

Students battle stress through relaxation

By ERIN SCHULTE
Senior Reporter

It's a world of deadlines and college students are always rushing to meet them. And in their full-speed-ahead charge, they sometimes run into walls — of sickness, lack of concentration, panic or substance abuse. In other words, stress.

Wes Sime, professor of health and human performance and stress expert, said college is prime time for students to hit the skids of stress.

"It is to be expected, particularly during a time period where there are multiple demands — school, relationships, work and extracurricular activities," Sime said. "They're all really exciting, but at the same time, they're an overload."

Complaints of "I'm stressed" are heard all over campus, and it's not just an imagined condition. Sime said stress manifests itself in four ways:

—Physiological problems, which includes nervous stomach, cold or sweaty hands and muscle tension.

—Cognitive troubles, like lack of concentration or memory and easy distraction.

—Emotional effects like panic attacks, anxiety or depression.

—Behavioral pitfalls such as overeating, anorexia, substance abuse, and irritability.

Sime compared stress to a speedometer on a car. We need a certain amount to keep us going, and if we don't have any, we'll simply shut down. If we get too much, we'll overwork our engines.

Some can handle all the demands. Eric Marintzer is probably one of the busiest people on campus. Like

everyone else, he's got classes. And like about one-quarter of UNL students, he's in a greek house. But he's also the ASUN president. The position has actually worked in his favor, he said.

"It's taught me to organize my time a lot better," Marintzer said.

When the seriousness of his duties get to him, Marintzer said his first reaction is not always good.

"I procrastinate," he said. "However, the position dictates that that's not a really feasible thing to do."

So he looks for his release at home. "My fraternity is one way I deal with stress," he said. "Being around people I know and generally have a lot in common with is very relaxing for me."

Jenny Brown, a senior biology student, takes a more common route for stress relief: caffeine.

"It's too bad, but yeah, I'm sleep deprived," Brown said.

Brown is president of Alpha Delta Pi sorority, just took the MCAT test, is applying to medical school, is involved with collegiate Sertoma and is taking 18 hours of classes. Think you're busy? She's also in the honors program, Golden Key and Tri-Beta biology honorary. She works at Bergan Mercy Hospital as a unit secretary, too.

That schedule doesn't leave much time for sleep — but just enough time to crack open a can of Coke or Mountain Dew, she said.

Brown said that, like Marintzer, she also does a lot of planning to avoid time crunches. She said she also has had to drop some things, like volunteering at local hospitals.

She also looks to friends or sorority sisters for help when she's too busy. "I delegate responsibility," she said.

"I have responsible friends who I know

I can trust to get things done."

Others, however, because of personality characteristics or habit, can't deal with stress quite so well, Sime said. For those, there are ways to combat stress.

Sime recommended biofeedback. During biofeedback, monitors are hooked up to the forehead and other points on the body. They measure heart rate, skin temperature and chemicals in the body, Sime said.

"It makes people smarter about recognizing what we feel and experience," Sime said.

People often ignore signals of stress, and biofeedback helps them realize how they feel physically when they experience stress.

"Students in particular block out signals and use caffeine to stay awake," Sime said.

Mary Swoboda, licensed clinical social worker at the health center, said there are lots of options for stress relief besides biofeedback.

From 12:30 p.m.-1:20 p.m. on Mondays there will be free "relaxation hours" at the health center. Methods of stress-reduction will include visualization, self-hypnosis and yoga. Schedules can be picked up at the health center. Swoboda also recommended regular exercise to keep stress at a minimum.

Biofeedback sessions are free the first three times and cost \$10 each after that.

Sime said if students had an unusual number of stress symptoms or felt like stress was "unbearable," they should stop in for help.

Also, students should remember that stress isn't all bad, Sime said. For example, inmates, who never have anything to do, need more stress.

"Life would be very boring, and not a healthy situation."



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MARNI SPECK

Health Center hails sex education Peer instruction courses expand student awareness

By ANTONE OSEKA
Senior Editor

Safe sex — it's an issue many college students think was covered adequately in their high school health classes, but most of the time, it wasn't.

Students looking to expand their education on these issues can do so through the University Health Center.

The health center offers two different classes, one on contraception and one on sexually transmitted infections.

Pat Tetreault, sexuality education coordinator for the health center, said the classes are taught through her department. The classes are meant to educate students through a program called PERSUNL, Peers Encouraging Responsible Sexuality at UNL.

Both classes are taught by peer sex educators and are offered once or twice a week. People must sign up at the appointment desk in the health center to take either class, Jina Verzal said. Verzal is a peer sex educator.

Both classes are free and focus on how students can protect themselves when they choose to have sex.

The contraception class is required

all for women wanting a prescription for birth control pills through the health center for the first time. The class isn't required for women who are already on the pill and just want the prescription through the health center.

Usually the contraception class has four to five students attending, most of them women. It's rare for men to attend the class, Verzal said. However, many types of students attend the classes.

Frequently the class is taught in residence halls, fraternities and sororities, which request that the program be taught by the health center for their specific audiences.

The STI course covers in detail the types of STI's encountered by most college students. The most common STI on campus, Tetreault said, was genital warts.

Genital warts is a viral infection that is not curable. The infection can be treated to ease discomfort, but it will never go away.

"The majority of the people don't contract an STI," Tetreault said. "We're here to provide people with ways to stay as healthy as possible."

But, if students think they have contracted an STI, they can go to the health

center for testing and treatment.

The Health Center also offers HIV testing for \$12. The charge is for the blood test, not for the visit, and the wait for results is two weeks.

Anonymous HIV testing is available through the county health offices. All positive HIV tests are reported to the state for statistical purposes.

Other STI viral infections, like gonorrhea, also have to be reported to the state for statistical purposes. Verzal suggested that students who believe they have an STI should get tested, just to relieve their worries.

"A lot of it comes down to people acknowledging we're sexual beings," Tetreault said. "It's just a part of who we are. We need to deal with sex in direct and rational ways."

That, in a nutshell, is exactly what the classes are trying to do. For teachers of the class, like Verzal, it gets easier with time to talk about sexual issues with their peers.

Verzal is in her second year of teaching the class, and said teaching doesn't faze her anymore.

"I had to get used to the methods and saying words like penis," she said. "Now it's second nature."



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