

HOW TO SUCCEED IN COLLEGE

Succeeding in college or in anything requires preparation, a positive attitude, good nutrition, exercise, sleep and knowing how to manage your time and stress levels. The following tips and associated links were prepared by the school nurse. You can visit her in G 208, call x2232 or email @ carol.constantine@bristolcc.edu.

Nutrition: “You are what you eat” is an old saying but still holds true. You will be healthier and feel better if you eat 3 balanced meals a day (or six smaller meals that equal 3 regular meals). They should contain some whole grains, fruit, veggies, lean meat, poultry or fish, nuts, low-fat dairy, eggs. Fast food, excessive caffeine, alcohol (or any drug) will impair your body and brain function. The so called “energy drinks” give you a sugar and caffeine “high” which can lead to a “low” later on leaving you feeling sluggish and sleepy. A cup of coffee is fine but stay away from those others—they are wasting your money and your health.

Try this fun site: www.mypyramid.gov and www.nal.usda.gov

Exercise has many benefits. Not only does it keep your body healthy but it helps your brain function better, helps improve your mood, helps with relaxation, digestion, circulation and gives you a feeling of “well-being”. The Fall River campus has a Fitness Center and Diane Hamel, the director, can meet with you to discuss your fitness program and show you how to use the equipment. Students, employees and alumni have free access to the Fitness Center.

Check out the fitness center facebook page, search: Bristol Community College Fitness Center. Also try: www.mayoclinic.com/health/exercise

Time Management is VERY important! Read your syllabus and mark on a calendar (preferably one you can carry with you) all the dates of exams and when assignments are due. Look at it frequently and plan when you will work on assignments and study. Don't wait until the day before your paper is due to start researching your topic! Don't laugh—students have done this! If you have an exam tomorrow, you can't party tonight—you need to review the material, get enough sleep and do something to relax (not drink or party). Many students cram all night but this is not a good way to learn—studying should be a daily event not something you do before an exam.

Visit the TASC Center in B building for tutoring, help with time management, etc. and visit their webpage on the BCC website. Also try www.studygs.net

Stress Management. Stress is a natural part of life and learning to manage it in healthy ways is important especially during exam times and the end of semesters when all your work is due. One to the easiest and quickest ways to decrease your stress level is to take some slow deep breaths. Longer lasting techniques are mediation, yoga, exercise, etc. There are other things you can do to help lower stress like thinking positive thoughts about yourself and your ability to succeed, not saying “yes” to everything and everybody, leaving some unimportant things for later, etc. (See attachment entitled “Stress Management Suggestions”). Also try www.helpguide.org and click “stress”.

Stress Management Suggestions

Michelle Kelly, MA
BCC Counseling Center

Do something special for yourself at the start of the day. For example, begin the day by taking a walk, having a cup of herbal tea, reading the newspaper, or sitting quietly and listening to a couple of songs from your favorite CD.

Talk to yourself in a positive way. For example, say to yourself: "I'm going to do well with this," "I'm well prepared," "I have the ability to do this."

Stop what you're doing and take 60 seconds to visualize a good result. Expect success and you will experience less stress.

Take a warm bath or get a massage.

Exercise is one of the best ways to relieve muscle tension and anxiety. Walk a couple of laps around the pond at BCC!

Don't beat yourself up if you did not do well academically in the past. Instead, focus on the present and take a few moments to consider what you will do differently this time.

Whenever you find yourself catastrophizing with "what if..." questions, simply counter your statements by saying "So what if..."

Think ahead to when finals will be over. For example, you could imagine that you are leaving campus after taking your last exam, enjoying the holidays, etc.

If everyone else is stressing out before the exam, avoid going to the classroom too early. Instead, go to a quiet place and do some breathing techniques and plan to enter the classroom just before the professor does.

Talk about your worries. Discussing your concerns with an empathetic and supportive friend may reduce your stress.

Remember that growth involves risk. Don't take unnecessary or dangerous risks but do allow yourself to be vulnerable.

Employ constructive time management procedures. Set up a weekly schedule and give yourself plenty of travel time.

Let the housework go for this week! Get takeout instead of preparing meals!!

When you study, take a brief break every 30-60 minutes. Do some body stretches, briefly glance around your surroundings, eat a snack, or do some minor household chore.

Develop a sound philosophy. Your spiritual/philosophical beliefs can be a source of support.

Relaxation Exercises

Here are some “mini” relaxation exercises for you to try at home. Choose one per day and do it for 10 minutes. You may do the exercise sitting or lying down and you should try to breathe through your nose (not your mouth).

I. Counting As You Breathe:

Slowly inhale to a count of 3, hold your breath for a count of 3, and then, exhale for a count of 3. You may extend the count if you can...the longer the count, the better.

II. For the following exercises, do not count your breaths. Instead, do the following:

1. As you breathe in, say to yourself, “I know I am breathing in.” As you breathe out, say, “I know I am breathing out.” (This may be shortened to “Breathing in” and “Breathing out.”)
2. As you breathe in, say to yourself, “Breathing in, I calm my body.” As you breathe out, say, “Breathing out, I smile.” (This may be shortened to “Calm Body,” “Smile.”)
3. As you breathe in, say, “Breathing in, I smile.” As you breathe out, say, “Breathing out, I release.” (This may be shortened to “Smile,” “Release.”)

Adapted from:

Hittleman, R. (1969). *Richard Hittleman's you: 28 day exercise plan*. New York: Bantam

Hanh, T. N. (1993). *The blooming of a lotus*. Boston: Beacon.

