

# Strategies for Learning During Times of Stress

**Conditions for Success:** Identify the conditions you need for success. This requires some self-reflection and recognizing your individual needs to be as focused and motivated as possible.

- ✦ **Understand the rhythm of your day.** Begin by taking time to understand the rhythm of your day. This might mean identifying tasks or projects that need to be completed, considering what time of day you are most productive, planning for scheduled classes or meetings, or setting aside quiet times to do independent work.
- ✦ **Manage your energy.** Use a planner or calendar to stay on top of class assignments or upcoming exams and give yourself plenty of time to prepare. Build in buffer time for unforeseen circumstances. If you need some help in this area, check out the Academic Success Center's Learning Corner for options & ideas to help you [manage your time](#).
- ✦ **Know when you need a break.** Pay attention to signals from your body and mind. Do your muscles feel achy? Is it difficult to focus on what you are reading? Do you feel jittery and anxious? Give your body a good stretch, take a quick walk, or take a short nap if you are feeling drained. By taking short breaks when you need them, you are better able to take care of yourself and come back to work feeling refreshed and productive. How do you [design & take effective breaks](#)?
- ✦ **Remove distractions wherever possible.** Distractions can impact your ability to focus and be fully present, and it takes energy and time to return from a distraction. Name what distracts you, and then try to remove it. And, at the same time, think about the spaces/environments that encourage your concentration. If a view of the outdoors gives you energy, try to create a work area near a window. If you need background music to work, select music that doesn't have lyrics so your brain isn't juggling that additional information. And, if you're able, put your phone on silent.
- ✦ **Be realistic about what you say yes to or what you expect of yourself.** Creating healthy boundaries can help you focus on your priorities and personal goals. If you already feel like you have too much on your plate, be careful about saying "yes" to additional asks. Give yourself grace around expectations and the amount of work you plan to accomplish.

**Caring for Your Mind & Body:** Take care of your body and mind. It's difficult to be at your best when you're not giving your body and mind what they need to keep you going.

- ✦ **Prioritize sleep.** Be sure to prioritize getting enough sleep to ensure that you're not having difficulty staying awake during your daily activities. Most people need 6 to 8 hours of sleep per night to feel fully rested. OSU's Student Health Services provides [tips for getting good sleep](#).
- ✦ **Stay hydrated and nourished.** Drink plenty of water and eat healthy meals that provide you with essential vitamins and minerals – don't skip out on fruits and vegetables! For no cost nutrition counseling, connect with a [registered dietitian at OSU](#).
- ✦ **Avoid caffeine when possible.** Caffeine provides a kick that may feel needed in that moment, but can also leave you with an energy crash later in the day.
- ✦ **Take the time to identify and put your feelings into words.** Sometimes it can feel like there are a million things running through your head and a lot of emotions to deal with. Recognizing/naming the emotions you're experiencing, and allowing yourself to feel them, can help improve your focus by giving those important feelings/experiences space and recognition too. [Naming our feelings can allow us to feel happier, even if we are struggling](#).
- ✦ **Journal to process.** Try journaling at the end of each day, or if you have supportive friends or family members, talk to them about what you are experiencing. Journaling exercises might include [gratitude journaling](#) (ex: write down five things you are grateful for), free writing (writing without any forethought or filter) or utilizing [journal prompts](#) to guide your thoughts.
- ✦ **Use grounding and breathing techniques.** Try [grounding](#) or [breathing techniques](#) if you're feeling anxious or overwhelmed. A simple grounding activity can be to take a moment to notice *five* things you see, *four* things you can touch or feel, *three* things you can hear, *two* things you can smell, and *one* thing you can taste. As a breathing activity, try taking 5 slow, deep breaths by inhaling through your nose and slowly exhaling through your mouth.

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**Stay Connected & Reach Out:** Connecting with people is important. Whether it's friends, family, mentors, OSU staff and faculty, or other resources, connecting is an important part of your strategy during times of stress.

- ✦ **Stay connected.** Create a network of family and/or friends that you feel comfortable reaching out to for support. Share how you are feeling with others and check in with others to see how they are doing. If you are starting to struggle in class, talk to your instructor early and ask for support if needed.
- ✦ **Know that you are not alone in what you may be feeling right now.** Mental health challenges are common, and while each of us is unique and our experiences are unique to us, others around us are also navigating mental health challenges too.
- ✦ **Reach out.** If you are experiencing challenges that feel difficult to overcome alone, reach out to your available OSU and national resources. We'll highlight some of these resources below.

**Support and Engagement Opportunities:** Here are a few tools you can use now to create conditions for success and care for your mind and body:

- ☑ [Anytime Anywhere](#)
- ☑ [Mental Wellness Apps](#)
- ☑ The CAPS [Resilience Toolbox](#)
- ☑ [Wellness Coaches](#)
- ☑ [Time management tools](#) on the Learning Corner
- ☑ [Breathing Techniques](#)
- ☑ [Grounding Techniques](#)

And here are additional offices and resources available to support you as an OSU student:

- ☑ The Academic Success Center has a variety of academic resources and services. Check out the Learning Corner, Academic Coaches, tutoring options, and more: <https://success.oregonstate.edu/>
- ☑ Counseling & Psychological Services provides online resources in the Resilience Toolbox as well as information on counseling services funded through student fees: <https://counseling.oregonstate.edu/>
- ☑ Ecampus students may contact Ecampus Success Coaches for individual support and help connecting with resources: <https://ecampus.oregonstate.edu/services/student-services/success/>
- ☑ OSU-Cascades students may contact Health Advisor Hannah Kuehl at [student.wellness@osucascades.edu](mailto:student.wellness@osucascades.edu) for help finding counseling resources
- ☑ The OSU Experience website provides information on OSU well-being resources: <https://experience.oregonstate.edu/well-being>
- ☑ Crisis Text line: send a text to 741-741
- ☑ Suicide Prevention Lifeline: call 988