Don’t Just Survive, Thrive! Strategies for New and Returning Students

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Objectives

- Understand Change and Transitions & Their Effects
- Understand Overwhelming Nature of Being a Student at UCSF
- Develop a Plan to Survive, and Thrive
“The answer was always to work harder and I’d succeed. But, this wasn’t enough anymore. I could work to the point of passing out or fainting (and my PI would have let me) and it wasn’t going to be enough.”
– Graduate student
What are the Changes/Transitions?

- New School
- New City
- New Residence
- New Role
- New Relationships, Loss of Old Relationships
- Returning After Being Away (i.e. from clinical in “the world” to academic role)
The Adjustments & Life Events Stress Scale

- Change to Different Line of Work/School
- Change in Responsibilities at Work/School
- Outstanding Personal Achievement
- Beginning School
- Change in Living Conditions
- Change in Income
- Change in Working/School Hours or Conditions
- Change in Residence
- Change in Recreation
- Change in Social Activities
- Change/Loss in Relationships
- Change in Financial Status - Taking out Minor/Major Loan
- Change in Sleeping Habits
- Change in Eating Habits
New Experience Phenomenon

Happiness

Honeymoon

CULTURE SHOCK

Adjustment

Mastery

TIME

0 mos. 6 mos. 48+ mos.
From Strength to Weakness/Optimism to Pessimism

- Energized, Healthy Self Esteem
- Depleted by Stress, Self-Esteem Declines, More Anxious
- “Fail” at something: Assume knowledge base is inferior (imposter). Response: Work Harder
- Loss of work/life balance; loneliness, isolation, irritability
- Self esteem continues decline. Burnout, Depression
With So Much Change, What Can Happen?

- Maintain Balance, Do Well
- Anxiety
- Imposter Syndrome
- Work/Life Imbalance - School Consumes
- Burnout, Depression
What to Look For

- Anxiety/Stress
  - Fears about immediate performance, future well being
  - No time for outside activities.

- Imposter Syndrome
  - Comparing self to others
  - Saying, “I don’t belong here,”
Imposter Syndrome

What I know

What I think other people know

What I know

What other people know
Imposter- Notice Inner Contradictions

- I’m not smart enough to be here
- UCSF made a mistake/I tricked them
- Everyone else seems to be managing it well
- I can’t believe others can be so involved in extra-curriculars and still do well academically
- I haven’t learned enough, and won’t before I graduate
- I’m going to look stupid or appear incompetent
- I’ll never find a partner if I am not in a relationship by now
What to Look For (continued)

- **Burnout**
  - Feel fatigued rather than energetic
  - Working harder but accomplishing less
  - More irritable, cynical

- **Work/Life Imbalance**
  - Limited or no time for non-school activities, non-school people
  - Loss of fun, humor

- **Sadness/Depression**
  - Social withdrawal, isolation; lack of interest in activities
  - Sleep, eating changes
  - Negative/Dark view of self, life
What to Do?

1. Recognize the Changes, Recognize Variables of Change, Personal Beliefs about Coping
2. Build Resilience
3. Don’t Be Alone/Get Support
5. Pay Attention to Body
6. Take Time for Care. Restorative Practices. Initiate or Maintain Healthy Activities
Recognize the Variables

- Situation/Self- Each change is unique.
- Self- Every person is different.
- Support- Support needs are different for each situation, each person.
- Strategies- Depend on situation, person, history.
Know Your Personal Beliefs about Change/Coping

Predictors of Positive Outcomes:

- Acceptance that problems arising from change are a normal part of living

- Belief that individuals have a number of strengths that can help them cope with most situations in an effective way
Resilience

- Being able to bounce back. And more. Our ability to learn in the process. Step back, rather than responding impulsively or passively, in order to appraise one’s thinking, feeling and behaving in a given situation.
- 2 setbacks OK, 3 not.
External Support

• Know types of people to call on in times of transition: people who can discuss concerns, who can make us feel valued and competent, who can provide us with important information, who will challenge our thinking, and with whom we can share good news
Pay Attention to Yourself, Your Body
TIME- If Only...
Healthy Activities

- Manage Time - Write it down, set priorities, break large tasks into smaller ones, set goals, accountability
- Get Academic Support - Work with instructors, advisors, department administrators
- Define Academic Priorities - Not everything is 1st
- Get Involved - With other students or outside school.
Healthy/Unhealthy Practices

- **Sleep.** Sleep deprivation linked to lower grades, decreased concentration, memory, and learning ability.
- **Eat.** Nutrition linked to ability to respond to stress, and process of learning, memory and intellectual functioning.
- **Exercise.** Benefits: Reduced stress, release of endorphins, improved memory, increased energy, improved focus, better regulation of mood.
Restorative Practices

- **Sleep** - No technology 30 min. before bed, 30 min. wind down. No caffeine after 3 p.m. Sleep an hour longer during the weekend,
- **Eating** - Have regular meals. Eat breakfast. Be mindful while eating.
- **Exercise** - Prioritize 3 days week, 30 minutes
- **Relax** - Breathe, Progressive Muscle Relaxation, Visual Imagery, Mindfulness
- **Social Connection**.
Summary

1. Stop. Recognize the Changes, Recognize Variables of Change and Know Ourselves

2. Build Resilience


4. Don’t Be Alone/Get Support

5. Pay Attention to Body

6. Restorative Practices. Initiate or Maintain Healthy Activities
Student Health & Counseling Services (SHCS)
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