

OHSU Joseph B. Trainer Health & Wellness Center

## **Caring for Yourself & Your Colleagues**

*Adapted with permission from UCSF*

## **Rationale**

Being in professional graduate school or postdoctoral scholar training can present significant challenges, regardless of your prior academic or life success. In addition to the classroom, laboratory and clinical experiences that comprise your program here, you may face stresses in your relationships or finances, or with issues related to becoming a professional in your chosen field. Sometimes the stresses of academics, career and other aspects of your life are hard to manage.

These stresses affect everyone, and every student and fellow has different methods of coping. Some methods, of course, are more effective than others. When the stresses become too much for your coping skills to handle, things can start to break down. It may be your physical health that shows the first signs. It may be your memory and concentration that start to lose their edge. You may become more easily irritated with things that are ultimately not that important. You may start to cope in less healthful ways (like drinking too much alcohol). Anyone can run into difficulties.

The signs of too much stress can manifest differently in different people. Such signs typically are visible to you early on (if you look for them) and to your colleagues (who might show signs of their own). Early detection of stress-related problems usually allows for an easier, more straightforward solution. Being mindful of your responses to stress and taking steps toward preventing such problems from happening in the first place is even better.

### **Steps to Caring**

The mission of OHSU entails both educating the nation's most promising students and fellows for careers in the health sciences and delivering the best possible health care. To fulfill that mission, members of the campus community must lead by example, demonstrating the ability to care not only for patients, but also for themselves and their colleagues.

Aspects of OHSU complicate achieving that goal, including a broad range of student ages and life experiences, and the health sciences' inherent focus on the importance of others' needs, which can reduce attention to the needs of the self.

As such, the campus community has taken significant steps toward creating a culture of caring at OHSU. This guide is part of that effort. The faculty and staff in your school have also received training about assisting students in need, and are available to help you with problems you may face while you're here.

This guide will help you care for yourself and your colleagues by providing:

- Basic tools for preventing stress-related problems
- Ways to recognize early signs of difficulties
- Resources available for care
- Ideas about how to help others

## Prevention

Training for a career in the health sciences (as well as actually having that career) includes performance under varying degrees of stress. Students and postdoctoral scholars come to graduate training programs with a wide range of strengths and coping skills for managing stress. You may be well prepared to deal with stress or you may benefit from additional help in learning how to manage stress.

Although studies have shown that a certain degree of stress enables peak performance, studies have also shown that excessive stress has significant negative physical, cognitive and emotional consequences. (For examples of these, please see the table on page 4.) Even the best-prepared students can have problems caused or triggered by stress.

You can reduce your chance of having excessive stress with these steps:

- Know the stressors
- Balance your lifestyle
- Change the system

## *Know the Stressors*

### Types of Stressors for Students and Postdoctoral Scholars

- **Academic** – Fresh from past academic success and now faced with high expectations and outstanding peers in your program, you may feel as if you are faltering (or even losing part of your identity as “top of the class”). Even if you’re doing well, you can still feel significant pressure to perform. The academic culture of professional and graduate schools, including OHSU, can often seem to reinforce competition, which can lead to undue stress.
- **Developmental** – Learning the responsibilities and the role of a health care professional frequently brings up problematic issues such as handling uncertainty, wielding authority and acting professionally.
- **Financial** - The rising cost of living can add to what may already be significant loan burdens from undergraduate study. In addition, you or others in your program may have additional financial obligations to children or family members.
- **Social / Relationships** – Stress can arise in developing new social connections (with colleagues, mentors, faculty, etc.) and managing changes in existing relationships. All new students and fellows must adjust to the unfamiliar social norms of their programs. Students and fellows relocating here encounter the added stresses of being in a diverse ethnic, social and cultural environment as well as separation from home, family and friends. Even local trainees may face disrupted social networks and need to adjust to new living situations.
- **Diversity** – OHSU celebrates the richness of diversity on campus, and diversity in itself is not a stressor. Nonetheless, ethnicity, race, culture, gender, age, health status, disability status, sexual orientation, and gender identity are all factors that can contribute to stress and influence how stress is shown.

*Change the System*

**Identify and act upon stressors that are within your sphere of control.** Find ways in which you can limit the impact of stressors on you. For example, be aware of taking on too many responsibilities while you are in training, but don't entirely cut yourself off from activities that help reduce your stress level. Also, during certain times of the year, it may be helpful to let your friends and family know that you're particularly busy, enabling them to either provide additional support for you or give you more space.

**Identify and act upon stressors that are outside your sphere of control.** Bring systems issues creating undue stress to the attention of staff and/or faculty, so that change might be effected. Look for opportunities to change the culture of your school, program or organization so it reinforces healthy living.

*TIPS FOR PREVENTION*

***Compete less, learn more***

It took a lot of talent and work to get here. You may have come from an undergraduate or graduate program where information was a commodity to be hoarded, to distinguish you from your peers. Now you need to rethink competing. You need to consider the benefits of collaborating and working cooperatively – your peers are now valuable resources.

Statistically, the odds that you're competing with your new peers for the one final spot in the one place you desperately want to go next in your career are slim. From each program here, you will move on to a more specialized and unique position. From here, you differentiate.

As you move through this program with your colleagues, you can work together to make each other better than students or fellows who are similarly differentiating at other schools. Sharing knowledge and skills will make OHSU's students and fellows more expert and sought-after professionals.

## Early Detection

Difficulties can manifest in five fundamental areas, affecting your work, relationships, thinking, feeling and physical well-being. Monitoring and assessing yourself in these areas can help to identify potential problems early on and enable you to prevent them from worsening.

Signs in any of the areas below may indicate a stress-related problem:

<p><b>Work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declining academic or work performance</li> <li>• Trouble finishing tasks</li> <li>• Poor attendance</li> </ul>	<p><b>Relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withdrawal from social interaction</li> <li>• Increased defensiveness, sensitivity or over-reacting in discussions</li> <li>• Disruptive behavior</li> <li>• Inappropriate or odd behavior</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cognition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty comprehending</li> <li>• Poor concentration</li> <li>• Indecisiveness</li> <li>• Forgetfulness</li> </ul>	<p><b>Emotion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elevated or depressed mood</li> <li>• Negative outlook, hopelessness or suicidality</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Excessive worry or anxiety</li> </ul>
<p><b>Physical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant loss or gain of weight</li> <li>• Obvious fatigue / sleeping in class</li> </ul>	<p><b>Well-being</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deteriorating personal appearance</li> <li>• Increase in alcohol or drug use</li> </ul>

A single sign from the table above indicates a need to assess your situation:

- *How long has this been going on?*
- *Do I have a good idea why it's happening?*
- *Have I tried to fix it, and has that helped?*

If the situation isn't changing for the better, and what you've been trying to do to cope hasn't yet addressed the problem, you should consider taking advantage of some of the resources OHSU makes available for students and postdoctoral fellows (see page 5).

Multiple signs from the table above or a long duration of a single sign indicate an increased probability that you would benefit from some help in finding a solution.

Some of the signs listed in the table may indicate mood disorders (such as depression), anxiety problems, substance abuse, emotional crisis, recent trauma or exposure to violence. Because these conditions or situations can be helped or treated, early identification is important.

## TIPS FOR EARLY DETECTION

### Timing matters

Keep in mind that holidays and exam periods are a common time for issues to surface on campus. Try to be more attuned to yourself and to colleagues during these times of increased stress.

### Resources for Care

OHSU is committed to helping its students, post-doctoral scholars, faculty, and staff, and provides many valuable resources toward that end. In addition, each school offers a number of resources for its students. See below for a list of resources for students and postdocs. It's important to realize that when you can't solve a problem yourself there are people who want to (and can) help you.

### Basic Self Care

Good self care practices are essential to handling stress. Good practices include:

- **Eat healthful foods.** Avoid high fat and high sugar foods.
- **Get regular exercise.** Maintaining physical fitness can make you more resilient to stress.
- **Avoid alcohol and illicit drug use.** Alcohol and illicit drugs, rather than relieving stress, can actually increase anxiety, depression and insomnia.
- **Limit caffeine and stimulants.** These actually cause anxiety and increase the stress response.
- **Have healthy sleep habits.** Keep regular hours and get at least 6 hours of sleep each night. Alcohol and caffeine both worsen insomnia.
- **Balance work and play.** Taking study breaks improves recall.

When you notice symptoms of stress in your life, try to:

- **Use relaxation exercises.** Meditation, deep breathing, visualization (of a soothing scene) or deep muscle relaxation (tensing and relaxing muscles). For details, see the OHSU website:
- **Reward yourself.** Give yourself a small treat or escape for a little while.
- **Talk about it.** Friends, family and peers can be invaluable support.
- **Change your environment.** Take a walk. Take a bath. Play some music.

## **TIPS FOR CARING FOR COLLEAGUES**

### ***Keep confidentiality in mind***

It can be difficult to hear from any colleague that it seems some help might be needed, especially around issues related to academic or work performance, or behavioral health. People worry that word might spread and that they will be perceived as “weak” or defective. One-to-one, private conversations may better defuse worry or defensiveness. As much as possible, discuss confidential information with as few parties as you can.

### ***Maintain some distance***

In helping, be careful not to ask too many questions. For example, it may be helpful to know your colleague is having family difficulties, but you probably do not need know the difficulties in intricate detail.

### ***Consider diversity***

Ethnicity, race, culture, gender, age, health status, disability status, sexual orientation, and gender identity are all factors that can give rise to stress and influence how stress is shown. It may be helpful, when one or more of these factors seem to be causing or affecting stress, to suggest diversity-focused services.

### ***Get a consultation (for students and post-doctoral scholars)***

Call JBT Health and Wellness Center at (503) 494- 8665 and ask to speak with JBT staff to discuss concerns about how to approach a student or fellow or if you are unsure about how to proceed with an individual in need. The staff will be happy to help you to a clinician as necessary. (Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.)

### ***Know your resources (for faculty & staff)***

Student Affairs Officers in your school can help you figure out how to best assist faculty and staff in your school. If you’re puzzled as to what (if anything) to do, arrange a meeting to talk it through.

Faculty and Staff Assistance Program staff can consult with you about the problem or speak directly with the staff or faculty in need. And ask to speak with a counselor.

HR Director can help you problem solve an issue you are having with a staff member and/or refer you to someone else who can be of assistance.

## Campus Resources

JBT Health and Wellness  
[www.ohsu.edu/jbt-health](http://www.ohsu.edu/jbt-health)  
503.494.8665  
[askjbthealth@ohsu.edu](mailto:askjbthealth@ohsu.edu)

Postdoctoral Scholar Liaison

Ashley Branch  
[postdocinfo@ohsu.edu](mailto:postdocinfo@ohsu.edu)

March Wellness  
[www.ohsu.edu/xd/about/services/march-wellness/](http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/about/services/march-wellness/)  
503-418-6272  
[feracoj@ohsu.edu](mailto:feracoj@ohsu.edu)

Student Access (Disabilities)  
[www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/education-diversity/student-access/index.cfm](http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/education-diversity/student-access/index.cfm)  
503-494-0082  
[orchards@ohsu.edu](mailto:orchards@ohsu.edu)

Healthy Starts Children's Center  
[www.cclc.com/center/or/healthy-starts-childrens-center-ohsu](http://www.cclc.com/center/or/healthy-starts-childrens-center-ohsu)  
971-230-2342  
[www.cclc.com/contact-center/2998](http://www.cclc.com/contact-center/2998)

Campus Life Services Resource Center  
[www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/about-us/campus.cfm](http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/about-us/campus.cfm)  
503-494-7878  
[acad@ohsu.edu](mailto:acad@ohsu.edu)

Student Service Resource Center  
[www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/about-us/students.cfm](http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/about-us/students.cfm)  
503-494-7878  
[acad@ohsu.edu](mailto:acad@ohsu.edu)

Student Center  
[www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/student-center/](http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/student-center/)  
503-494-8295  
503-494-8296  
[studentcenter@ohsu.edu](mailto:studentcenter@ohsu.edu)

Campus Life Services Resource Center  
[www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/about-us/campus.cfm](http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/about-us/campus.cfm)  
503-494-7878  
[acad@ohsu.edu](mailto:acad@ohsu.edu)

March Wellness  
[www.ohsu.edu/xd/about/services/march-wellness/](http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/about/services/march-wellness/)  
503-418-6272  
[feracoj@ohsu.edu](mailto:feracoj@ohsu.edu)

Academic and Student Affairs  
[www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/](http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/)  
503-494-7878  
[acad@ohsu.edu](mailto:acad@ohsu.edu)

Center for Diversity and Multicultural Affairs

[www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/education-diversity/index.cfm/](http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/education-diversity/index.cfm/)

503-494-5657

[cedma@ohsu.edu](mailto:cedma@ohsu.edu)

Student Council

[www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/student-life/ohsu-student-council/](http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/student-services/student-life/ohsu-student-council/)

503-494-9072

[scouncil@ohsu.edu](mailto:scouncil@ohsu.edu)

Bike Incentive Program

[www.ohsu.edu/parking/bike/OHSUBikeSite2010.pdf](http://www.ohsu.edu/parking/bike/OHSUBikeSite2010.pdf)

503-494-2555

[bike@ohsu.edu](mailto:bike@ohsu.edu)

Campus Map

[www.ohsu.edu/xd/about/visiting/locations/upload/campusmap.pdf](http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/about/visiting/locations/upload/campusmap.pdf)

## Off Campus Resources

### Crisis and Behavioral Health

Multnomah County Crisis Line: 503 988-4888 or 1-800-716-9769

Walk in the Cascadia 24 hour Urgent Walk-in Clinic:

2415 SE 43rd (Use west entrance at SE 42nd/Division)

Bus #4 can also be used to get to the clinic

The Portland Women's Crisis Line: 503 235-5333 or 1-888-235-5333

The Men's Resource Center: 503 235-3433

Oregon Psychological Association

147 SE 102nd Ave.

Portland, OR 97216

503.253.9155

Tollfree 800.541.9798

Fax: 503.253.9172

[www.opa.org](http://www.opa.org)

Oregon Psychiatric Association

PO Box 2042

Salem, OR 97308

1-800-533-7031

503-587-8063 (fax)

[www.orpsych.org](http://www.orpsych.org)

## Substance Abuse

OHSU Avel Gordly Center for Healing

621 SW Alder, Suite 520

Portland, Oregon 97205

Clinic phone: 503 494-4745

Fax: 503 494-4747

Email: [agch@ohsu.edu](mailto:agch@ohsu.edu)

Alcoholic's Anonymous (AA) meetings

3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Rd, Auditorium Rm. 221-upstairs lobby, meets Wednesdays at 8PM.

Call the Portland Area Intergroup's Central Office at 503-223-8569 for information.

## Portland community hospital emergency rooms:

OHSU Hospital Emergency Department: 503 494-7551

3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Rd

Providence Portland Emergency Department: 503 215-6000

4805 NE Glisan, Portland Oregon

Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital Emergency Department: 503 413-7711

1200 NW 23rd Ave. Portland Oregon

Providence St. Vincent Emergency Department: 503 216-2361

9205 SW Barnes Rd. Portland Oregon

OHSU Avel Gordly Center for Healing

621 SW Alder, Suite 520

Portland, Oregon 97205

Clinic phone: 503 494-4745

Fax: 503 494-4747

Email: [agch@ohsu.edu](mailto:agch@ohsu.edu)



