Life at the Top – Senior School News

Lifestyle Management

Year 12 students are now entering the home straight and are heading toward the finish line. This can be a very challenging time for both young adult and family. Stress levels can rise and molehills can appear to be mountains.

A few years ago I purchased the book titled ‘Science of Student Success – HSC by Douglas Barton, Edward Seung and Dorjee Sun. They offer some good advice on how we can help control these stress levels.

They presented five lifestyle management techniques to this end: These are:

1. Exercise
2. Socialise
3. Maintain a Healthy Diet
4. Time management
5. Cultivate Inner Peace

Here are a few ideas about each that I hope you will find beneficial

1. Exercise

I know from personal experience that once the work starts to pile up I tend to cut back on exercising. This is ever so true of Year 12 students. Doing an hour of exercise that they could put into study (revising) or doing assignment could disadvantage them. WRONG!

The more you exercise the greater will be the study productivity for two reasons:

1) Physical Vibrancy – If you are physically vibrant you can sit longer at your desk and you also have higher levels of memory retention and focus. If you go long periods without exercise your productivity can decline

2) Chemical Balance: Exercise releases endorphins, the body’s happy gas and this helps release stress

2. Socialise

School does not mean giving up your social life. Friends can be your ultimate stress relief! All the top students who stayed mentally balanced maintained their social lives. Friday night was chill out night where they do no work and be with friends
On the other hand breakdown students would often go long periods without going out.

However it’s not a free for all, socialising needs to be disciplined. Sometimes you need to reduce work and see friends and other times you need to stay home and work.

I know my son, when he was at the Australian National University, would often (around assessment time) stay home on a Saturday Night and study!!

You have to cut back on socialising during hectic periods.

3. **Maintain a Healthy Diet**

Stress can make someone forget about eating healthy. I knew one student who would skip meals or eat his dinner at his desk while studying! The brain needs energy to think, so don’t miss meals.

Caffeine tends to be abused especially through so called energy drinks or copious amounts of coffee! There are three key points to consider here:

1) The occasional coffee or energy drink is ok. However if you are using these as a stimulant you are in effect tearing down your defences against stress.

2) Too much caffeine or sugar tampers with your blood sugar levels which leaves you vulnerable to more stress.

3) If your body wants to go to sleep and you take drugs to stay awake you are opening the doors to stress. Depriving your body of sleep and creating chemical imbalance will guarantee increased levels of stress.

4. **Time Management – self-management**

The reason most students become stressed is that they’re not prepared for an exam or an assessment task. Manage the time
between study, rest, socialising and exercise – use a study timetable and stick to it!

5. **Cultivate Inner Peace**

Take time out away from study. Students who set aside at least one hour each week or fortnight makes a significant difference – it’s not partying or shopping.

Some examples of what students have done include:

- Getting a massage every fortnight
- Go to the Botanical Gardens and sit in nature
- Find a quiet place to sit and relax.
- Go for a walk along a beach at sunset
- Go to church and pray
- Play a musical instrument

This helps give you balance and perspective in your life as well as affording you a great chance to relax and recharge.

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