



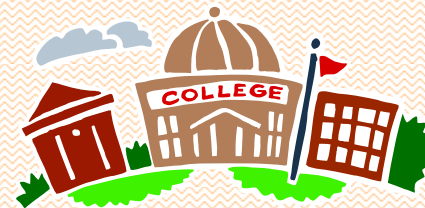
Collaborative  
Research For  
Horizontal Mentoring  
Alliances  
NSF HRD-0619150

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# Time and Stress Management

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For Faculty in  
the Liberal Arts  
College  
Environment



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# Facts about Stress

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- 54% of Americans are concerned about the level of stress in their everyday lives.
- 62% of Americans say work has a significant impact on stress levels.
  - Facts on Stress, Tuesday, January 23, 2007, Washington Post.com, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/19/AR2007011901430.html>

Those in the academic profession also experience work-related stress.

# Major Causes of Faculty Stress

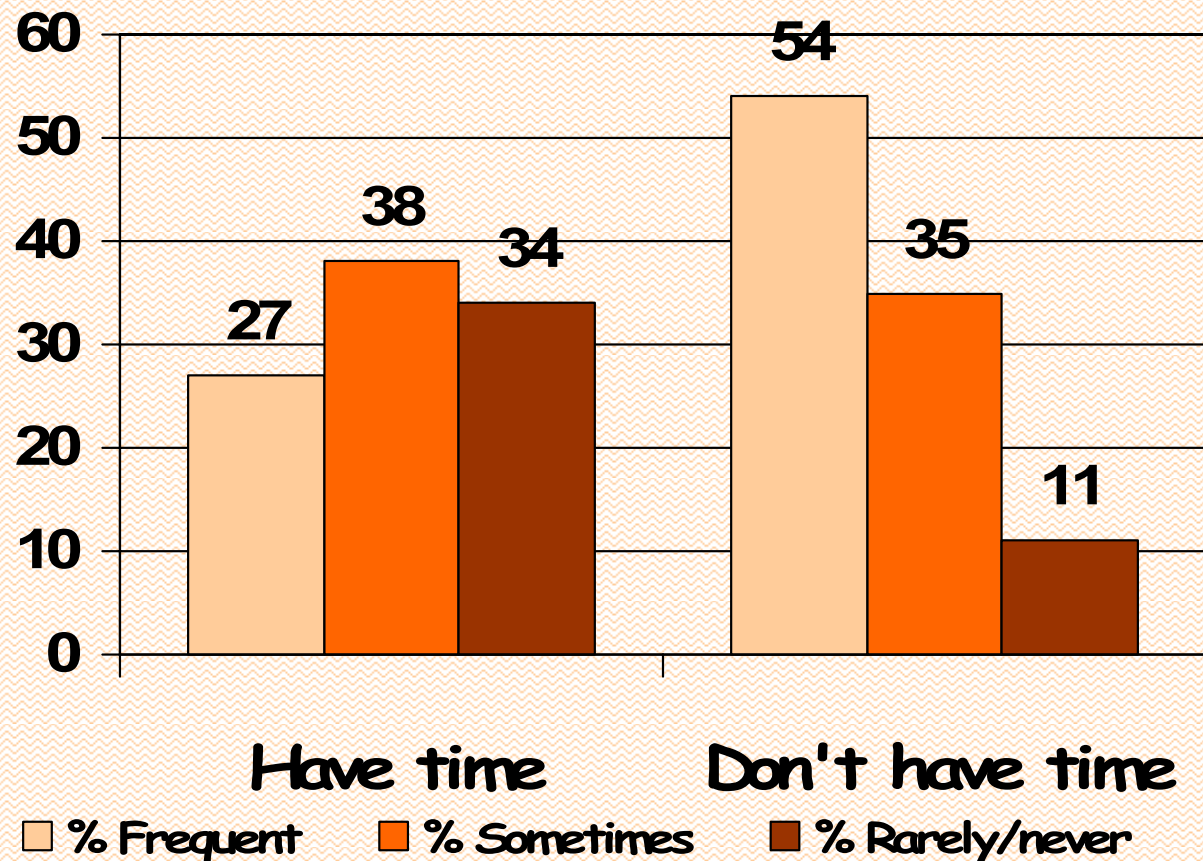
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- No control over one's schedule.
- Recognizing that no amount of planning will prepare one for the challenges of a given day.
- Feeling that there's too much to do.
- Conflicting demands on the job.
- Insufficient resources to do one's job.
- Not feeling appreciated.
- Always wanting to feel "caught up".



# Correlation of Stress and Time Pressures

Stress  
Frequency (y-  
axis) versus  
Sufficiency of  
Time (x-axis)



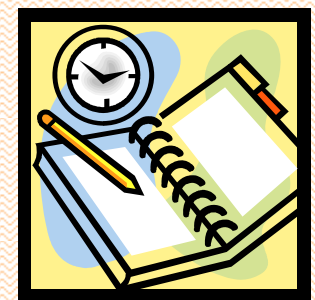
A December 2007 Gallup poll explored the connection between time and stress. 54% of Americans who reported not having enough time to do all they wanted to do [the right cohort on the x-axis] also frequently experienced stress. In contrast, only 27% of those with sufficient time [the left cohort on the x-axis] reported experiencing stress.

[www.gallup.com/poll/103456/time-pressures-stress-common-americans.aspx#1](http://www.gallup.com/poll/103456/time-pressures-stress-common-americans.aspx#1)

# Simple Techniques to Manage Time that WON'T Work for Faculty at Liberal Arts Colleges

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- Use a "Do Not Disturb" sign!
  - Not consistent with our focus on students or on the collegial atmosphere of small campuses...
- Read your e-mail once a day.
  - We expect our students to remain in contact and stay tuned for messages - why shouldn't we do the same?
- Arrange your schedule so that you tackle your most significant tasks during the part of the day when you work the best.
  - Most of us don't have complete freedom in scheduling classes, and coordinating meetings, etc. with numerous colleagues doesn't always result in optimal schedules.



# Simple Techniques to Manage Time that WON'T Work for Faculty at Liberal Arts Colleges

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- **Avoid meetings.**

- Not practical advice and certainly not consistent with faculty governance models on most campuses.



- **Volunteer for only those service activities that you think might not require too much time.**



- Again, not consistent with faculty governance models and not wise advice when service is a factor in tenure and promotion decisions!

# Simple Techniques to Manage Time that WON'T Work for Faculty at Liberal Arts Colleges

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- Do only those tasks that appear on your original plan for the day. Make others (chair, students, etc.) aware of your deadlines and be firm to exceptions.



- Not consistent with the attributes that have made the liberal arts college a powerful learning environment, including "a strong emphasis on teaching and student development, ... and frequent interactions inside and outside the classroom between students and faculty."
- Pascarella, E., Wolniak, G., Seifert, T., Cruce, T., & Blaich, C. (2005). Liberal arts colleges and liberal arts education: New evidence on impacts. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass and the Association for the Study of Higher Education.


# Simple Techniques to Manage Stress

## Lessons Learned through Years of Stress

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### General Suggestions



- Use a daily to-do list to focus on the day's priorities and gain a sense of accomplishment by noting completed tasks.
    - Not only will you derive satisfaction from what you have finished or achieved, you'll also have the basis for your annual report.
  - For every new responsibility that you take on - a new committee, research student, proposal submission, etc. - you **MUST** drop something else that requires your time.
- There are only  hours in a day!



# Simple Techniques to Manage Stress

## Lessons Learned through Years of Stress

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### General Suggestions

- Maintain a calendar in which you record your classes, committee meetings, etc., as well as times for class preparation, grading, lunch, gym workouts, etc.
  - Adding your personal times to the calendar before the semester starts is one way to put yourself first and minimize stress.
  - Schedule a reasonable time to end each day.
- Add reminders about important deadlines (proposals, conference abstracts) to your calendar.



# Simple Techniques to Manage Stress

## Lessons Learned through Years of Stress

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### General Suggestions

- **Periodically find time to clean your workspace.**



- With a clean workspace, you'll feel more in control and reduce your stress.
- A clean desk minimizes distractions and reduces wasted time looking for important papers, etc.

- **Rather than trying to learn to say "no", learn to say "yes" strategically.** Do this by:



- Replacing "Where can I help?" with "Where am I really needed?"
- Replacing "Do I need to do this now?" with "Do I need to do this at all?"

# Simple Techniques to Manage Stress

## Lessons Learned through Years of Stress

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### General Suggestions

- **Aim to be on time for classes, meetings, and other appointments.**
  - Worrying about being late adds unnecessary stress.
- **Find synergy between different activities.**
  - Are there service opportunities that would provide research data or a new research direction for you?
  - Can you design inquiry-based laboratory experiments to answer targeted questions for your larger research focus?
  - Are there opportunities to design new courses (first-year seminars, interdisciplinary team-taught seminars, etc.) that would enable you to pursue a particular passion or avocation?



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# Simple Techniques to Manage Stress

## Lessons Learned through Years of Stress

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### Suggestions for Classes

- **Schedule time before each class to collect your thoughts.**
  - Avoid meetings, office hours, etc. that run until just before the start of a class by adding preparation time to your calendar. Close your door briefly to avoid distractions.
- **As best you can, arrange your classes to create blocks of time or even a “free” day to work on research and other professional activities.**
  - The likelihood of preserving all of these blocks of time is small, but you will have some larger slots to tackle more significant tasks during the work week, rather than relying on weekends for uninterrupted time.



# Simple Techniques to Manage Stress

## Lessons Learned through Years of Stress

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### Suggestions for Classes

- Don't spend an entire summer or semester break preparing for your classes for the upcoming semester.
  - Decide on a set amount of time to organize your course and stick to it. Without a limit to your preparation time, you are likely to spend far more time than necessary.
- Try to schedule teaching assignments so that you can teach a given course in subsequent years.

# Simple Techniques to Manage Stress

## Lessons Learned through Years of Stress

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### Suggestions for Classes

- While you may attempt to maintain an “open door” policy, give your students some target times when you are most likely to be free.
  - You won't need to feel guilty when you're not available at all hours or when you need to reserve some time for important obligations.



Additional Lessons adapted from  
Richard Carlson's *Don't Sweat the Small  
Stuff at Work* (Hyperion, New York, 1998)

## #36 "Pat yourself on the back"

Whether anyone else praises you or not,  
recognize how hard you work and how  
much of a difference you make on your  
campus and in the lives of others.  
Regaining your perspective in this way can  
be a significant way to reduce your  
stress.



Great  
Job!  
😊

Additional Lessons adapted from  
Richard Carlson's *Don't Sweat the Small  
Stuff at Work* (Hyperion, New York, 1998)

#60 "Don't get stressed by the  
predictable"



No day will go 100% as planned. There will always be interruptions and crises to handle. Recognizing these facts is one way to help reduce your anxiety and stress.

Blessed are those who are flexible for they shall not be bent  
out of shape. Unknown author

Cited by Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching, Western Kentucky  
University, <http://wku.edu/teaching/db/quotes/index.html>



Additional Lessons adapted from  
Richard Carlson's *Don't Sweat the Small  
Stuff at Work* (Hyperion, New York, 1998)

#95 "Don't sweat your critics"

The academic world is rich with opportunities to receive praise as well as criticism. Promotion and tenure reviews, course evaluations, peer review of manuscripts and proposals for funding - all are occasions to receive validation of our efforts as well as judgment of our faults and shortcomings. The best advice is to try to grow from the experience.

If you are not criticized, you may not be doing much. Donald H. Rumsfeld, former Secretary of Defense

Additional Lessons adapted from  
Richard Carlson's *Don't Sweat the Small  
Stuff at Work* (Hyperion, New York, 1998)

#76 "Learn to say no without guilt"

#81 "Forgive yourself; you're human"

#87 "Avoid 'If only, then' thinking"

#88 "Eliminate the worry factor"

#96 "Reduce your self-induced stress"

Much of our stress is self-imposed. While external stressors may be beyond our control, we nevertheless have complete power to eliminate the internal factors that heighten our anxiety.



“[Teaching is] like being on a roller coaster and you can't get off for nine months.”

Unknown, quoted by William Celis 3d, New York Times, Section 4A, p. 17, November 5, 1995

Manage Your Stress and  
Enjoy the Ride!



Collaborative  
Research For  
Horizontal Mentoring  
Alliances  
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Chemistry, Harvey Mudd College

## Additional Resources

**Basics of Time and Stress Management,**  
Carter McNamara.

Adapted from the *Field Guide to  
Leadership and Supervision.*

[http://www.managementhelp.org/prsn\\_prd/  
basics.htm](http://www.managementhelp.org/prsn_prd/basics.htm)

**Time Management for Faculty**  
Center for Excellence in Teaching, Boston  
University.

<http://www.bu.edu/cet/develop/time.html>

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findings, and conclusions or  
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