

10.08.2020

bridges to university

issue no.5



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Introduction



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Hey everyone! Welcome back for this week's issue of the official bridges newsletter!

This week, we will discuss something that will become a big part of your academic career, if it isn't already. This topic has been historically ignored despite its importance in academic success: mental health. Until recently, mental health has been disregarded mainly because of the widespread belief that anything non-physical is "just in your head" and not a valid problem. Traditional quotes like "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" reinforce the idea that mental well-being is a minor issue.

With the advancement of science, we can confidently say that this is not true. Whether it be grades, extracurriculars, or relationships, mental health is starting to slowly gain its rightful place as one of the key factors that determine how post-secondary education, and your career, will pan out. So with a better understanding of this concept, we plan on discussing a whole range of topics related to mental health today. Note that we will mostly cover external stress factors, like school, for this newsletter. So let's get right into it! If you have any other questions, feel free to send us an email at bridgestouniversity@gmail.com! We are always more than willing to help you out!

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Sources of Stress

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Going into post-secondary, you will quickly realize that many things can stress you out, and sometimes even ruin your day. In this section, we will be covering some of the main sources of stress and where to expect them.

common sources of stress



In school, there may be many things expected of you. In class, you will have assignments due, presentations required, and exams to complete.

Outside of your courses, you may be pressured to work with people you've never met, navigate campuses and cities on your own, and hang out with many new friends.



Away from university altogether, you may have to deal with family issues and personal relationships.

Feeling some level of stress from all of these different factors is entirely normal and expected. Stress is a biological characteristic that has been helpful throughout history. In the past, "stress" forced humanity to worry about its survival and was the primary mechanism for the "fight or flight" response. Back then, this meant keeping an eye out for that herd of lions and making sure you hunt that gazelle for dinner. Today, this stress is no longer as much from physical threats as it is from mental and social pressures like school and relationships[1]. At the end of the day, it just depends on how you cope with it. Which is exactly what we will talk about next!

[1] Nesse, Randolph & Bhatnagar, S. & Ellis, Bruce. (2016). Evolutionary Origins and Functions of the Stress Response System. 10.1016/B978-0-12-800951-2.00011-X.

Dealing with Issues

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For our next topic, let's talk about how we can cope with the many factors of stress that we've just discussed. Since we are all unique and react to things differently, not all of these techniques will work for you. It is up to you to decide which of these would be the best solutions in coping with your challenges.

Here are some ways that me and my colleagues deal with stress:

- **Meditation:** One of my friends does this almost religiously. This is a great way to get a clear headspace in the morning and get ready for what the day holds. It can be as short as 5 minutes, but ends up being a great way to relieve stress and self reflect.
- **Journaling:** A great way to visualize and understand your problems and duties. Really helpful to getting to the root of the problem or in simply venting about your problems.



- **Exercise:** A scientifically proven way to make yourself feel happier and boost your confidence!
- **Creating a study group:** Study and do tasks with your friends. It's always easier to divide and conquer than to go at it alone.
- **Find a Hobby:** A really great way to get your mind off things, and learn something you love simultaneously!
- **Breathing Techniques:** Try searching up some great techniques that can help you relax and get focused during stressful times or during a panic attack.
- **Talk to a Professional:** Every university has great resources when it comes to how to make mental health and coping with stress. It's always a great idea to reach out to them whenever you need it. That's what they're there for!



Growing from your Problems

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Lastly, let's talk about how we can grow from the obstacles and problems we face in post secondary and in our future. As I have said before, stress is a normal part of post secondary life. You will tumble, and you will fall. There will be days when you feel like the whole world is against you, and on others days, you will feel like you are on top of the world. In life, whether in school or not, you will have good days and bad days, and learning to adapt and grow from them is a part of being human.

At the end of the day, what determines who you are is how you grow from your problems. Take a moment to reflect on some of the challenges you have faced in the past, and what you did to solve them. What were your weaknesses during the last few years, and how can you fix them? How can you learn from your past experiences and make sure that when a similar problem arises again, you're on your "A game".

Many of us look back at past selves and cringe at how ignorant we were. This "cringe" is proof that you have grown as a person, and we can guarantee you this will continue as you grow up. So learn from your experiences, acknowledge what happened, good or bad, and become the best version of yourself you can be today! Remember, the only thing that's worse than cringing at how you used to act, is not cringing.

The more you grow, the more skills you will accumulate to learn how to deal with future stress. We have no doubt that all of you will deal with whatever school throws at you and come out as better versions of yourselves on the other side!

