



# Be Well: Student Success and Wellness

## Stress Management

Healthcare professional training is inherently demanding, with long hours, high-stakes decisions, and intense academic pressure creating a perfect storm for stress. Here are evidence-based strategies specifically tailored for trainees in medical, nursing, and other healthcare fields:

 **Time management techniques** become crucial when balancing coursework, clinical rotations, and personal life. The Pomodoro Technique works well for study sessions, while time-blocking helps manage clinical schedules. Create realistic daily and weekly schedules that include buffer time for unexpected clinical demands.

 **Cognitive reframing** helps combat the perfectionism common in healthcare training. Instead of "I can't make any mistakes because lives depend on it," try "I'm learning to provide the best care possible, and making mistakes is part of becoming competent." This shift reduces paralyzing anxiety while maintaining professional standards.

### Physical and Mental Health Foundations

- **Sleep hygiene** is non-negotiable despite irregular schedules. When working night shifts or long hours, maintain consistent sleep patterns when possible, use blackout curtains, and avoid caffeine 6 hours before intended sleep. Even 20-minute power naps between rotations can be restorative.

- **Regular exercise** doesn't require gym memberships or long workouts. Ten-minute walks between clinical sessions, stairs instead of elevators, or brief stretching routines in break rooms all help manage stress hormones and improve focus.

- **Mindfulness and breathing exercises** can be done anywhere, even in scrubs between patients. The 4-7-8 breathing technique (inhale for 4, hold for 7, exhale for 8) activates the parasympathetic nervous system and can be completed in under a minute.

### Building Support Systems

- **Peer support groups** with fellow trainees provide understanding that family and friends outside healthcare may not offer. Many programs have formal mentorship, but informal study groups and decompression sessions are equally valuable.

- **Professional counseling** should be destigmatized early in training. Many healthcare institutions offer employee assistance programs, and seeking help demonstrates the same self-care you'll later encourage in patients.

### Practical Coping Strategies

- **Compartmentalization** helps separate work stress from personal time. Develop rituals that mark the transition from clinical to personal time - changing clothes, taking a shower, or listening to specific music.

- **Journaling** provides emotional processing and helps identify stress patterns. Even five minutes of writing about challenging cases or feelings can provide clarity and emotional release.

- **Nutrition strategies** for irregular schedules include keeping healthy snacks readily available, staying hydrated (especially during long procedures), and avoiding excessive caffeine that can worsen anxiety.

### Long-term Perspective

Remember that training is temporary but intense. The skills you develop now for managing pressure will serve you throughout your healthcare career. Building resilience during training creates a foundation for sustainable practice later.

Consider stress management as a clinical skill itself - just as you learn procedures and protocols, developing effective coping mechanisms is essential professional development that will ultimately benefit both you and your future patients.

### Campus Resources

- Campus Assistance Program: HDC, Suite 233 · 504-568-8888
- Off Campus Professional Counseling: Irena Schmidt, LCSW · 504-290-0236 (Student get 6 sessions as a benefit)
- Wellness Center: CALS Bld., 3rd floor · 504-568-3700
- Student Health Center: Seton Bld., Room 307 · 504-568-1800

### Additional Resources

- HHS Surgeon General. Health Worker Burnout. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/health-worker-burnout/index.html>
- National Institute of Mental Health. I'm So Stressed Out! Fact Sheet. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). NIH Publication No. 20-MH-8125. Retrieved from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/so-stressed-out-fact-sheet-stress: MedlinePlus>
- National Institute of Mental Health. Publications About Stress. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Retrieved from Stress | NCCIH (<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/stress>)