

LISA PYTLIK

# Stress reduction key to survival

I've got to ask this now, at the beginning of the term, because later you will be too caught up with the familiar backlog of homework, papers and finals to answer me. So I will ask now: Have you been constipated lately?



*It seems that we should be a lot more careful about the amount stress we are willing to endure. In fact, maybe we'd all be better off quitting school. . . .*

How about fatigued? Have you suffered from any headaches, stomachaches or pains in your shoulders, neck or back? If you have had any of these symptoms this past week and you are enrolled in classes this five-week term, you, like myself, may be suffering from an acute case of school.

School? Yes, school. Most students will agree that "school" is nearly synonymous with "stress," because rarely are classes found without it. And stress is directly linked to such psychosomatic illnesses as those listed above, as well as to many others. In fact, some doctors have estimated that as many as 75 to 90 percent of health concerns result from or are influenced by stress. Even illnesses of greater severity, including heart disease, asthma, rheumatoid arthritis and cancer, are today thought to be influenced by stress.

In light of this, it seems that we should be a lot more careful about the amount stress we are willing to endure. In fact, maybe we'd all be better off quitting school. . . .

Well, maybe not. Quitting school would probably create more stress than it would diminish. In place of the stress of homework and tests would be decreased job opportunities, unemployment or career dissatisfaction and the same mounds of unpaid bills we face as students, without the benefit of low-interest or interest-free student loans.

What, then, are we to do about health-endangering stress?

Well, perhaps we could reduce it by changing the system. For example, perhaps we could make rules prohibiting studying any more than 40 hours per week. Perhaps areas on campus could be designated as "no studying" zones. Perhaps warnings could be printed on textbooks to inform students of the books' stress contents and associated health risks.

Perhaps these ideas sound ridiculous.

And they probably are because they assume the whole problem of the stress incurred by students is the fault of the system, not the student. Obviously, the system is not perfect and there are some things that could be changed — and SHOULD be changed — to lower the amount of stress that students face. However, it takes a long time for a system to change and, in the meantime, it makes sense to also look at ways in which individuals can personally reduce the negative effects of stress. For example, through the use of stress reduction programs.

There are a variety of techniques that we students could use to reduce stress in our lives. None of them take a great deal of time and many of them are taught through the health center, right here on campus.

Yet most students, myself included, don't engage in a regular program of stress management. In fact, just this summer I asked a class of about 50 students how many used some sort of stress reduction program and only three people raised their hands. Part of the reason for this may be that we don't take the effects of stress seriously because we can so easily blame our problems and ills on other sources. For example, I'd personally rather believe that any stomachaches I get these days are from something I ate

rather than from being nervous about some little test.

Another reason why some people may not practice stress management is that they think their stress will end when school does. But even if all college graduates were fortunate enough to find good jobs, most would continue to experience stress from other sources such as from having a family and adjusting to a new career.

Really, nearly everyone could benefit from practicing stress management, whether they are students or not. Furthermore, if everyone routinely practiced stress management and learned to change other illness-causing lifestyle factors, society as a whole would probably also reap great benefits.

For example, one of today's top political concerns is health care reform. Most of the debate surrounding this issue seems to revolve around finding the best way to "reel in" costs and make high quality health care available to everyone who needs it. But most of the proposed solutions seem to focus on how we should change the system. Little if any attention has been paid to what individuals may do in support of the cause.

It's true that our current system needs to be changed. But imagine what would happen if, in addition to changing the system, we eliminated all health problems primarily resulting from stress and other lifestyle factors such as smoking, overeating, and inactivity.

I'm not an economics expert, but it makes sense that if we were really able to do this, it would decrease the demand for health care and thus both decrease the price of health care and increase its availability.

It's probably not possible to eliminate all psychosomatic illnesses, but reducing them as much as possible would definitely benefit individuals and probably society as a whole. Therefore, it seems my social duty to take some reading about stress management and go on a vacation. Which is exactly what I intend to do.

Pytlík is a graduate psychology student and a Summer Daily Nebraskan columnist.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

# Freedom of the press editorial absurd

Your concern about the too generous interpretation of the media of their rights under Freedom of the Press is absurd (Enough Press, 7/8/93). What about Roger Bjorklund's too generous interpretation of his rights as a citizen of the United States? And what about Candice Harms' right to pull into the parking lot of her parents'

apartment building at night and not be bothered?

The outcome of the first abuse is that I am presented with too much information (fact or otherwise) about a criminal and the crime he committed. So what? The outcome of the second abuse is the loss of Candice Harms' life. There is no comparison.

It makes no difference to me if his trial takes place in Libya, Lima or Lincoln. Just let it take place quickly so that not one more cent of my taxes is spent on the process of ensuring Roger Bjorklund a fair trial.

Julie Russell  
Lincoln

## P.S. Write Back

The Daily Nebraskan wants to hear from you. If you want to voice your opinion about an article that appears in the newspaper, let us know. Just write a brief letter to the editor and sign it (don't forget your student ID number) and mail it to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 'R' Street, Lincoln, NE 68588-0448, or stop by the office in the basement of the Nebraska Union and visit with us. We're all ears.

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3. You may enter as many times as you wish.
4. All entries become the property of the Lied Center for Performing Arts.
5. The winning entry will be posted at the Lied Center Box Office beginning Aug. 9, 1993.
6. The Lied Center reserves the right to make changes to the winning entry.
7. The decision of the judges is final.
8. Lied Center employees and their families are not eligible to win.
8. All entries must be postmarked by July 30, 1993 to be eligible to win.

Send entries to:  
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