**HOW STRESSED ARE YOU??** Find yourself feeling tense or anxious? Overreacting to comments & situations? Getting into arguments? Mind racing with all there is to do? Feeling on edge? Always rushing?

Different people show stress in different ways.

Some physical symptoms include:
- Difficulty sleeping
- Feeling tired all the time
- Back/shoulder/neck pains
- Skin problems (acne, eczema)
- Physical restlessness
- Weight loss/gain
- Upset stomach, acid reflux
- More colds, flu etc.

Some emotional & cognitive symptoms include:
- Nervousness
- Memory problems
- Depression, moodiness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fear of the worst happening
- Feeling out of control
- Irritability
- Mind racing with stuff to do

**NOT ALL STRESS IS BAD**

The stress response is a brilliant evolutionary design, aimed at your protection & survival. When faced with danger (real or imagined), the so-called “fight or flight response” increases your alertness, helps you run quicker, hit harder & live another day.

**CHRONIC STRESS IS THE PROBLEM.** Stress that is overactive or prolonged, however, can have negative effects on your physical health, emotional well-being, mental functioning & your interpersonal relationships.

The same stress hormones that help you remember stuff in an exam or escape danger, also suppress your immune system. Also, you are more likely to make unhealthy choices when stressed (e.g. grabbing junk food on-the-run, drinking more to relax, too tired to exercise). Thus, chronic stress can lead to stress-related health problems.

Stress also increases negative thinking which can trigger self-doubt, frustration etc. At best you might feel moody & irritable and worst, depressed & overwhelmed.

**THE REALITY OF STRESS... it’s impossible to eliminate all stress from our lives.** Firstly, the challenge is to get better at recognizing YOUR early signs of stress and the situations that typically trigger them. Secondly, to improve the ways you cope with stress.

**Some positive strategies:**
- Seek out friends for conversation & support
- Make time for fun, relaxation
- Work on study strategies & time management skills
- Take some physical exercise
- Enjoy music, movies
- Eat well & get enough sleep
- Try meditation, yoga
- Take time to breathe, unwind
- Prioritise & get better at saying ‘no’

**Some strategies to avoid:**
- Drinking or smoking in excess
- Ignoring the feeling & hoping it goes away
- Sleeping plenty
- Getting irritable & taking it out on others
- Socially isolating yourself
INTERESTING WEBSITES:
http://www.laughteryoga.org it’s good for a laugh!

SELF HELP MATERIAL
Check out the self-assessment tools for a variety of problems on our website:
http://sta.uwi.edu/caps/

COUNSELLING AT CAPS
At UWI, the Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is a free and confidential service for students. Whether you see the counsellor for one or two sessions, or on a more regular basis, depends on what you find most helpful.

Psychological therapy provides an opportunity to think through some of the reasons why you might feel the way you do. It offers ways of managing stress, or relationships problems, through changes in your behaviour and the way you think about things.

So, whether you are facing a stressful life event, struggling with the challenges of university life, or familiar problems you’ve faced before, don’t wait for the problem to go away... make an appointment to speak with a student counsellor.

HOW TO CONTACT CAPS?
Call us: 662 2002 ext 2491.
Email: counsellor@sta.uwi.edu
Or pop in and see us. We are located in the Health Service Unit (HSU), between Trinity Hall and the Learning Resources Centre (LRC).

OPENING HOURS
CAPS is available throughout the year, from 8:30am - 7pm during term-time. During vacation, we close at 4:30pm.

A guide to STRESS...what it is, what to do about it, & how to stay sane.

This leaflet prepared by the Counselling & Psychological Services, UWI, St Augustine.

CAPS 662-2002, ext 2491