TIME& STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

## Time Management

1. Prioritize – what do you HAVE to do? What MUST you accomplish? Homework, rehearsals, practices, games. Figure out what has to be done (include things your parents say are priorities, like chores and eating dinner with your family), and then don’t be afraid to say no to things that aren’t important to you, or don’t fit with your goals and priorities. You don’t have to join every club, volunteer for every event, or watch every YouTube video.
2. Get enough sleep. And exercise. Remember, your physical and mental health is a priority, too. If you are scheduling yourself so tightly that you are pulling all-nighters and not having time for breaks, it is time to fall back and regroup.
3. Make a weekly life schedule/calendar, then make a to-do list every day. Using a large weekly calendar, block out the times you’re busy. Then look for chunks of time to complete homework. Try making your to-do list the night before when you go to bed. This not only helps you to plan for the next day but helps to alleviate stress and lets you sleep better. Your to-do list might be set for the amount of time you want to devote to a project or be determined by goals you want to accomplish.
4. Be flexible but realistic in your scheduling. Don’t allot 20 minutes for reading that you know is going to take an hour. If your teacher says an assignment should take 45 minutes but you know from experience it will take you an hour and a half, allow for the longer time. If you usually take 30 minutes per math section, allot 30-45 minutes per section to have a cushion.
5. Allow for planning time. English students, if you need to process a prompt or outline an assignment, don’t forget to give yourself time to do that. If you’re given an assignment on Wednesday that you know you’ll need to think about, don’t put it in your schedule to start writing the next day. Do your processing on the bus or in the car, before you go to bed at night, whatever, but if you need that time take it – otherwise you’ll waste much of the time you set aside for writing just planning out the assignment in your head. But don’t spend forever on planning – at some point it just becomes an excuse for not starting.
6. Become the master of back-scheduling. Back-scheduling means looking at the deadline for your project, and then working backwards to determine what you need to have accomplished by when to meet those deadlines. If your essay needs to be turned in on Thursday, you want to have the final draft done by Tuesday, so that means you need the first draft done by Monday, and the outline done by Saturday, and the research done by Friday, and so on. If you must complete 12 sections of math homework, decide when you should have four or six sections completed. Always be sure to leave an extra day at the end for emergencies, etc. The same process works for a long homework assignment. Figure out how much you need to get done each day to finish on time.
7. Write down assignments including due dates and check items off as you get them done. This is a psychologically helpful activity. Checking things off a list lets you feel accomplished and boosts your feeling of “Yes, I can do this. Look at what I’ve already done.” Trust me, you’ll feel better about yourself.
8. Determine one small thing you can do to get started. Sometimes a barrier to getting started is just that – getting started. If you can knock one thing off the list you wrote down, many times other items will start to fall like dominoes. So, what is one easy thing you can do to begin? Just 10 math problems? Reading a short passage? Pick one and do it right away, just to get the ball rolling.
9. Try the Pomodoro Technique. The Pomodoro Technique is a time management method based on 25-minute stretches of focused work broken by five-minute breaks. Longer breaks, typically 15 to 30 minutes, are taken after four consecutive work intervals. You can revise this technique for whichever intervals work best for you, for instance, a 50-minute stretch of focused work followed by a 10-minute break.
10. Keep your work with you (in case you have extra time). Sitting in the car waiting for a sibling? Waiting for your folks to pick you up from practice? Keep work with you in case you find time to knock off something small – particularly if you have reading to do, a worksheet to complete, or planning or other small parts of projects that can be knocked off quickly or are portable.
11. Figure out when you’re most productive and create a dedicated study time. Right after school? After dinner? Early in the morning? Late at night? Figure out when you are the most fully charged and try to set that time aside. And then turn off your phone and shut down all the other tabs and notifications on your computer! Also think about a dedicated study space – some locations are better than others.
12. Avoid digital distractions! No one can multi-task well. When doing your homework, you need to remove the temptation to connect with your friends on any device. Physically move the small devices and turn off temptations on larger ones. See the “Avoiding Digital Distractions While Completing Homework” handout for complete tips.

## STRESS MANAGEMENT

Immediately**:**

* Take several deep calming breaths
* Change your focus. Start by looking around you and naming three things you can see. Then listen. What three sounds do you hear? Next, move three parts of your body, such as your fingers, toes, or clench and release your shoulders. (This is the 3-3-3 Rule.)

You Might Need To**:**

* Take a break from homework – 15, 30, 60 minutes, depending on your stress level and the time available to you.
* Ask a classmate, parent, sibling, or other trusted person if you can bounce ideas off them.
* Take a walk or exercise – physically move your body.
* Listen to music.

Need to Relax More**?**

* Take a bath.
* Try meditation.

Ultimately**:**

* Examine what triggers your meltdown – content, time constraints, feeling inadequate, perfectionism? Discuss these concerns with an adult.
* Remember, not every day is “give it 110% day.” Some days are just “get something done days.” If you are feeling super stressed, it is better to turn something in (even if it is not your best work) and come back and fight another day. Explain the situation to your instructor, and don’t use this excuse repeatedly. But life happens.