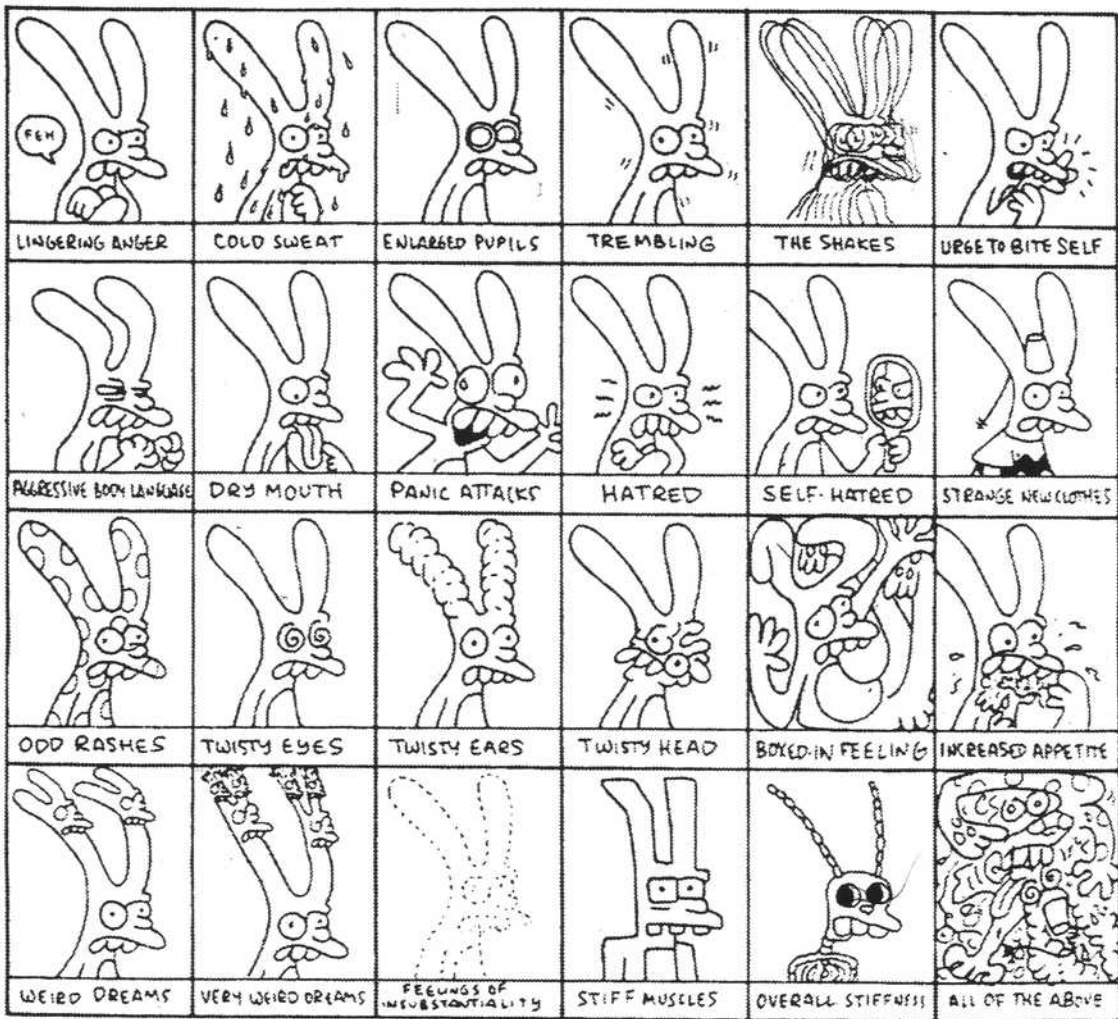


LIFE IN HELL

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THE 24 WARNING SIGNS OF STRESS



Stress strikes students differently

BY IEVA AUGSTUMS
Staff Reporter

Living as a college student in the '90s is not easy: so many expectations and responsibilities, and sometimes more learning than fun.

For most students, college can be the most stressful time of their lives. Sue Bukacek, a psychologist at the University Health Center, said, "Students are prime targets for stress just because they are students."

"Students are very vulnerable to societal stress," Bukacek said. "There is a lot to juggle around in only four years. Even after graduation, learning and educating oneself never seems to cease ... nor does the stress."

Stress can be good, called eustress, when it helps us perform better; or stress can be bad - distress - when it causes one to become upset or sick, Bukacek said.

In essence, stress is something that cannot be avoided. Most people do not have trouble realizing they are stressed, but many do not realize what causes or remedies stress.

Finances, academic achievements, time management, family and personal appearance are just some of the common stresses of a college student. However, students are not, and should not feel solely responsible for having stress.

Bukacek said causes of stress vary among students:

■ Freshmen deal with moving away from home and loved ones, adjusting to campus, getting used to a

new living environment, making new friends, and experimenting with the idea of independence.

■ Sophomores and juniors are affected by more general types of stress, such as deciding on a major and/or study field, getting used to harder classes and coping with friends graduating and moving away from college.

■ Seniors have difficulty with saying goodbye to friends and loved ones when they graduate and experience the transition from college into career world. Other stresses include going to job interviews, applying and being accepted into graduate school, and realizing they are considered adults and have more responsibilities.

Sometimes, it's not the big changes in life that cause the most stress.

"The biggest stress in my life right now is finding parking on this campus," said Malanie Richards, a sophomore pre-nursing major. "If I don't find a place to park, I cannot attend my classes."

Students who experience stress, whether it be simple or complex, do not always recognize the onset of stress, Bukacek said. Stress is produced by both normal and unexpected events, as well as by both positive and negative occurrences. Just as a divorce or a low grade might increase stress, positive experiences, such as a marriage engagement or admission to graduate school, also increase stress.

"Some stresses, like studying for a test, can actually help you perform well in the future when you are faced with other stresses in your life,"

Bukacek said.

Brian Wucher, a junior international relations major, agreed.

"Doing your homework, or even working ahead in your studies, means you have one less thing you have to do later," Wucher said. "If you wait until the last second to do things, you allow for stress to build up and get worse. If you manage your time and get things done, you have more time to relax and enjoy college."

Making time for oneself and relaxing is one way to deal with stress. Other ways include getting enough sleep, talking to friends and family or a counselor, taking part in a physical activity or sport and pampering oneself to certain luxuries, such as a relaxing massage, Bukacek said.

Managing stress is easier said than done. For most people, stress management is the hardest task they will ever face in life, she said.

"Stress can be more harmful to a student when they do not feel in control of their stress levels and the events that produce them in their lives," said Melissa Ellenson, a sophomore secondary education major and student health aide.

Ellenson has not assisted any students yet in coping with stress, but is assured that when midterms and final exams come, students will be knocking on her door wanting someone to talk to and give reassurance that everything will work out for the best. Ellenson said she is ready to help in any way she can.

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