

# STOP the

# STRESS



As the new school year begins, so does the added stress of homework, studying, extracurricular activities and making time for yourself on top of everything else. Stressful situations such as this can make for a difficult transition from summer to school year, but with these helpful stress indicators and tips to avoid stress, hopefully the transition will be less of a disturbance on your current lifestyle.

The body is designed to handle any number of stressful situations that occur in life – both physically and emotionally.

It is possible for stress to have a positive effect on the body because it causes us to be alert and aware of possible dangerous or harmful situations. However, if you are in a state of distress, or stress that has not been resolved, your body's internal equilibrium becomes off balance and can have a negative impact on your daily life. WebMd ([www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)) suggests that negative physical symptoms of distress can range from, "...headaches, upset stomach, elevated blood pressure, chest pain and problems sleeping."

Jerome F. Kiffer, MA, Department of Health Psychology and Applied Psychophysiology at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation lists the following physical warning signs of stress:

- Dizziness or a general feeling of "being out of it"
- General aches and pains
- Grinding teeth, clenched jaw
- Headaches
- Indigestion
- Increase or loss in appetite
- Muscle tension in neck, face or shoulders
- Problems sleeping
- Racing heart
- Cold and sweaty palms
- Tiredness, exhaustion
- Trembling/shaking
- Weight gain or loss
- Upset stomach

Kiffer suggests that if you are experiencing any of these symptoms and feel that they are stress-related, learn to manage the stress in your life by following these helpful tips:

- Keep a positive attitude.
- Accept that there are events that you cannot control.
- Be assertive instead of aggressive. "Assert" your feelings, opinions, or beliefs instead of becoming angry, defensive or passive.
- Learn and practice relaxation techniques.
- Exercise regularly. Your body can fight stress better when it is fit.
- Eat healthy, well-balanced meals
- Get enough rest and sleep. Your body needs time to recover from stressful events.
- Don't rely on alcohol or drugs to reduce stress.
- Seek out social support.
- Learn to manage your time more effectively.

*The most important aspect of keeping stress under control and to keep it from getting to the point of distress is to know your body and listen to what it is trying to tell you. If you feel that you are distressed, take some time and take steps to ensure that your life is as stress-free as possible.*

