Staying Healthy During the Holidays

Holiday time coincides with finals. Nearing the end of the semester, the body is at its most exhausted state from the finals, projects, papers, holiday gatherings, social lives, and more. Obviously it's stressful, but it's also a wonderful time of year. Take steps to enjoy this time by controlling what you can (your own reactions and behavior) and managing your stress.

Recognize the signs of stress - Some common stress symptoms include high blood pressure, elevated heart rate, overeating, and sweating. Additional signs are irritability, insomnia, anxiety, headaches, indigestion, muscle tension, and jitteriness.

Make a plan - It may sound like the last thing you would want to do, but your brain is still in academic mode, take advantage of it. Often over breaks, our minds tend to forget how much work we have to do; do not leave things until the last minute. Use a "to-do" list. Go through what you have to get done and set deadlines. This will prevent the "Oh No! I forgot to do..." moments. Prioritize the items; place all high priority tasks first.

Finish homework early - Take advantage of the holiday breaks. If you have papers, research, or other academic work finish it relatively early. Once you get everything done you will have a clear mind and will be able to relax. Let people (friends, family and roommates) know in advance that at some point during the break you must do some work. This will make it easier for you to get it done and provides support from family and friends so that you can buckle down to get projects finished.

Important Dates

Please note the upcoming deadlines:

November 26 - 28 - Thanksgiving Recess

December 8 - Last day of full term campus based courses

December 14 - Last day of D2 online courses

December 14 - SOOT closes for D2 courses

December 14 - Completed Phase III form, and thesis or capstone project due to the Office of Graduate Studies

December 22 - Comprehensive exam and portfolio deadline

December 29 - Degree conferral date
Be Realistic - When you begin to feel tense and overwhelmed, stop what you are doing, try to look at your situation from a fresh perspective. Ask yourself, "Why am I feeling this way?" All too often we get stressed out over everyday things whose consequences are minimal. Try to look at the "big picture" and prioritize. Does your family member really need that gift? What will happen if you don't go out of your way and make cookies in your usual holiday tradition?

Learn how to relax - Schedule time for breaks; you cannot study for exams or write papers if you are fried. Take the time to de-stress and learn relaxation skills they will help you through grad school and the rest of your life. Consider the 50/10 rule: work for fifty minutes, rest for ten. The thought of six straight hours of homework may make you want to vomit. Fifty minutes of work, on the other hand does not sound as bad (it is less than an episode of LOST). Your anxiety of large tasks will subside, and you will come to notice you become really good at focusing for 50 minutes. Take a 10 minute relax break, whether it is meditation, exercise, reading, drawing, or just veg-out.

You have been going at such a fast pace during the semester that you are probably ready for some time off. This is fine as long as you make sure to have your priorities straight. Try some of these tips to help you slow down and enjoy the holidays while staying on top of your work.

For more information check out:  
http://gradschool.about.com/  
http://collegelife.about.com/

The Write Idea:  
Take Your Writing to the Graduate Level

Writing skills are a fundamental aspect of attending graduate school. In graduate school writing is much more intensive than in an undergraduate program. This means that students will need more than just the ability to recognize the correct answer. Writing at this level requires the ability to recall, identify, examine, and explain the correct answer. Some tips that will help you, as a graduate student, get past undergraduate writing into a graduate level of writing are as follows:  
Be direct; Avoid unnecessary first person tense; Use strong transitions; Control your sentence structure.  

The first tip is to avoid "wishy-washy" language. Look for words in your paper like "maybe", "suggest", or "possibly" and replace them with words or phrases that convey certainty. For more information on this visit: avoid.http://www.bestcustomwriting.com/blog/writing-in-general/writing-mistakes-to-avoid

The second tip is to avoid using the word "I". Using "I" gives readers the perception that your writing is too casual. Some students ask how to state their opinions without using the word "I", and the answer to that is if you are writing it, it is your opinion. If I say "The
article examining graduate level writing is a hoax," it is more effective than "I think the article examining graduate level writing is a hoax" but I am stating my opinion in both.

The third tip is to control your sentence structure. This means that you are not letting your sentences get so long that the reader gets lost in what you are trying to say. It is better to be succinct and clear than to prove you have an extensive vocabulary.

The fourth tip is to use strong transitions. Transitions are an important part of any paper since they guide the reader through your paper.

Lastly avoid all grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors. This means enlisting an editor if you need to but errors like this are the easiest and most preventable ways to lose points on your paper.

Many graduate students believe that writing at the graduate level involves using many complex sentences and fancy words but the real goal is to clearly present your points to the reader. If your paper lacks clarity and sentence structure you have wasted yours and your reader’s time.

Writing skills for the graduate level writer can be learned. It may take some time and research but one of the keys to graduate level writing is that YOU are the one who did all the research, therefore YOU are the expert, and you are using other experts to supplement YOUR expertise.

Completion Form. By this date all students completing either a thesis or a capstone project must have the approval of their committee and submit to the Office of Graduate Studies via the ETD site. The site can be accessed through the OGS website utica.edu/ogs. The account set up for the submission site takes about 20 minutes and can be done ahead of time. In addition to submission the completed Phase III form must also be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, meaning that the student must fill it out and submit it and the committee must approve it by this date. The form can be accessed under the Forms link at utica.edu/ogs. If anyone has questions about the December 14, or any other deadlines please contact the Office of Graduate Studies at ogs@utica.edu or 315-792-3335.

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