Stress Busters for Students: Avoiding the Food Trap

Students often resort to food as a means to reduce stress or as a reward for studying. However, this habit can get you in trouble, nutritionally speaking. Routine use of food to cope with stress can lead to unwanted weight gain, extreme energy shifts and poor nutrition. Learn to fight stress with non-food stress busters. Just don’t use ’em to put off studying forever!

Trade a foot or shoulder massage with a friend or roommate. Be sure to use some lotion if you are doing a foot rub!

Play a game of solitaire. Fifteen minutes of a mindless game can be just the thing that re-energizes you. For about $15, you can buy a computer version that makes it really fun!

Zone out with scented candles, dim lights, natural sounds or meditative music. Use head phones for an enhanced musical experience.

Go for a quick run, power walk or a rollerblade.

Step out on your balcony or in front of your residence hall for a momentary change of scenery.

Take a short excursion to an on-campus park or arboretum. If it is dark, take a friend with you and stay in well-lit areas.

Paint your finger and toe nails with a new polish.

Write/send holiday cards or email greetings. Check out Blue Mountain Arts website. You can email free animated/musical cards: http://www.bluemountain.com/index.html

Put on your favorite CD for 15 minutes.

Practice deep breathing for a few minutes. In a comfortable chair, inhale and exhale slowly and deeply, allowing your abdomen to push in when you exhale and extend out when you inhale. Repeat this breathing sequence for five minutes or until you feel more relaxed.

Sit in a comfortable chair or sofa and have a “mini-day dream”. Visualize a pleasant place to go and allow your mind to “go” somewhere else that is safe and relaxing.

Try yoga. Your campus may offer free yoga or a close by wellness center. There are also many DVDs/video tapes available.

Doze for 10 minutes. Be sure to set an alarm to wake you up. A short nap like this can revitalize you better than a cup of coffee.

Make a list of a few nice things you’re going to do for yourself when the test, paper or exams are over.

Organize your photos to share with family and friends during an upcoming holiday break.

Do anything else that takes your mind off your studies, except eat, and that de-stresses you for a few minutes. Make your own list of non-food stress busters below.

Students are at risk for not getting enough sleep. Lack of sleep not only increases stress levels, it may also lead to extra pounds! Try not to sacrifice sleep for studying on a regular basis.