4 self-care tips when you're feeling stressed

Students are constantly plugged in to technology. With continual access to your e-mail, phone, and calendar, you can also be contacted by texts and instant messaging. Couple that with the pressure to balance time spent between parents, friends, and fellow classmates, and the time and effort needed to do your best on your school work. You may sometimes find yourself asking, "When do I get a break!?"

The short answer is that we don't, not unless we take the initiative and give ourselves one. What I am referring to is taking the time to establish good school-life balance and proper self-care—the building blocks of a healthy foundation to build the rest of your life on. Self-care falls into four spheres: health, spirituality, hobbies, and social support, and each topic represents a larger sub-grouping of activities. Learning to juggle these spheres can help you create an excellent barrier against all kinds of stress, anxiety, and the possibility of burnout.

Sphere 1: Health

Health refers to much of what you would think; making sure you are getting adequate sleep (at least seven hours a night); eating a healthy diet (the engine will only run as good as the fuel you put in it); and remaining active during your week.

- Students who exercise a little each day sleep better, have a more positive mood, and have more energy. Sleep is how we feed the brain so it is important that if we are having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep that we try to correct that ASAP.

Sphere 2: Spirituality

Spirituality can be prayer, meditation, journaling, yoga, or spiritual discussion with a friend. Whatever your flavor is, the main idea is that you are taking time for meaningful and thought-out personal dialogue, introspective thought, relaxation, and the exploration of personal growth.

Sphere 3: Hobbies

When was the last time you did something you enjoy doing just because you enjoy doing it? Hobbies allow us to decompress and distract ourselves from the things that stress us out. Escapism is not necessarily a bad thing as long as you are not using drugs, alcohol, or avoidance to do it. Getting lost in a good book, or turning off your brain to watch a movie, or being involved in a sport or creative project are all great ways to forget the things that are bothering you for a while and find your center. Students should have at least one hobby that is enjoyed with others, which is a great segue into the final sphere.

Sphere 4: Social Support

It is important that everyone have a safety net of close friends and family, mentors, instructors, classmates, and professionals (such as counselors) to catch us when we fall. They allow us to get different perspectives on our problems, give us advice, and help us feel that we don't have to deal with all of our problems alone. A good social support network can make the difference between getting burned-out and rolling with the punches.