

Q&A with **stress expert Dr. O'Barr**

The exam period can be a stressful time. The Daily Tar Heel reporter Ellen Black spoke with Dr. Allen O'Barr, the director of Counseling and Wellness Services, on how to handle exam stress in a healthy way.

DAILY TAR HEEL: How should students handle the stress of exams?

AO: Exams are inherently stressful for most people. It's tempting to deprive yourself of sleep, use substances, eat poorly, but those things ultimately aren't going to help you get through exam period. The best thing to do is to try to have prepared up until that point to make sure you are ready.

Set a schedule, so that you're not just wasting time. Try to get good sleep, if you can. Try and not to do drugs or drink alcohol. Try to eat well. It's amazing what a good diet does for brain function.

DTH: If we have to choose between sleep and exercise, which should we choose?

AO: Try to balance them. If you can drop from 8 hours of sleep to 7 hours of sleep, and squeeze in an hour of exercise, good move. If you're dropping from 2 hours of sleep to 1 hour of sleep to get exercise, bad move.

The idea is balance. I would opt for enough sleep first, and then, if there's a way to get exercise, get exercise.

DTH: What are some things that college students usually do during exams that actually hurt us rather than help us?

AO: Pretty much, skipping sleep. Also stimulant use, including caffeine, Adderall or Dexedrine. If those aren't prescribed, and I know people are using them, that's ultimately putting you into a deficit that you may not be able to sustain through an 8-day exam period.

TIPS ON HOW TO HANDLE STRESS

Find ways of balancing life and exams for the next week and a half:

- Try to get enough sleep; 8 hours a night is recommended
- Avoid drugs and alcohol
- Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, Adderall and Dexedrine
- Eat a balanced diet, not just

sugary and junk foods

- Take breaks while doing work
- Make a schedule and stick to it
- If feeling overwhelmed, visit Counseling and Wellness Services. Walk-in hours are Mon. through Fri.:
9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

DTH: Is there anything that college students should start doing that could help us during exams?

AO: Better than anything else, start with a schedule today. Look at your schedule, put your time blocks in there for your classes.

If you've got important social things that you need to do, put those in as blocks, then put in your study blocks, and if your study blocks are few and far between and your social blocks are a ton, start cutting out social blocks and putting more study blocks in.

You can make up the social stuff later. Now is the time to set up a calendar and just stick to the schedule, otherwise the time goes by.

DTH: What are the most common stress-related problems that you hear of?

AO: Not being able to sleep. Once a person gets stressed, they start getting anxious, they can have panic attacks, they can have difficulty falling asleep and difficulty staying asleep. They can lose their appetite.

I'd say anxiety is the number one thing that's a result of stress.

DTH: What are some ways to de-stress during exams to prevent these problems?

AO: Exercise, good sleep, good diet, and of course, seek help if you don't feel like you're going to make it. Come to Counseling and Wellness.

DTH: Is it important to take breaks?

AO: I think so. Your brain is only going to be able to function maximally for whatever period of time is determinant to you.

If you find yourself just staring at the page, not retaining anything, take a break. The break will refresh you.

I'm not saying take a 2 day break, but take 45 minutes or an hour if you can afford it and go do something physical to get your blood pumping, so that you're sort of changing over all the blood in your brain.

Otherwise you just end up staring at the same sentence and the same page over and over again. If you're not getting anywhere, you might as well take a break.

DTH: What should students do if they are feeling overwhelmed?

AO: Come to Counseling and Wellness, or if it's not that severe, seek help from a friend or family.

Contact the desk editor at university@dailytarheel.com.

Turn
Christmas
Upside Down
at University United Methodist Church
www.chapelhilluunc.org

Worship fully. Spend less. Give more. Love all. Remember what the season is all about.

Sunday, December 9

A Carolina Christmas, 7 pm

The UNC Women's Glee Club, Tarpeggios, Vision and the praise bands from the UNC Wesley Campus Ministry and Presbyterian Campus Ministry will lead the music for this service of Lessons and Carols to prepare the campus community for the Christmas season. Hot chocolate will be served after the worship service. Sponsored by UNC Wesley Campus Ministry, Presbyterian Campus Ministry, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and University United Methodist Church.

Sunday, December 16

Christmas Carols and Candlelight, 7 pm

Sing Christmas carols, sip sweet coffee and enjoy Moravian buns as we celebrate the season with a festive candlelit Love Feast in the Moravian tradition.

Wednesday, December 19

Blue Christmas Worship Service, 7 pm

For those who are grieving this holiday season, we will hold a Blue Christmas service in conjunction with Amity United Methodist Church at their location (the corner of Estes and MLK).

Monday, December 24

*Children's Christmas Eve Service, 5:30 pm
Candlelight Communion Service, 8 and 10:30 pm*

University United Methodist Church

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