



reCAPS

Counseling & Psychological Services
University of California, Santa Cruz

New Workshops on Managing Stress

This month, CAPS launched a new workshop series called Stress Less, led by our Peer Education Program volunteers. Peer educators are dedicated to increasing information and reducing stigma about mental health issues and CAPS services. In the past couple of years, they have focused on providing outreach through tabling and other special events and publishing the [CAPS PEP blog](#). This is the first year the peer educators have offered workshops. Peer educators worked hard earlier in the quarter to develop a fun,

interactive, and informative 90-minute presentation that includes teaching a relaxation exercise and providing other helpful resources and tips for stress management.

The workshop was offered multiple times this quarter and may be held again in future quarters. You can just drop in—no sign up or commitment required. The same workshop will be held each time, but you are welcome to come to more than one if you think a refresher will be helpful!

Stress Less!

What: A 90-minute interactive presentation including a relaxation exercise and resources and tips for stress management.

Who: For any UCSC undergrad or grad student who wants help managing stress.

Where & When: CAPS group room (Health Center, East Wing, 2nd floor). Remaining workshop this quarter: Wednesday, 11/18, 11:00–12:30 pm.

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All About CAPS

Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) offers confidential mental health services to registered UCSC students all year 'round:

- Awesome workshops and trainings around campus
- A variety of therapy and support groups
- Brief individual and couples counseling
- Referrals to on- and off-campus resources
- Crisis services (in person Mon-Fri 8 am-5 pm; by phone 24/7 at 831-459-2628)

To make an appointment, call 831-459-2628 or stop by (Student Health Center, East Wing, 2nd floor) weekdays between 8 am and 5 pm. To learn more, visit our [website](#), check out the [CAPS blog](#), and like us on [Facebook](#)!



Upcoming Events

MOVIES FOR MENTAL HEALTH: An exciting, free event featuring short films designed to reduce mental health stigma and a panel discussion with students and mental health professionals. Free dinner provided. No sign-up required. November 18th, 5:30–7:30 pm. Student Health Center Mural Room.

LET'S TALK: A drop-in space where you can have a brief, confidential chat with a CAPS counselor. It's free, and you don't need an appointment—just walk in! Let's Talk is held on Tuesdays at the Cantu Center from 2:00 to 4:00 pm and Wednesdays at the Graduate Student Commons (across from the Bay Tree Building), from 12:30 to 2:30 pm. All registered undergraduate and graduate students are welcome to both locations of Let's Talk. Read more about Let's Talk on the CAPS [website](#).

WELLNESS SERIES: CAPS launched a new wellness workshop series this quarter. These weekly hour-

long events are designed to give you helpful info and tools for being mentally healthier. Topics include self-compassion, mindfulness, healthy thought patterns, and how positive psychology relates to academic success. Check our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page for the latest info on these awesome workshops!

STRESS LESS WORKSHOPS: CAPS launched a new workshop series this quarter, led by our peer educators. Each 90-minute workshop provides valuable tips on stress management and includes an interactive and fun relaxation exercise. No sign-up required—just come to the CAPS central office. See page 1 for more information about remaining workshops this quarter.

FINALS PREP WORKSHOP: CAPS, EOP, Oakes College, and College 8 are teaming up to provide "Hop Tips for Preparing for Finals," a workshop happening Wednesday, November 18th, 5:30-7:00 pm, at the Oakes College Guzman Room. Free food provided! All students welcome. Call EOP for more information at 831-459-4386.

Dear CAPS,

I heard that sometimes there is a long wait to get a counseling appointment at CAPS. Is that true?

—Seeking Services

It is true that things can get backed up at CAPS when the demand for services is high. However, that's not the whole story. Individual counseling is not always the best fit for a particular issue, and CAPS offers a number of other services, including workshops (such as Stress Less—see page 1), groups, our Let's Talk drop-in consultation service, medication, and referrals for other services on and off campus. We can also recommend self-help resources (e.g., relaxation exercises, tools for addressing unhelpful thoughts).

Regardless of what service we might recommend, we do try to keep the wait for a first contact with us short. Usually, the first step in the CAPS process is a phone appointment.

You can be scheduled for a phone appointment pretty quickly—sometimes in a day or two and generally within a week. During business hours, you can call CAPS (831-459-2628) or stop by to schedule the phone appointment. During this appointment, we get information about why you are calling and some other background info and make recommendations for how to help you. From there, how long it takes to start services depends on the reason you are calling and which services you need.

Sometimes we recommend individual counseling with a CAPS counselor or off campus with a private therapist or agency. At CAPS, the individual therapy we offer is brief, meaning that most students are seen from one or two sessions up to a handful of sessions in an academic year. For those who want or need open-ended counseling or a specialized service that we don't offer (e.g.,

intensive treatment for substance abuse, an eating disorder, or severe depression; comprehensive psychological testing), off-campus therapy is usually the best option. Also, when CAPS is backed up due to high demand, students can typically get seen much faster off campus because there are a large number of therapists nearby, many of whom take SHIP (or other) insurance.

When a student is in crisis, CAPS will see them as soon as possible—particularly if the student is at risk of harm to self or to someone else. Remember that even when CAPS is not open, we have crisis services available by phone at 831-459-2628.



Managing Unhelpful Thoughts

We all have “unhelpful” thoughts and worries sometimes. These thoughts are different than “helpful,” or “productive,” thoughts and worries, which may have a useful function. With helpful worrying, we may be gaining insight, planning how to change something, or recognizing a pattern that no longer works. With unhelpful thoughts, our minds get stuck in a loop that snowballs until we feel worse, and we don’t solve anything. Even though it can feel like we have no control over unhelpful thoughts, we can practice techniques that will help us question, challenge, or counteract them or distract us from them. We can also learn how to treat ourselves with kindness and compassion and self-soothe.

Different techniques work better in some situations than others, and different people may prefer one strategy over another. Try some of the following, and remember, the more you practice recognizing and combatting your unhelpful thoughts, the better you’ll get at it.

Questioning Thoughts

- Is this really true?
- Do I really believe this thought?
- Am I seeing things clearly?
- Are these the facts or just assumptions? What is the evidence?
- Is thinking about this helpful? (e.g., Is it solving a problem, planning an action, making me feel more prepared?)
- What am I gaining from these thoughts? What am I losing?
- Is what I am worried about likely to happen?
- Are there other ways of looking at this?
- Will this still matter in a few months? A year? Ten years?

De-Escalating Thoughts

- Is my thought accurate, or is it exaggerated? (Clues: When you use words like *always* and *never*, it’s probably exaggerated.)
- Can I think of examples of when this was not true?
- If the worst happened, what are some ways I could probably deal with it?
- Can I focus on the present or my next steps, rather than catastrophizing about the future?

Building Compassion

- Would I say this to someone I care about? If they were thinking these thoughts, what would I say to help them feel better?
- What would a good friend say to me right now?
- Even if what I am thinking is true or upsetting, can I accept that these feelings are normal?
- Can I focus on the effort I made rather than the result?
- Can I see this as a partial success or a learning experience, not as a failure?

- Instead of judging myself, can I accept that I’m not perfect?

Choosing Your Words Carefully

- Am I using extreme, inaccurate, or emotionally loaded words (e.g., “I hate myself,” “I have nothing to live for”)? How can I reword this to be less extreme or unhelpful?
- Am I putting unrealistic expectations on myself but using unhelpful “should” statements?

Distraction (Note that distraction is fine as one coping tool in your toolbox, but it can backfire if it’s your *only* strategy and lead to denial and trouble facing the tough stuff.)

- What can I do to take my mind off these negative thoughts (e.g., watch a video, read, run, paint, write, play sports, play video games, cook, play music, volunteer, clean, do homework)?
- Who can I talk to right now? Who can I have fun with?
- What activities might feel soothing (e.g., taking a hot shower, drinking herbal tea, getting a back rub, lis-

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FEELING
DOWN??



Have you tried dwelling on it and thinking about your problems over + over?

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tening to music, being in nature, breathing deeply, doing yoga)?

Other Ideas

- Take a meditation class or listen to meditation or relaxation podcasts on line.
- Join a support group or spiritual community.
- Talk to a therapist, trusted friend or relative, mentor, or religious leader.
- Use a self-help website (e.g., e-couch: <https://ecouch.anu.edu.au>) to work on combatting unhelpful thoughts, anxiety, and low mood.
- Practice yoga or martial arts to develop more mental focus.
- Learn to set boundaries to avoid unhealthy situations with other people.
- Avoid using alcohol or other drugs to cope, as they can cause problems and prevent you from learning healthier coping skills.
- Take care of yourself by getting enough sleep, eating well, and exercising—if you aren't practicing self-care, it'll be harder to manage anxiety and unhelpful thoughts.

Contact CAPS:

Student Health Center
East Wing, 2nd Floor
Phone: 831-459-2628
(24/7 crisis help)
<http://caps.ucsc.edu>

Wellness Tip: Getting Better Sleep

One of the most common wellness issues we hear about at CAPS is not getting enough sleep. Some students stay up too late because they are so busy and/or aren't managing their time well. Others have trouble falling asleep for various reasons (often anxiety). If you are having trouble getting enough sleep, these tips may help you fall asleep faster and get the rest you need to be healthy and productive:

1. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day (even weekends). We know this can be tough when you're in college, but it really seems to help.
2. Create a relaxing ritual before bed: Turn off electronics, put away stressful studying, and take 30 to 60 minutes to relax and unwind. Try stretching, yoga, reading for fun, soft music, or hot herbal tea.
3. Reserve your bed for just sleep (or sex). Don't use your bed a place to study. If your body associates the bed with sleep, it'll be easier to doze off at night.
4. Avoid strenuous exercise, caffeine, and big meals just before bed.
5. If racing thoughts are keeping you up, try journaling or making a list of things you need to do tomorrow as a way of getting your thoughts "out" so you can let them go. Also try breathing or relaxation exercises.
6. Cut out daytime naps or limit them to 20-40 minutes.
7. Keep your room dark, quiet, and a little cool if possible. If you can't control these things, you can try to adapt with earplugs, a white noise machine or fan, an eye mask, or other tools to cope with a less-than-ideal sleep environment.
8. Try natural sleep aids like chamomile tea, melatonin, and valerian before reaching for sleeping pills, which may have unwanted side effects, and if you use them too much, you can become dependent.
9. For more tips on sleep, including relaxation exercises, visit the CAPS self-help website at <http://caps.ucsc.edu/resources/self-help.html>. You can also download a free app for sleep called CBT-I Coach with sleep strategies, relaxation exercises, a sleep log, and more.

