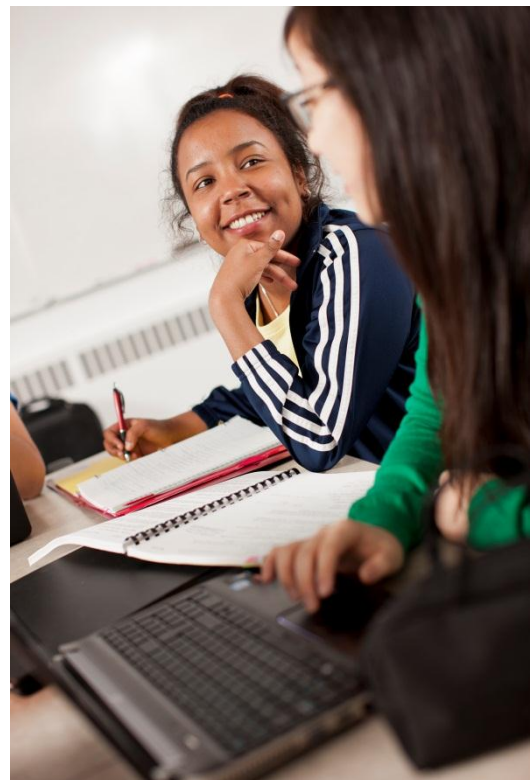


# Stress Tolerance

Stress tolerance is the ability to be relaxed and composed when faced with difficulties. Having positive stress tolerance is being able to stay calm without getting carried away by strong emotions of helplessness and hopelessness.

1. **Pay attention.** Engage your self-awareness and look for any physical or mental indications your stress level may be rising. You may feel wound up, wired or overwhelmed; experience tension in your neck, back or shoulders. You may also develop headaches, dizziness or shortness of breath. Your sleep and/ or eating patterns may be disrupted. If you are seeing these sensations visit a doctor, a counsellor or a success coach to help you develop strategies to minimize some of your stress.
2. **Evaluate priorities.** Is your stress related to taking on too many volunteer or extra-curricular activities? If so evaluate all of the areas of your life that take up time and prioritize them. Is being on volleyball team worth the anxiety it is creating? If you have a job while in school, do you have to work as many hours? Evaluate if the extra activities are helping or hindering your success. It is ok to say “no” sometimes.
3. **Avoid being hijacked.** When you are stress your emotions may get carried away. Be aware of what your emotions are saying and ask yourself, “does my emotion fit with this present situation.” Realistic thinking can help calm your nerves and match your emotions to the current situation.
4. **Focus on one issue at a time.** Having more than one area of stress can build significant anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed. First, list all of your concerns in order of their immediacy. Tackle the most pressing concern first and then continue down the list. This way you are taking control of the problems one by one.
5. **Take a time out.** It is very difficult to take some time out when you feel anxious and out of control. However, this may be the best thing for you. Go for



dinner with a friend or watch a movie. Guaranteed the concerns will be there when you return, but sometimes your brain needs a break from the stress.

6. **Talk positively.** Say positive statements to yourself like: "I can do this", "I am strong and capable", "This will pass, it's only temporary", "I've got through this before, I can do it again". Find an affirmation that works for you (even if you don't believe it at first!). Write it down and memorize it for when you need it.
7. **See the big picture.** What significance will this issue or concern have a week, a month or a year from now? If you fail an assignment, it is ok there will be other assignments. Remember, thinking big picture will help you minimize the stress by seeing your concerns in a realistic light.
8. **Talk it out.** Who is your support system? If do not have one, have a look around at the people in your life. Who is trustworthy and caring? Who encourages and supports you? Talking about your stress may help minimize some of the anxiety, by getting it outside your own head.
9. **Additional suggestions:** Take a deep breath, go for a walk, count slowly to ten, exercise, talk it out with a friend, practice meditation or yoga, listen to soothing music, swim, create purposeful distractions, journal or create some other form of artwork.
10. **Visit a success coach.** If you would like more information on this topic visit a success coach. To book an appointment, visit the student success office (2nd floor of south campus hall) or call 519-888-4567 ext. 84410

Adapted from University of Waterloo Counselling Services

