



### **Stress Management**

#### **What is stress?**

There is often a lot of disagreement amongst healthcare professionals over what stress is as there is no medical definition. Definitions of stress vary from individual to individual as one individual might react to stress differently than another individual.

Not all stress is bad - it can trigger your fight-or-flight mechanism so that you can respond in an emergency, but this feeling is meant to be temporary and so problems arise when we experience this heightened state for too long.

#### **What types of stress might I encounter at University?**

What is true is that everybody experiences stress and that it is normal to experience stress in everyday life. During your journey through University you will encounter a number of normal stresses that are linked to higher education, such as the transition from home to university life, potential financial stresses, and the stress of adapting to new environments and new ways of learning and developing relationships that will increase your stress levels on a day to day basis.

You may also experience life events during your time at University that could cause a significant increase in your stress levels such as a bereavement or traumatic incident. Though these incidences are unpleasant and difficult to cope with, experiencing stress as a result of such occurrences is normal.

#### **When stress becomes a problem - Stress Vulnerability**

Everyone has a cut off point for stress known as their 'vulnerability', at which point the levels of stress that they experience can spill over and impact negatively on their mental health and/or physical health causing them to feel anxious, agitated, irritable, de-motivated, distracted and/or physically unwell.

If an individual has limited effective coping strategies, then this can lead to mental and/or physical illness to develop as a result. In order to maintain stress levels at a manageable level, it is important to engage in positive coping strategies in order to let stress out.

In order to manage stress positively, there are a number of things students can do.

For example:

- Regular exercise
- Maintaining a healthy diet
- Good sleep hygiene
- Mindfulness

- Development of awareness of emotional resilience
- Basic relaxation techniques

Stress management links to many other aspects of wellbeing, such as developing resilience, confidence, self-awareness, improving time management, relaxation techniques. Have a look at other sections in LEAP Online such as Mindfulness and look out for further content to come in the future.

Access LEAP Online at: [www.bolton.ac.uk/leaponline](http://www.bolton.ac.uk/leaponline)