Stress may affect your health, outlook, and relationships. Therefore, it is important to identify stress symptoms, traps and triggers to accurately assess the amount of stress in your life. Then you can learn and implement healthy strategies to reduce your stress!

Physical Symptoms

People who have high stress levels usually:
- Lack healthy sleep patterns
- Have poor eating habits
- Lack any type of exercise regimen
- Have a higher susceptibility to common illnesses

Stress is directly related to:
- Heart disease: heart attacks and strokes
- Digestive issues: ulcers, irritable bowel, and chronic nausea
- Musculoskeletal problems: migraines, TMJ, and chronic back pain

Psychological and Emotional Traps

The following are common forms of stress traps:

- **Anxiety**
  a negative perception or apprehension about future events which are considered unavoidable or unchangeable

- **Negative self-talk**
  defeating and negative inner dialogue about one’s value and worth

- **Lack of strength awareness**
  the inability to recognize the strengths we possess

- **Catastrophizing**
  occurs when a mild to moderate setback or negative outcome is perceived as an utter failure or catastrophe

- **Generalizing**
  occurs when an individual assumes that a single, isolated incident will be applicable to all future events

- **Self-fulfilling prophecy**
  a prediction that directly or indirectly causes itself to become true

Relational and Environmental Triggers

Stress may occur if our relationships and/or environments suddenly change:
- Termination of a relationship (friend, significant other)
- Death of a family member or close friend
- Changes in family structure (marriage, divorce—even that of parents)
- Social pressure
- Moving to a new city (loss of all that’s familiar in previous residence)
- Starting a new job or school
- Cultural differences
- Added responsibilities (finances, academics, work—everything!)

Adapted from [http://www.cas.lsu.edu/](http://www.cas.lsu.edu/)