

No need to stress about it

By: Greg Bluestein



When walking the campus grounds at UMass Boston, a lot of stress can be seen in the faces of the students studying or working on papers. And why not, college is certainly stressful and the way we as students often handle it usually only makes things worse. We drink until we can't remember the previous day, we eat triple the amount of calories than we normally should, and we spend countless hours on Facebook just waiting for something interesting to happen. Although comforting, these are not helping your stress level and in fact, they are just making it much worse for you.

Dr. Edna Pressler is the director of the UHS Counseling Center here at UMB. Students that are overwhelmed with stress or other problems often will go to the counseling center to sort things out.

"The most common reasons why students come to the UHS Counseling Center have to do with mood difficulties, anxiety, stress, relationships, and problems with attention, concentration, and memory," said Pressler. Clearly then, with finals approaching rapidly, the UHS Counseling Center must be extremely busy, right?

Actually, this isn't true. According to Pressler, "...there is typically an increase in students looking for counseling around mid-terms (in October), rather than finals (in

December)," she said.

"One likely explanation for this finding is that many/most students who were struggling realized that they needed to withdraw from particular courses or for the semester as a whole and did so by the November deadline," Pressler explained.

No matter when you are stressed though, be sure that you take care of it properly. Stress is no joke and you could really hurt yourself if you have too much...or too little. Pressler explained that a healthy balance of stress actually will improve how well you work and learn.

"College life is inherently stressful: You are being challenged to grow and change in all kinds of ways. Stress is not all bad or always to be avoided. In fact, research shows that you are more likely to learn when you are moderately stressed. Too little stress and you are bored; too much, and you're overwhelmed," said Pressler. " However, if you find that you are experiencing aches and pains, fatigue, frequent illnesses, lack of energy, desire to avoid or lash out at others, and that the work you are producing is of lower quality and/or late, it's time to do something about it!" Pressler said.

But what can you do about it? The work is piling on, you have so many things to worry about, how do you have the time or the ability to handle your stress and keep your mind healthy? The truth is that there is no secret to handling stress; It really is similar to how you would handle a majority of personal problems.

"Some students try to get rid of stress by using drugs or alcohol, eating junk food, or spending hours on the internet, which might help to distract them, but tend to only make the situation worse," said Pressler. " More effective strategies include taking care of your body with physical exercise, meditation/relaxation, adequate sleep and good nutrition; taking care of your mind by prioritizing what you need to do and being realistic about how much of it you can accomplish each day and giving yourself credit for each task you finish; taking care of your soul and spirit by reminding yourself of your goals and dreams and being grateful for whatever opportunities and experiences you have; and taking care of your relationships by finding time to connect with others. Although you might feel too busy to do any of these things when finals are approaching, remember that the time you spend reducing your stress level is likely to increase your effectiveness and enjoyment," Pressler said. If none of these help in resolving your stress, feel free to contact Dr. Edna Pressler or anyone else at the UHS Counseling Center on the second floor of the Quinn Administration Building or call 617-287-5690 to set up an appointment.