Welcome to Wellness
By Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS)

Welcome from the Director

Welcome back! We hope that everyone had a restful and enjoyable spring break. As we approach the final stretch of the academic year, we at CPS recognize that college life can be full of stress and stressors. From exams, papers and internships to navigating our finances, relationships and self-identities, it’s no surprise that 87% of Fordham students described feeling overwhelmed by all they had to do in the past year. In this issue of “Welcome to Wellness,” we’ll explore what stress is (and isn’t), as well as share some strategies for coping with and optimizing our response to stress. We hope you find this newsletter helpful for tackling the many stressors and challenges that come with college life. And remember, if you’re ever struggling or feeling overwhelmed by college (or anything else), please reach out to us or any of the other campus resources listed on page 5.

Jeffrey Ng, Psy.D.

Stress: True or False?

Stress is Different for Everyone - True. Everyone experiences and responds to stress differently. What’s stressful for one person may or may not be stressful for another. One person may have stomach pains when feeling stressed, while another person may not feel any physical symptoms at all, but instead experience mild depression or concentration difficulties.

Stress is Always Bad - False. A moderate and manageable level of stress can increase motivation and performance. Chronic and severe stress, however, negatively affects our physical and mental health and compromises our overall functioning and well-being. “Stress is to the human condition what tension is to the violin string: too little and the music is dull and raspy; too much and the music is shrill or the string snaps.”

Stress Equals Success - False. Unfortunately, we live in a culture that associates stress with productivity. We, therefore, assume that successful people are constantly stressed out. But this couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, feeling chronically overstressed or overworked decreases our productivity and performance, which ultimately jeopardizes our success.

Feeling Chronically Stressed is Avoidable - True. Despite what many believe, feeling stressed isn't unavoidable. We can’t always control or prevent stressful situations, but we can regulate our responses to them. Remember, it's not the events themselves, but rather our responses to those events that result in our feeling stressed.

Alcohol & Smoking Reduces Stress - False. Alcohol and smoking may create an immediate sense of relaxation, but they actually increase stress and anxiety in the long run. Alcohol stimulates the release of the stress hormone cortisol while nicotine cravings and withdrawal mimic the body’s stress response.
Stress Busters

- **Play.** As we grow up we seem to find less and less time for play. This is unfortunate since play greatly enhances our overall well-being. Playing and having fun improves our mood and increases our energy, which allows us to be more productive later. Try to find some time for play in your busy schedules. Watch a movie, play a game, listen to music, read a book, hang out with friends, or like some Fordham students recently did (see right), have an all out snow ball fight on Eddie’s Parade.

- **Practice Mindfulness.** Mindfulness involves being aware of and paying attention to our present experience with acceptance and without judgment. The practice of mindfulness has been shown to reduce the body’s stress response, including a decrease in the stress hormone, cortisol (Go to page 3 to learn about a mindfulness exercise called progressive muscle relaxation).

- **Laugh.** Just as chronic and severe stress can compromise our physical and mental health, humor can be healing. Laughter boosts our immune systems, triggers the release of endorphins (the feel good hormone), and reduces the levels of the stress hormones, cortisol, epinephrine, and dopac.

- **Give Away Your Cape.** If you haven’t already figured out by now, we’re not superheroes. We don’t possess superhuman qualities. We’re human, which means we make mistakes, are imperfect and have certain limitations, such as the number of hours in a day (24) and the amount of time it takes to get from point A to point B (In your car. Not your Batmobile).

- **Exercise.** Physical activity stimulates the release of neurochemicals and hormones that induce euphoria and enhance the body’s response to stress and anxiety. You don’t need to run a marathon or complete a triathlon to reap these benefits. Taking a brisk stroll or walking up a flight of stairs might be just enough to ward off feeling stressed.

- **Be Flexible.** Change is inevitable. The more we’re able to accept and respond flexibly to the changes that come with life the less prone we’ll be to feeling stressed.

- **Sleep and Eat.** This might sound obvious, but neglecting basic life functions, such as sleeping and eating, increases our vulnerability to stress and anxiety. Sleeping and eating well bolsters our immune systems, optimizes our capacity to learn, and enhances our ability to cope with stress.

- **Get Outside.** Fresh air and natural light can be rejuvenating and uplifting. To boost your mood, try to go outdoors at least once a day, especially during those frigid and snowy winter months.

- **Attend a Workshop or Group at CPS.** Please contact us or visit our website to find out more about our various stress management and mindfulness programs.

Click below to see a music video on stress reduction set to Asher Roth’s “La Di Da”:
Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is a great way to learn how to relax our bodies and our minds. Day to day life can be stressful and our stress can manifest as tension in our muscles. We often notice tension in our necks and backs, but tension can affect every part of our bodies, which in turn impacts our emotional well-being. The best way to release tension is to begin to notice what our muscles feel like when they are tense and what they feel like when they are relaxed. It is impossible to be relaxed and tense at the same time. Therefore, if we are able to acquire the skills to relax our bodies, we will have more control over our overall well-being. Try the PMR exercise below. If you find it helpful try to practice it regularly so it becomes easier to use when you are feeling stressed.

• Sit back in a comfortable position. Take a deep breath.
• Now lift your eyebrows like you are making a surprised face. Hold this for 10 seconds.
• Relax your face for 20 seconds.
• Smile and hold that smile as tight as you can for 10 seconds.
• Relax your face for 20 seconds.
• Make a fist with both hands and raise both arms like you trying to flex your biceps. Hold as tight as you can for 10 seconds.
• Relax your arms for 20 seconds.
• Pull your shoulder blades together like you are trying to get them to touch. Hold for 10 seconds.
• Relax your shoulders for 20 seconds.
• Pull your abdominal muscles in as tight as you can and slightly lean forward. Hold for 10 seconds.
• Relax your abdominal muscles and sit back for 20 seconds.
• Tighten you upper thighs and hold as tight as you can for 10 seconds.
• Relax your thighs for 20 seconds.
• Extend your legs and point your toes to the floor and hold as tight as you can for 10 seconds.
• Relax your legs for 20 seconds.
• Extend your legs again and this time point your toes to the ceiling and hold as tight as you can for 10 seconds.
• Relax your legs.
• Scan your body and repeat in any areas that there is existing tension.

For additional guidance on PMR take a look at the following links:

http://www.mckinley.illinois.edu/units/health_ed/relax_relaxation_exercises.htm

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eHqfc8qQs0

DID YOU KNOW?
Practicing relaxation techniques can decrease stress hormones, improve quality of life, and help manage & decrease physical pain.

“An anxious mind cannot exist in a relaxed body”
Edmund Jacobson

“We learn about ourselves and the world at the same time.”
Jane Fried, Ph.D.
Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS)

Counseling and Psychological Services is a comprehensive mental health service within the Division of Student Affairs at Fordham University. Our mission is to promote students’ emotional and psychological health and well-being through counseling, psychotherapy, psychiatric services, consultation, outreach, prevention, and contributions to the mental health professions. Consistent with the University’s commitment to Cura Personalis, we strive to foster a community of care that recognizes and values the depth, dignity and uniqueness of each student.

CPS provides **confidential** and **free** services for all matriculated students. These services include:

- Individual Short-Term Counseling
- Group Counseling & Workshops
- Psychiatric Evaluations and Medication Management
- Crisis Intervention for Urgent Situations
- Personalized Referrals for Specialized and/or Longer Term Services

For a virtual tour of our office and services click on the video below:

MEET OUR COUNSELORS

Dr. Yael Kaner is a supervising psychologist and the Assistant Director at CPS' Lincoln Center campus office. She is originally from Canada and is very interested in languages, travelling and cultural experiences. Dr. Kaner is especially passionate about women's issues and working with international students.

Dr. Miriam Burt is a Supervising Psychologist and the Assistant Director at CPS’s Rose Hill office. She is of South American heritage and is a native Spanish speaker. Dr. Burt is especially interested in eating disorders, psychodynamic psychotherapy, and college mental health.
Focus on Wellness: Quinn Library

CPS met with David Vassar, Reference Librarian, and Bob Allen, Library Deputy Director, of Quinn Library to find out more about their dedication and efforts to enhance student wellness. David and Bob are both very knowledgeable about the mind-body connection and strive to create a space that optimizes student learning, collaboration and wellness. As an example, David shared that he was recently contacted by a student living on Long Island who needed an article that was only available in hard copy at the library. To support this student, David scanned and sent the article directly to him! David and Bob view the library as a “refuge” for students who need some quiet time and relaxation amidst all the business in their lives. As part of their efforts to create a welcoming environment for all students they participated in the recent LGBT and Ally Network of Support training. So, if you’re looking for a welcoming “refuge” in the midst of all the stressors that come with college life, be sure to stop by the Quinn Library (If you want to highlight your dept.’s wellness programs just let us know)!

Resources on Campus

The following resources are also available on campus to assist and support our students:

- Health Services Career Services
- Safety and Security
- Dean of Students Office
- Resident Advisors/Directors
- Academic Deans & Advisors
- Athletic Coaches and Trainers
- Office of Multicultural Affairs
- Disability Services for Students
- University Mission and Ministry
- Professors and Teaching Assistants
- Counseling & Psychological Services
- Office of Substance Abuse Prevention & Student Support
- Office of Student Leadership & Community Development

Online Resources on College Mental Health and Wellness

ULifeLine - online resources for college mental health & wellness   
http://www.ulifeline.org/

MTV’s Half of Us - celebrities & artists discuss their own struggles with mental health    
http://www.halfofus.com/

Transition Year - an online resource on emotional health before & during the transition to college   
http://transitionyear.org/