

# COPING WITH STRESS AND SHYNESS

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My first paper of the term is due in eleven days. Eleven days! And another, two days later, and a test too? Oh no! What am I going to do? I'm scared.

Well, actually, I'm not too scared yet, but by next Friday I'll be SCARED. I'll eat too much for a few days, and yell at the kids, and clean house. Yes, clean house. I always find lots of housework to do when there's a deadline coming. After all, who can study with fingerprints on the walls?

Oh yes, I'll probably have a good cry too. That's what stress does to me.

A little bit of stress is a good thing they say. In fact, Reg Craft at the Counselling Centre says that if you aren't a little nervous about your midterms, you should be. Otherwise, you might fall asleep in the middle of a fifty point essay question. A little stress will keep us on our toes.

It's not the butterflies in the tummy that make stress a problem. It's the times your mind goes blank even when you know you know the answer. Or the times you finish an exam with three minutes to spare, only to read it through and discover that you've misunderstood.

If this has ever happened to you, or you're scared it might, then pop on down to the Counselling Centre for a Stress Management Workshop. Reg Craft will be offering two this term - one for those who are already half dead from fear, and the other for those who need one batch of midterms to get them that way.

At the workshop, you will learn how to be aware of stress as it is building. The problem is much easier to manage at the beginning than at its peak. Awareness is achieved through body sensing skills, relaxation training, and a diary of stressful situations.

The diary will help you find patterns in your stress, as well as point out what adverse effect you have on your own stress. That sounds a little strange, doesn't it? After all, stress is something that just happens to you, isn't it? Not really. Stress does not exist on the outside. I'll put it this way - a 3000 word essay may cause sheer terror or it may invoke a sense of challenge. It's all in how you see it.

The diary will also prove invaluable in discovering the source(s) of your stress. Then, depending on that source, you learn to deal with it in specific ways - relaxation, encouraging yourself, or focussing on the

most important task at hand. (I guess that means I shouldn't do housework during midterms. I'll have to try that excuse on my mother-in-law.)

Stress management, however, requires practice. The night before an exam is too late to go running down the hill to see Reg.

So, if you think a Stress Management Workshop would be helpful, on October 4 at 7 p.m., the place to be is Room 19, Alumni Memorial Building. The workshop consists of three weekly three hour sessions. There is no pre-registration, but it is first come, first serve. Attendance at all three evenings is important, both for your own sake, and for the group, so mark it well on your calendar.

The next workshop begins November 15.

Oh, by the way, these Stress Management Workshops will be dealing only with performance stress, the kind you get over exams, seminars, and assignments. If you are suffering from people related stress, for instance, it would be better to see Reg Craft for a private chat. Call for an appointment at 453-4820.



He: So, Sugarplum, where should we go tonight after the movie?

She: Uh, it doesn't matter. Anywhere's ok.

He: How about pizza?

She: Sure.

He: But if you'd rather have

a hamburger...

She: Anything's fine. It doesn't really matter.

Does that sound familiar? It does at our house (except for the Sugarplum bit, that is.) Or how about this one:

He: Is six o'clock alright for a jog around campus?

She: Great! See you in the morning! (Meanwhile she's thinking, "I hate getting up early. And I hate running even more. But...")

In both cases, at least one person is being non-assertive. The first couple will probably eat Chinese, which both hate, but think the other loves. The second couple will run together for months until "she" finally blows up and refuses to take one more step at such an ungodly hour.

If you can see here a little of yourself, perhaps you would do well to take advantage of the Assertiveness Training Workshop beginning next week at Counselling Services.

Nonassertive people may be afraid that assertiveness will be mistaken for aggression. They are not quite sure what their rights are, but they certainly know what will happen if they speak for themselves - the worst possible consequences, of course. So they quietly say nothing, try to please everyone, and gradually burn up inside.

Aggressive people understand better what their own rights are, but they forget about the rights of other people. And anyone unfortunate enough to get in their way will soon know it. Aggressive people are sarcastic, condescending and completely bothersome.

But is there no choice between meekly accepting other people's plans or making an outright attack?

By "responsible," I mean a careful weighing of the circumstances and consequences. You can say what you honestly think or feel. But other people

have rights too, and here are a few: the right to do what they want with their own things, their own body, and their own time; the right to express their feelings as well; and the right to be respected.

It can be summed up in an old saying, to do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

The Assertiveness Training Group will begin meeting October 4th, from 3 to 5 p.m. Over ten weekly sessions, participants will learn the difference between nonassertive, assertive and aggressive ways of interacting. They will learn how to meet people and carry on suitable conversations. They will practice asking for what they want, and saying no to requests. And they will discover that it's ok to state their opinion or express their feelings.

Any student of UNB or STU, even part time ones like me, can register for this group. However, a preliminary interview will be necessary. Larry Finkelman, who conducts the workshop, uses these interviews to make the sessions relevant by presenting specific problems and the skills for dealing with them.

Through role play and group feedback, the members will explore all the thoughts and feelings that make assertiveness difficult. They will learn to substitute new, more self-confident thoughts and responses, and then practise, practise, practise. This practise, or homework, will be tailored to individual needs.

So if your own nonassertive or aggressive behaviour is threatening your well being, give Larry Finkelman a call at 453-4820, or stop by at the Counselling Centre in the Alumni Memorial Building. And do it today. Time is running out.

P.S. If you can't make it this term, there will be a second chance after Christmas.

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