



AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION of  
GRADUATE  
STUDENTS

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION  
**CEP** CONTINUING  
EDUCATION  
IN PSYCHOLOGY

# Enhancing Success by Managing Stress as Psychology Students

APAGS in partnership with CE & Psi Chi

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## Psi Chi: The International Honor Society in Psychology

- What is Psi Chi?
- Benefits to Membership
- Awards, Grants & Scholarships
  - Christian Ladd Hall Scholarship
- Contact Form:
  - <https://www.psichi.org/general/?type=CONTACT>



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## Our speakers



**Jahnvi Pandya**

MA (India), is a third-year counseling psychology Ph.D. student at the University of Iowa.



**Tiffany Parisi**

MA, MPH is a fifth-year clinical psychology PhD candidate at Fielding Graduate University.



**Elizabeth Espinal**

MS, is a fourth-year clinical psychology PhD candidate (adult neuropsychology concentration) at Drexel University in Philadelphia.

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## Overview

The Psychology of Stress

Navigating Academic and Professional Stress

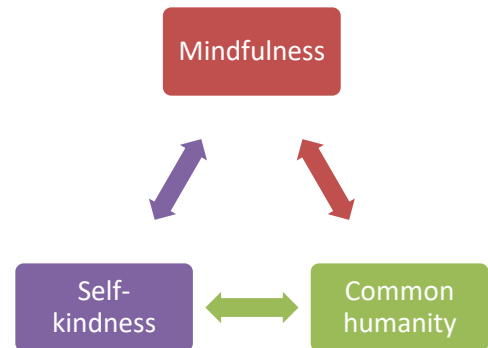
Handling Personal/Life Stressors

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## Before we begin...

- Gratitude to the organizers
- Thank you all for being here
- Talking about stress can be stressful
- Approaching today's topic with self-compassion (Neff, 2011)

### Components of Self-Compassion (Neff, 2011)

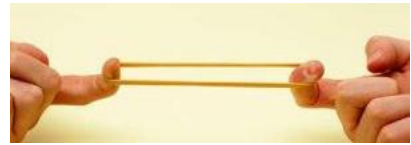


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## The Psychology of Stress & Stress Management

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# What is stress?



A state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation. Stress is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives. Everyone experiences stress to some degree. The way we respond to stress, however, makes a big difference to our overall well-being.

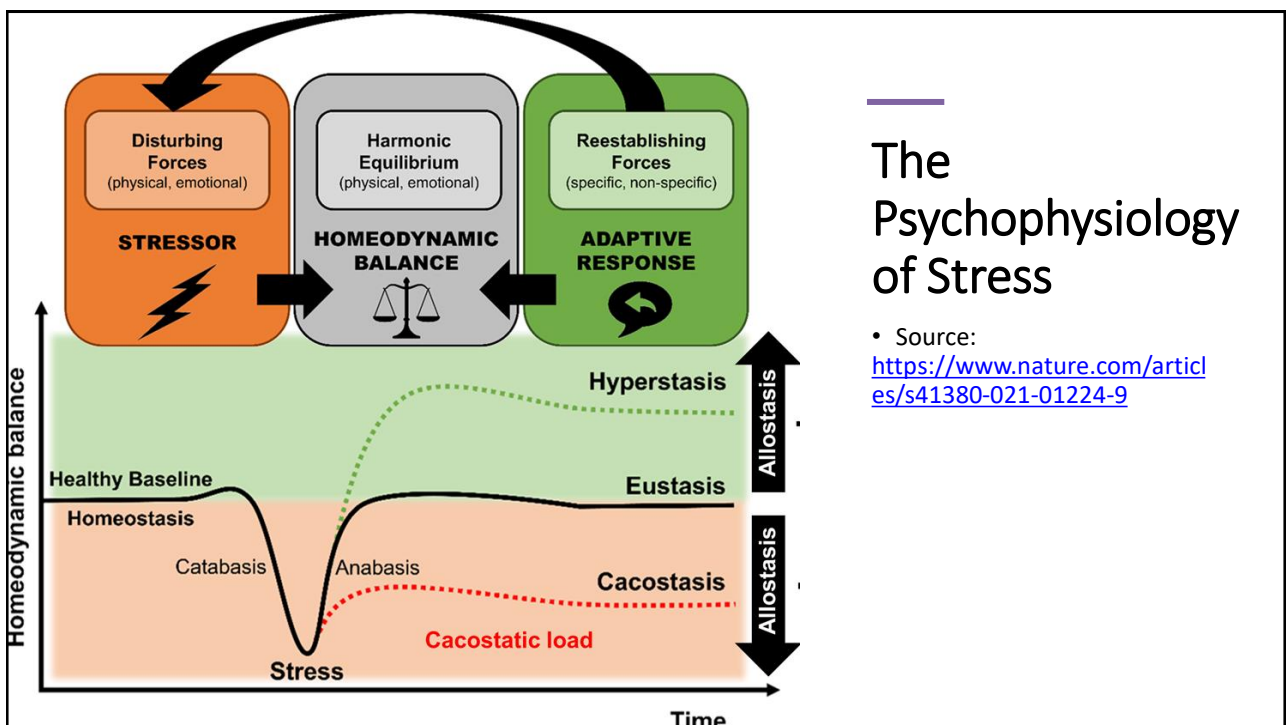
— **World Health Organization**

The physiological or psychological response to internal or external stressors.

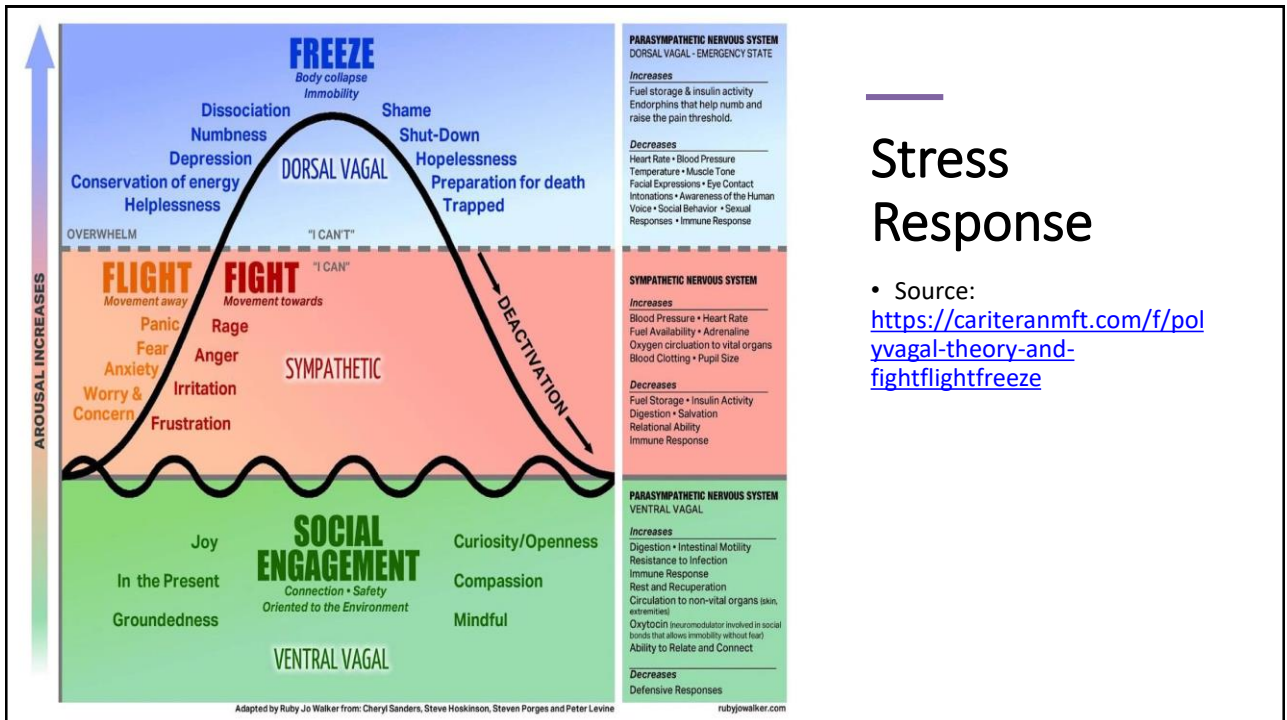
— **American Psychological Association**

Image source: <https://drcynthiasimpson.com/2013/09/30/the-stress-and-rubber-band-analogy/>

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## Impact of Stress on Our Body

- Body on high alert
- Can accumulate and cause:
- Inflammation
- Wear off the immune system
- Risk of ailments: digestive issues, heart disease, weight gain, stroke

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## Stress in America

- Young people are reporting higher stress levels than older generations
- 18- to 34-year-olds reported their average stress level as a 6 out of 10 (3.4 people 65+, [APA's 2023 Stress in America survey](https://www.apa.org/topics/stress/generation-z-millennials-young-adults-worries))
- Common stressors: COVID-19 pandemic, global conflicts, racism, racial injustice, inflation, and climate-related disasters\*
- Compounding factors: inflation, spotty health care access, and the aftermath of COVID
- Older adults tend to handle stress better than younger adults

Source: <https://www.apa.org/topics/stress/generation-z-millennials-young-adults-worries>  
 \* <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2023/collective-trauma-recovery>

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## Stress Among Young People

- Younger people report the deepest consequences of stress. 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of 18-34-year-olds say:
  1. Stress makes it hard to focus (67%)
  2. Feel as though no one understands how stressed they are (66%)
  3. Most days, their stress is “completely overwhelming” (58%)
  4. It renders them numb (50%)—most days so stressed that they can’t function
- Less inclined to report recovery from stress quickly.
- 74% say it’s harder to connect with people today than past

Source: <https://www.apa.org/topics/stress/generation-z-millennials-young-adults-worries>

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Figure 1: The Yerkes-Dodson Human Performance and Stress Curve



Image source: <https://visionhelp.wordpress.com/2017/10/10/the-science-of-stress/>

## Is stress always bad?

- Hans Selye's idea of *Eustress* & *Distress*
- The inverted U-curve of stress by Yerkes-Dodson
- How to measure stress?
- *Perceived stress scale*:  
<https://www.das.nh.gov/welness/docs/percieved%20stress%20scale.pdf>

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## Navigating Academic & Professional Stress

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# Understanding Academic & Professional Stress

Encompass a range of stressors, including academic and professional pressures, interpersonal challenges, and personal barriers.

## *Academic and Professional Pressures:*

- Research and clinical requirements, programmatic expectations, research responsibilities, etc.

## *Interpersonal Challenges:*

- Advisor-advisee disagreements, lab and research conflict, microaggressions and discrimination, etc.

## *Personal Barriers:*

- Financial burden, imposter syndrome, burnout, little-to-no time for self-care, decreased connection to support network, etc.

(Cohen & McConnell, 2019; Schneider et al., 2021; Sverdlik et al., 2023; Wilcox et al., 2022)

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# The Impact of Academic & Professional Stress on Our Well-Being

We face unique consequences and challenges as psychology students.

## *Consequences:*

- The constant pursuit of psychological knowledge, clinical and research requirements, and research responsibilities can contribute to heightened and sustained stress levels throughout our academic and professional careers.

## *Intersectional Framework:*

- The impact of academic and professional stress have been found to be compounded by intersectional factors and experiences.
- For example: first-generation students, caregivers, and diverse, LGBTQIA2s+, disabled, and neurodiverse individuals.

(Grabin & Pereiras, 2019; Miller & Orsillo, 2020; Wilcox et al., 2021)

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## Self-Reflection

Take a moment to reflect on past times when you've felt significantly stressed and anxious.

How did you recognize you were not feeling ok?

What changes did you experience?

What was happening contextually?

Did friends, partners, family, etc. recognize it and say something?

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## Identifying Signs of Academic & Professional Stress

Stress in these areas can manifest physically, emotionally, and behaviorally.

*Examples Might Be:*

- Missing deadlines, inability to focus (or hyper-focused), changes in eating and/or drinking, avoiding people or environments, feeling uncertain about the future.

*Importance of Self-Awareness:*

- Being aware of your stress signals is a powerful tool for identifying and managing stress effectively and early on.

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## Coping Strategies for Academic & Professional Stress

These are essential tools in your toolkit for navigating the challenges of psychology programs.

### *Personal & Realistic Goals:*

- This is crucial to being able to succeed in your program. Consider what your short, medium, and long term goals are. Working backwards on these can be extremely helpful!
- Power of saying “no.”

### *Breaking Down Tasks & Planning:*

- It's easier to tackle complex goals with smaller, achievable steps. Think about the amount of time you will need to meet your goals and work on creating detailed schedules to plan time for **BOTH** tasks and well-being.

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## Building an Academic & Professional Support System

Don't underestimate the power of seeking support from peers, mentors, and mental health professionals.

### *Communication:*

- Open communication is key. Initiating conversations about stress with advisors, supervisors, and peers can lead to valuable insights and support.

### *Identifying Support Systems and Resources:*

- Take advantage of support groups in your department and institution to ensure you're not navigating this journey alone. Consider joining identity-specific support groups or working with other students to form one.
- Remember to reserve time for your pre-existing supporters.

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## Balancing Personal Life Stressors & Professional Demands

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### A time for reflection...



What are some common personal life stressors?

What are your personal life stressors?

How do they interact with your academic/professional life?

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**What** are you juggling?

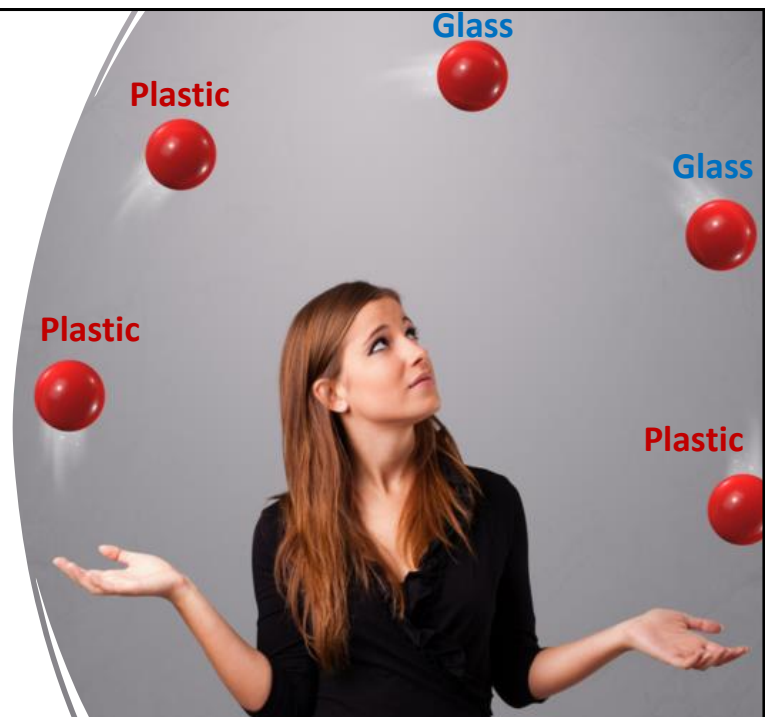
**How** are you juggling it all?



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A new  
approach to  
juggling:  
*Let some  
things fall!*

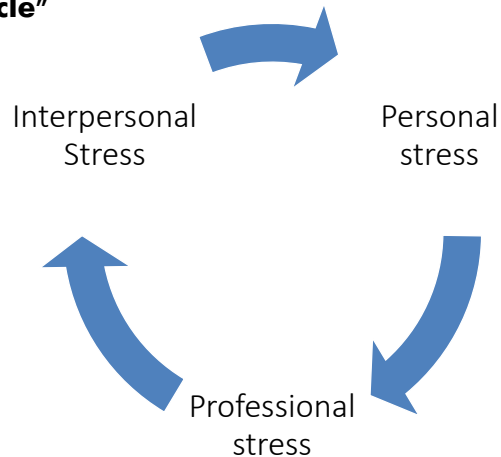
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# !!! Why is this important?

## The "Stress Cycle"

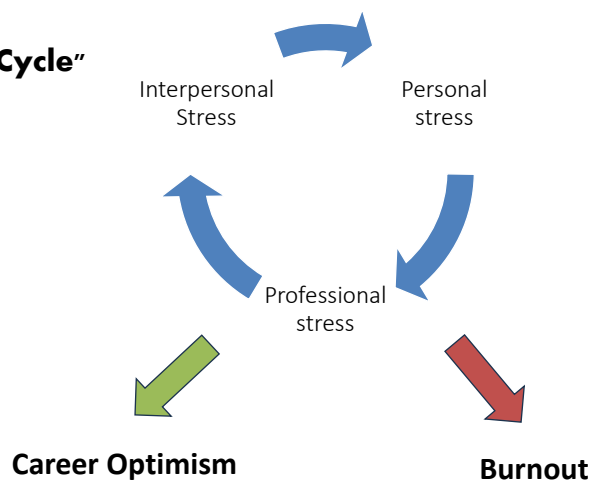


(Montgomery & Rupp, 2005)

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# !!! Why is this important?

## The "Stress Cycle"



(Montgomery & Rupp, 2005)

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## Seek out Community



Types of community support:

(Montgomery & Rupp, 2005; Taylor et al., 2019)

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## Self-Advocacy



What do you **need** to be successful?

**How** can you ask for it?

**Combatting emotional exhaustion:**

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# Questions?