

Student Counselling Office (Zentrale Studienberatung)

Overcoming stress

1. How can I prevent ongoing negative stress?

The better you know yourself, your current stressors, your stress reactions and your personal stress amplifiers, the more possibilities for action you have. This is why it is important to analyse yourself and your stress behaviour. Answer the following questions:

- *What stressors and pressures am I currently facing?*
- *How do I react to stress?*
- *What are my personal stress amplifiers?*
- *What options are available to me for overcoming stress situations?*

2. How do I reduce my stressors and make my everyday life more relaxed?

- Plan what you want to get done (be realistic about the time needed).
- Set clearly defined work periods, breaks, free time and everyday time and separate these clearly from one another.
- Take a step-by-step approach rather than trying to do everything at once (multitasking).
- Optimise or switch your workspace.
- Turn off sources of distraction.
- Find a study partner or form a study group.
- Give up tasks that you don't absolutely need to do yourself.
- Write distracting or stressful thoughts in an 'overthinking book' and postpone conflicts to a suitable time.
- Get help before you are overwhelmed by stress.

3. How do I change my personal stress amplifiers – e.g. stress-generating judgments and views?

- 'Shit happens' is an attitude with which you first simply acknowledge the reality of the situation.
- Look at the demands of the situation constructively: Are there exceptions? What is good about the situation?
- Focus on your own skills: What difficult situations have I already overcome in my life? Which of my abilities helped me do so?
- Relax your own 'laws' from 'I always have to...' to 'I'm also allowed to...'

Student Counselling Office (Zentrale Studienberatung), HAW Hamburg, Stiftstraße 69, 20099 Hamburg

We're here to answer all of your questions about your studies – by email, by phone or in person.

You can find up-to-date contact information and office hours at bit.ly/HAW-ZSB.

For personal use only. Please ask the ZSB's permission before sharing.

Student Counselling Office (Zentrale Studienberatung)

4. How can I reduce my experience of stress in a concrete way?

The formula is simple: Intentional physical and mental relaxation helps reduce acute experiences of stress. The more quickly and deeply you learn to relax, the better prepared you are to deal with moments of stress. Try to find out which relaxation technique suits you and use it regularly – for example, yoga, breathing exercises, muscle relaxation, meditation, tai chi, autogenic training. Courses are offered by the university sports programme (Hochschulsport), health insurance companies and adult education centres (Volkshochschulen), among others.

Movement and fresh air are equally helpful. The physical effort of exercise reduces your stress level and clears your head!

Over the longer term, unfortunately, there is no five-minute recipe against stress. When it comes to stress and overcoming stress, it is important to try to identify helpful ideas, ways of taking action, and your personal goals, visions and values, so that you can organise your life in the way you want to live it.

5. What regenerative and preventative strategies can help prevent stress more generally?

- Take time for everyday pleasures.
- Make sure to have free time without plans and just go with the flow.
- Spend five minutes just looking out the window.
- Get enough sleep on a regular basis.
- Eat healthy food.
- Be physically active.
- Take a (short) holiday.
- Keep up your hobbies and any leisure activities that you enjoy.
- Maintain your friendships.
- Use relaxation techniques regularly.

6. What is burnout syndrome?

Burnout syndrome is a specific consequence of ongoing stress. It is a lasting and severe state of exhaustion as the result of a chronic stress reaction with physical and emotional symptoms.

Student Counselling Office (Zentrale Studienberatung), HAW Hamburg, Stiftstraße 69, 20099 Hamburg

We're here to answer all of your questions about your studies – by email, by phone or in person.

You can find up-to-date contact information and office hours at bit.ly/HAW-ZSB.

For personal use only. Please ask the ZSB's permission before sharing.

Student Counselling Office (Zentrale Studienberatung)

7. How can I tell if I'm in danger of experiencing burnout?

The following physical and mental effects of ongoing and intense negative stress are typical. Even if you are only experiencing the stress symptoms listed under level 1, you should start making changes to your daily life and using both short- and long-term strategies for countering stress.

- **Level 1:** problems sleeping, heart palpitations, tinnitus, muscle tension, increased work activity, reduced ability to concentrate, irritability
- **Level 2:** significant sleep disorders, increasing physical complaints, social withdrawal, frequent feelings of depression, aggression, clear difficulty concentrating, increased consumption of sleep aids or productivity-enhancing products
- **Level 3:** feelings of alienation, intense anxiety, apathy, depression, suicidal thoughts