

Coping with Stress and Time Management

PART ONE: Mentor Preparation

Coping skills help a person tolerate, minimize, and deal with stressful situations in life. Managing stress well can help a person feel better physically and psychologically and it can positively impact their ability to perform their best.

This activity will provide you with an opportunity to explore your mentee's stressors and to empower them to identify coping skills that will build resilience. Finally, it will prompt your mentee to practice their time management by developing a plan to incorporate their coping skills into their daily lives.

It's important to recognize that the identification of coping skills is just the first step towards establishing a balanced lifestyle. Ultimately it will be the regular integration of healthy habits and the appropriate application of coping skills during stressful times that will help your mentee find balance and achieve optimal performance. As a mentor, you can help your mentee practice regular self-care by holding them accountable to their self-care plan and by reminding them of the coping and time management skills that they identified during this activity when they become overwhelmed.

Please review a few common stress factors, or types of stress, below. Utilize this information to develop 5-10 open ended questions that will encourage your mentee to reflect more deeply on their current experiences with stress.

Academic Stress: As a freshman, your mentee will experience a number of changes. In the absence of a parent or guardian, your mentee may struggle to attend classes, complete assignments, manage projects and prepare for exams. They may not know how to seek out resources or where to find support.

Personal Stress: College is often the first time many students are living independently of family. They may struggle to find a sense of belonging and cave to peer pressure as a result. They may engage in the use of substances to feel included or to cope. They may struggle with their identity and engage in the exploration of their own values and beliefs.

Family Stress: Family expectations and their support, or the lack thereof, can impact your mentee's experience. They may feel a lot of pressure to choose the right major or to get good grades especially if they are the first in their family to attend college. Your mentee may also struggle with the absence of familial support or with the guilt of being away from family.

Financial Stress: Besides tuition, the hidden costs, such as books, school supplies, personal care, social outings, fees for clubs and organizations, and miscellaneous charges, may come as a surprise to your mentee. Some mentee's will work part-time to meet these costs. Working hours takes away from studying hours and can increase academic stress.

Reflect on your own coping and time management skills. Be prepared to share these with your mentee.



PART TWO: Stress Management

Coping skills help a person tolerate, minimize, and deal with stressful situations in life. Managing stress well can help a person feel better physically and psychologically and it can positively impact their ability to perform their best.

With your mentor, explore the stress in your life and identify the unique coping skills that will help you to manage this stress.

What are some of the big stressors in your life right now? (List 4)

What types of stress are they?

Identify 10 coping skills (activities or people) that make you feel better when you aren't feeling your best:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

How regularly do you engage in these activities or with these people? How might increasing the frequency of your engagement impact your well-being?

PART THREE: Time Management

Good time management allows you to accomplish more in a shorter period of time. This leads to more free time, which lowers your stress, helps you focus, and leads to greater success.

Some time management best practices include:

- Setting goals
- Identifying and completing the most important task first
- Prioritizing your tasks
- Creating a schedule
- Including healthy boundaries, saying “no” when you have to
- Practicing self-care during scheduled breaks
- Using the right tools
- Asking for help
- Not procrastinating

Discuss the importance of each practice with your mentor!

Which time management practices do you use regularly? Write them down below and describe how and when you are using them.

Ask your mentor how they manage their time! Compare and contrast their practices with your practices and the best practices listed above. Write down 3 strategies that you would like to adopt and use more regularly.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How can your mentor help you to make sure that you’re using these strategies consistently?

With your mentor, outline a weekly schedule that details when you will practice your coping skills and apply your time management strategies. Use a planner or an app to get organized! Set alarms to act as reminders and check-in regularly with your mentor to assess your progress. If you don’t yet have the right tools, use the template below to get started.

