thoughts;

Meditation, prayer.

Conversation with someone about the things that worries you may help to feel better and look at things from a different angle;

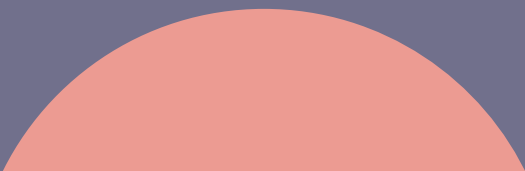
Communication, actively participating in University's and other organization's events is a great way to spend your free time, gain experience, meet new people and maintain your well-being;

Volunteering plays a crucial role for personal fulfillment which helps to feel needed and important;

Good time management skills – a great way to avoid unnecessary stress and to carry out work in time. Manage your time in a way so you can do your tasks in a regular manner. Plan your work and free time sensibly in case things turn out the way you expected.

Staying in contact with your family and friends. People who are loved and spread love, compassion and support are more resilient to stress;

Relaxation and joyful activity, hobbies.



Advices for YOU:

Observe your reactions. What causes stress? How do you feel physically and emotionally at that time? How do you react to stressful situations? What makes you relax the most?

It is essential to answer these questions: Can I eliminate stressor/change the situation/acknowledge the situation the way it is? Can I contain stress? Do I need professional help?

Positive thinking exercise helps to see the bright side of it. Sometimes we cannot change the situation but are able to see it from a different angle – take a piece of paper and divide it into two equal parts. On one side write situations which cause stress and on the other – positive aspects of these situations. Remember it every evening and think about the positive situations you experienced throughout the day.

Deep breathing exercise. When you are feeling stressed your breathing becomes rapid and shallow. Deep breathing is an effective technique which helps to calm down. Sit down comfortably with your back straight, place one hand on your stomach and other over your chest. Close your

eyes. Breathe in slowly through your nostrils and count to 10 at the same time. As the air fills your lungs, your stomach rises. Breathe out slowly through the mouth and count to 10 at the same time. When you breathe out, your diaphragm relaxes and moves upward into the chest cavity. Repeat this exercise 5-10 minutes and focus only on your breathing.

Visualization. Sit down in a comfortable position, close your eyes. Breathe calmly. Inhale and exhale slowly. Think about the situation or a place where you feel relaxed. Focus on what you see, hear and feel. Note even the smallest details, e.g. you are walking down the beach and sand grains are gently tickling your feet. Do you feel the wind blowing? Hear the sound of the ocean? See yourself from a different perspective. When you are ready slowly come back to reality. Open your eyes, inhale and exhale deeply, stretch out.

Every single one of us is unique. Regardless of common advices, the most important thing is to discover the most suitable relaxing technique to relieve stress, follow recommendations of a healthy lifestyle and you will notice the changes!

Exams and stress

Exam session is a huge part of academic life. For some students preparing and taking exams require a lot of effort, but it is manageable task. For other though it becomes a real challenge. **Eustress** is crucial for successful preparation of exam session, though an overwhelming amount of distress can complicate the preparation process and have a negative impact on your academic results. **So what to do if you want to control stress and prepare for exams?**

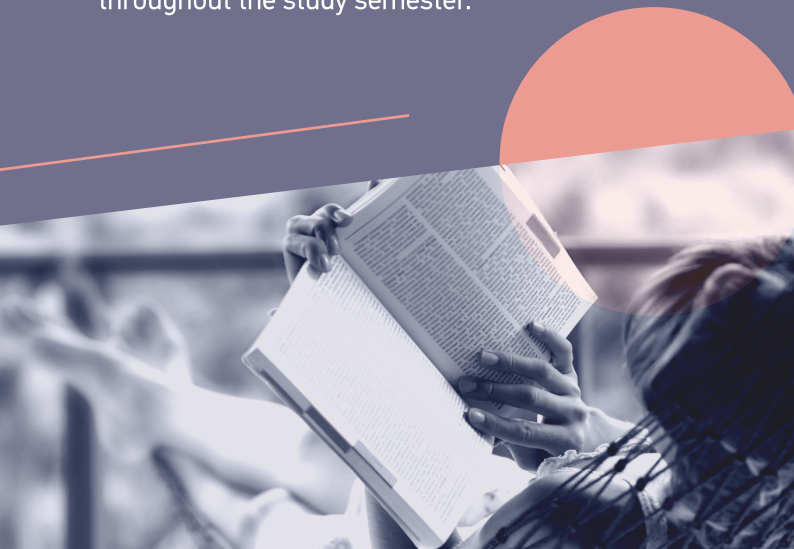
Preparing for exams

Read carefully and exam all study notes and other tasks. **Determine** your goals, **evaluate** your possibilities and **dedicate** your time to finish all tasks. **Plan** your study and free time activities. **Set** your priorities straight and **do** the most important tasks first. Remember, you **can** always consult with your mentors and lecturers;

Break big tasks into smaller pieces. Do not try to learn everything by heart, remember the most important information. Find the most effective learning method. It is important to find out what helps you concentrate the most while studying;

Procrastination. Learning process often causes stress, tension or anxiety. To escape from it all we delay our tasks. Eventually we start feeling even worse because there is no time left to study.

Leaving everything for the last night is much more inefficient than learning systematically throughout the study semester.



Before exam

It is completely normal to feel concerned before exam as it shows that this exam and the results are important to you.

- Find out the time and place of the exam early. Do not be late – it can cause you even more stress. Waiting also affects you negatively so try not to arrive too early;
- Know the examination order and evaluation criteria;
- Sleep well before exam, eat right and avoid products with caffeine in them;
- Bring everything you might need – water, pen or other writing instruments;
- If you feel stressed out try one of the relaxation techniques described earlier (e.g. deep breathing exercise). Remain calm, concentrated and you will reach the best results.

During exam

Try to stay calm and organized. Look through exam tasks, questions and start by doing those which seem the easiest for you. Leave some time to go through all tasks one more time.

After exam

Exam session is only one more challenge in your life. Exam results represent only a limited proportion of what you are really capable of. If the results are not as good as you expect you can always do better in the upcoming semester or retake the exam;

After exams take some time to rest and spend time with your family and friends. When you are well-rested you will be able to learn more efficiently.

Remember that stress is unavoidable but can be managed. If you want to feel well it is important to follow general recommendations. However, if you think that communication with friends and family is not helping, look for professional help and talk to University's psychologist (psichologas@ktu.lt) or other mental health service specialists (www.vpsc.lt).

Free psychological help in Kaunas city

psichologas@ktu.lt

KTU psychologist

[\(8 37\) 40 14 52](tel:+370837401452)

Kauno Kalniečių mental
health clinic registry

[\(8 37\) 30 15 88](tel:+370837301588)

Šilainių mental health
clinic registry

[\(8 37\) 31 36 65](tel:+370837313665)

General medicine practice
registry

[\(8 800\) 28888](tel:+370880028888)

Emotional support

[\(8 37\) 40 39 77](tel:+370837403977)

Dainavos mental health
clinic registry

[\(8 37\) 34 22 87](tel:+370837342287)

VŠĮ Kauno Šančių
mental health clinic
registry

[\(8 37\) 42 45 41](tel:+370837424541)

Kaunas health centre
registry

[\(8 37\) 33 79 07](tel:+370837337907)

Vita Longa registry

www.klausau.lt

Find more information at
Student information centre
Studentų str. 50-168