

5-2020

## **Increasing CSUMB Students' Awareness on How to Identify and Cope With Stress**

Alida Lopez  
*California State University, Monterey Bay*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes\\_all](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all)

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Lopez, Alida, "Increasing CSUMB Students' Awareness on How to Identify and Cope With Stress" (2020).  
*Capstone Projects and Master's Theses*. 878.  
[https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes\\_all/878](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all/878)

This Capstone Project (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Capstone Projects and Master's Theses at Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@csumb.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@csumb.edu).

Increasing CSUMB Students' Awareness on How to Identify and Cope With Stress

Alida Lopez

A Capstone project for the Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies

### Introduction

Nowadays, many college students lack stress management skills. Research shows that academic stress, homesickness and anxiety is increasing among college students, which may be due to poor stress management skills. Without these skills, difficulty concentrating, loneliness and low energy levels may occur. Therefore, I created a one-day workshop lesson for CSUMB students about the effects of stress and how to cope with stress.

### Needs Statement

According to the National College Health Assessment (NCHA) 35.3% of undergraduates students reported that they struggled with stress in the last 12 months. A cross institutional study found stress the top of health problems which worried students most (Delene & Brogowich, 1990). According to Yikeado, Karvinen, and Tareke (2018), the stress students experience includes “educational, social, environmental and psychological adjustments, which may affect their psychosocial well being and learning atmosphere.” All of these adjustments are stressors that apply to students. Beck and Young (1978) mentioned that 25% of college students reported symptoms of depression. Due to loneliness, isolation and stresses from college work

(Wig et al. 1969 as cited in Bhujade, 2017) mentioned that half of the 68 students who went to the counseling center felt difficulty concentrating, 23.5% getting nervous, 24.4% experienced frequent sad mood, 22.4% inferiority feelings and difficulty in memory and 23.5% with headaches. 26 of these students were diagnosed as cases of Anxiety Neurosis. Anxiety Neurosis generalized as Anxiety disorder in which excessive worrying is the core symptom. Along with fear of dying, shortness of breath, dizziness, attacks of palpitations, and choking. In a

study conducted for first semester college students showed that 21% had symptoms of separation anxiety (Seligman & Wuyek, 2017). Separation Anxiety Disorder is Anxiety that occurs when the individual separates from someone they are attached too or from home (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

For many students going to college is their first experience being away from home (Beck, Taylor, & Robbins, 2003). Loneliness and homesickness are issues that affect a high number of college students in the United States and also abroad (Longo & Kim-Spoon, 2013). There is not an exact percentage of the students who suffer from homesickness but they range from 19% to 91% (Thurber, Walton, & the Council on School Health, 2007). Also, it has been shown that college students who have higher levels of academic success is due to having a close relationship with their loved ones. (Turner, Chandler, & Heffer, 2009; Yazedjian, Toews, & Navarro, 2009).

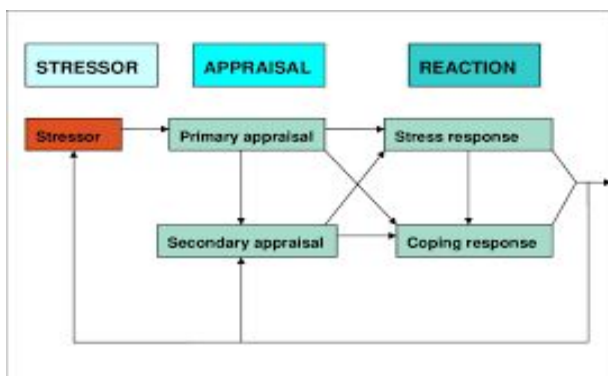
Given that my topic concerns anxiety, academic stress and homesickness, I have created a workshop for college students at California State University of Monterey Bay because it is important for college students to identify what stress is, what it can do to their bodies and how they can cope with it. Managing stress in the early stage can help maximize the college experience and opportunities for the students.

### Theory

The Lazarus and Folkman theory focuses on the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. There are three major concepts that this model focuses on: The stressor, appraisal, and the coping response. The level of stress depends on how the individual appraises the situation. There is a primary appraisal in which is the form of feelings, thoughts, threat that the situation

might bring. On the other hand, there is the secondary appraisal where the individual evaluates the ability to be able to take care of and cope with the situation that has come their way.

(Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984 as cited in Transactional model of stress & coping, 2013). According to Lazarus the growth of stress is based more on the individual's feeling of threat than on the actual stressful situation itself (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984 as cited in Transactional model of stress & coping, 2013). There are many different factors that lead college students to experience high levels of stress, but there are also many techniques that can help to take control and cope with that situation. The transactional model of stress & coping theory supports the content that I will present to my participants. The purpose of this lesson is to increase awareness to CSUMB students on the effectiveness of appraising and coping with the demands of college along with daily life. They will be able to identify what stress is, what it can do to their bodies and how they can cope with it.



### Consideration of Diversity

My project will be led to California State of University of Monterey Bay college students. According to college factual the ethnic group percentages at CSUMB are as follows: 46.7% Hispanic/Latino, 25.0% White, 5.4% Asian, 5.3% Non-Resident Alien, 4.2% Black or

African American, 0.3% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 0.3% American Indian or Alaska Native, 12.8% Ethnicity Unknown. Having a set of participants with diverse cultures, beliefs and values is what will make my sample different. The difference between these participants from the overall population is that besides working, getting through daily life, they are college students which is another responsibility to complete. Being a college student is what is unique from the overall population.

The content is directed to college students. It explains the physical and emotional symptoms of stress. Then it provides different examples on what techniques to use to combat stress and where to reach out if stress gets too high. Not limiting my content to only college students would be the changes that I would implement to address a more diverse audience. It would expand this content to anyone in general without limitations. Overall, this content would be able to apply to other participants even to as young as a teen since they would be able to understand the examples of what stress does and how to combat stress.

### Learning Outcomes

The purpose of this workshop is to increase awareness to CSUMB students on the effectiveness of appraising and coping with the demands of college along with daily life.

By the end of my lesson, students will be able to:

1. Identify two common symptoms of stress.
2. Provide one strategy they would incorporate into their life to cope with stress.

3. Have the resources where to seek help if levels of stress get too high.

### **METHOD**

First, I will introduce myself and explain what I'm about to do. Then, I will introduce the topic of stress and explain how everyone experiences it. I will also point out how too much stress can affect the individual's relationships, mood, and school performance. Also, how this workshop will help them recognize stress symptoms, and skills to reduce and cope with stress in their everyday life. Making life a whole lot more fun.

Second, I will open with a Visual Imagery Activity. See Appendix A. Then I will give my presentation on Stress and Coping. As I go through the presentation there will be a couple of pauses for everyone to reflect, which will cover learning outcomes one, two, and three. See Appendix B. In conclusion, I will pass a Self-reflect hand out. See Appendix C. At the end, I will thank everyone and pass out little bags for everyone with a positive message in the front and some goodies inside.

### **Results**

Could not complete due to COVID-19

### **Discussion**

Could not complete due to COVID-19

## Reference

- Beck, R., Taylor, C., & Robbins, M. (2003). Missing home: Sociotropy and autonomy and their relationship to psychological distress and homesickness in college freshmen. *Anxiety, Stress, and Coping, 16*, 155–166.
- Berjot, S., & Gillet, N. (2011). Stress and Coping with Discrimination and Stigmatization. *Frontiers in Psychology, 2*. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2011.00033.
- Bowman, N. (2010). The development of psychological well-being among first-year college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 51*, 180–200.
- Brougham, R. R., Zail, C. M., Mendoza, C. M., & Miller, J. R. (2009). Stress, Sex Differences, and Coping Strategies Among College Students. *Current Psychology, 28*(2), 85–97. doi: 10.1007/s12144-009-9047-0
- Delene, L.M., & Brogowicz, A.A. (1990). Student health needs attitudes and behavior marketing implication for college health centers. *Journal of American College Health, 38*(4), 157-164.
- Martinez, A.M., & Fabiano, P. (1992). *Stanford students health needs assessment 1990, Student Health Center*. Stanford University Report of Stanford CA: Cowell.
- Rudland, J. R., & Wilkinson, T. J. (2018). When I say ... stress. *Medical Education, 52*(7), 692–693. doi: 10.1111/medu.13520.



Seligman, L. D., & Wuyek, L. A. (2007). Correlates of Separation Anxiety Symptoms Among First-Semester College Students: An Exploratory Study. *The Journal of Psychology*, *141*(2), 135–145. doi: 10.3200/jrlp.141.2.135-146

Wig, N.N., Nagpal, R.N., & Khanna, H. (1969). Psychiatric problems in university Bourne, E.J. (2004). The anxiety and phobia workbook students. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, *11*, 55-62.

## Appendix A

**Visual Imagery**

**Purpose:** Students learn the process of visual imagery as a technique to help themselves calm down.

**Content:** I will lead the students through the process of visual imagery as a relaxation technique. I will explain and ask for consent to make sure they feel comfortable participating.

**Instructions:**

1. Students sit comfortably for this activity.
2. I will use a calm, low, slow voice and give sufficient time between each visual suggestion for students to ease into the vision and see each step.
3. I will tell them to close their eyes and I will give them the following visual scenario:

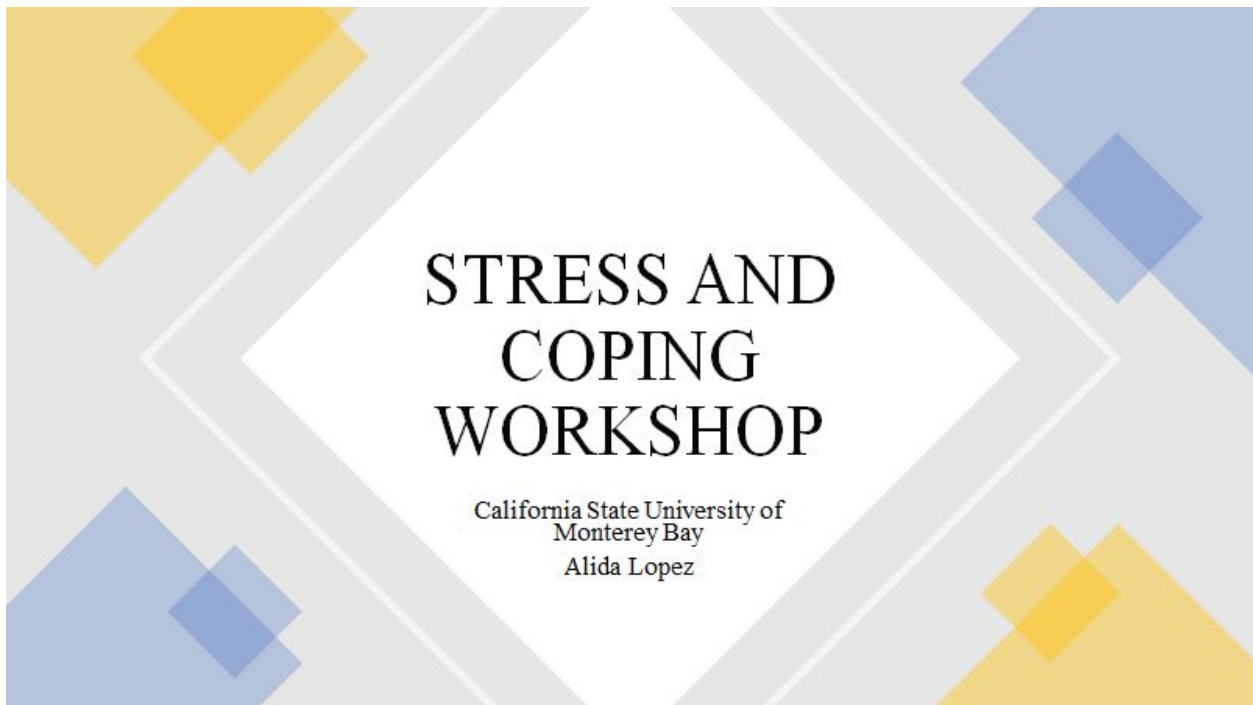
See in your mind's eye a beautiful beach. The sun is shining warmly, the breeze coming from the ocean is soft and warm, palm trees are overhead and a few seagulls circle about. Imagine walking barefoot in the warm sand, feel your feet sink in the sand with each step. Walk toward the water's edge and let the water roll over your feet. Jump in the water; it is warm, gentle and very refreshing. Come out of the water and walk to your big beach towel, lay down and relax. Rest for a while in all the peace and beauty surrounding you. Imagine how it looks, how it sounds, how it smells. Breathe in deeply the warm ocean air, stay as long as you like. When you are ready to leave, go to the edge of the water and throw in anything that has been bothering you,

anything you wish to be rid of in your life, anything you are feeling sad or angry about, anything you worry about. Picture it as a chain, a big rock, a heavy bag over your shoulders, or any image that helps you see it as unwanted. Throw it in the ocean as far as you can. Watch it sink and get taken by the waves. Be thankful for the release of the burden, the problem, the worry; then walk peacefully back through the warm sand and take a rest on your beach towel.

4. I will allow time for students to debrief and share about where they went in their visualization and what they felt about the experience. I will ask them if this would be a technique/exercise they might do in the future to calm down, relax and reduce their stress.

*Appendix B*

*Powerpoint on Stress and Coping*



Stress is a natural part of every young person's life. Stress is any change, internal or external, positive or negative, to which a young person must adapt.

"stress is anything that causes physical and/or mental wear and tear on the body and mind"





## PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

How stress affects the body varies from person to person, but some of the common physical effects of stress are:

- Low energy levels
- Headaches
- Stomachaches and nausea
- Insomnia
- Chest pains
- Frequent colds or other illnesses
- Shaking or sweating hands

**Note to self:** To cope with stress, it's important to first understand what your personal triggers are, so be sure to note when any of the above symptoms take place so you can find ways to manage them.



## EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

While stress has several physical indicators, it can also manifest in more internal ways.

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Problems with cognitive functioning (being unable to concentrate or learn as well as you normally would)
- Changes in behavior, such as being annoyed, angry, bitter, frustrated, or quiet
- Other mental or emotional health problems



Identify two common symptoms of stress.



How to cope with it:  
It's normal to experience a certain degree of stress as a student, but the next time it starts to feel like too much, try the following tips to combat stress in your everyday life

## Maintain a healthy diet

Eating healthy foods can help stabilize your blood pressure and blood sugar levels, which cause many of the physical symptoms of stress. It's also important to start your day off with a balanced breakfast and maintain regular meals throughout the day.

Foods like oatmeal, yogurt, salmon, blueberries, lean meats, nuts, and avocados can assist with stress relief.

Avoid sugary drinks, caffeine and drink more water.



## Be sure to exercise

Exercise increases your endorphins, which helps you feel happier, more relaxed, and more content. Go for a jog, a swim, or even a long walk.



shutterstock.com • 690682603



## Getting enough sleep

- Provides the energy necessary to manage stress
- Helps your body and mind rest and repair
- Improves mood
- Boosts the immune system
- Increases memory, concentration and motivation
- Increases ability to make rational decisions



## Hobby

You need a break most when you believe you don't have time to take a break. Find a new hobby, play sports, paint, draw, garden, do something that gives you an escape from the tension of everyday life.



## Build a Support System



Having a strong support system is vital to weathering stressful times and living a joyful life. Surround yourself with family and/or friends who lift you up, encourage you and listen without judgment.

## Plan

Get organized, plan, and stick to it. Prioritize your obligations each week and then schedule time for studying, working, family and friends, and yourself.





## Think Positively

Your thoughts create your reality, and it's time to turn negative thinking around. Try saying positive affirmations.

I AM FOCUSED,  
PERSISTENT  
AND WILL NEVER  
QUIT.



## Meditate

Meditation is a simple way to lower stress that you can do anywhere, at any time. Begin with a simple technique such as deep breathing, do a guided meditation (find these on YouTube).



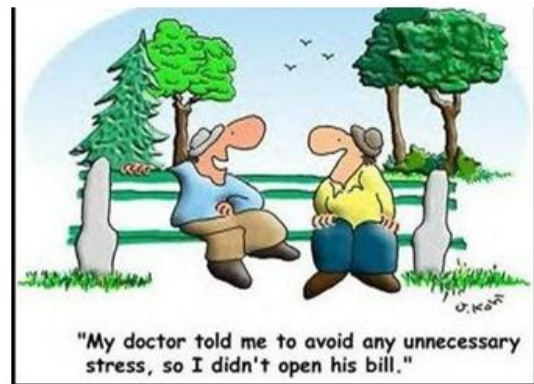
## Journal

Keeping a journal helps you process life's problems and deal with everyday stress. It also boosts your memory and allows you to self-reflect.



## Reflection Time

Provide one strategy that you will incorporate into your life to cope with stress.



## If Stress Gets Too High

Everybody needs help from time to time. If you're experiencing academic stress, anxiety or depression, if you're unable to sleep or enjoy life, or if you're turning to alcohol or drugs to cope with stress, it's time to ask for help. Reach out to:

- Your university's counseling services
- Your student advisor or a resident assistant
- Doctor or therapist
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Helpline 1-800-662-HELP
- Stress.org (The American Institute of Stress)
- 211.org



### Food for thought



*Next time you're stressed:  
take a step back, inhale and  
laugh. Remember who you  
are and why you're here.  
You're never given anything  
in this world that you can't  
handle. Be strong, be flexible,  
love yourself, and love  
others. Always remember,  
just keep moving forward.*



**Don't forget  
Breathe in,  
Breathe out  
and Enjoy  
your day!**

**THANK  
YOU FOR  
YOUR  
TIME!**



Appendix C

Self-reflection Worksheet

Identify a situation where you felt stressed or anxious this past week:

What did you feel like:

What were your thoughts:

What would you do differently in the future to cope with the situation: