Effective & Ineffective Stress
Every person has their own unique level of optimal performance. Find your peak performance level.

- **Low stress**: leads to procrastination and lack of motivation
- **Eustress**: is the optimal or peak performance level—provides motivation without being overwhelming
- **Distress**: is overwhelming—debilitating and harmful to your health, leading to headaches and burnout

How to Manage Stress
Learning to manage stress on your own is a step in the right direction toward leading a balanced life. It can be hard to change and understand how to deal with stress. Here are a few tips you can apply in your life.

1. Change the causes of stress
   - *Talk to a T.A. about getting extra help in a class*

2. Develop skills to cope
   - *Use a weekly calendar to better accomplish everyday tasks*

3. Manage the mind
   - *Use positive images to help cope with hard days*

4. Lead a balanced lifestyle
   - *Eat balanced meals, exercise, relax and develop creative hobbies or outlets*

Breathing Awareness
It is hard to feel tense while practicing slow, relaxed, deep breathing. Breathe deeply to relax your body and quiet your mind. Control your breathing and you can control your tension.

**Abdominal Breathing**
This is full breathing from your lower abdomen, making full use of your diaphragm. Your stomach should expand and release, without chest or shoulders moving at all.

- *Deep, even, natural breathing: natural for newborns and sleeping adults*
- *This is the easiest way to elicit the relaxation response*

**Chest Breathing**
This type of breathing is shallow and quick, as if you’ve been exerting yourself too much. You will feel your shoulders tense and your neck muscles contract, never fully feeling refreshed.

- *Associated with anxiety and distress*
- *Increases your heart rate and muscle tension and turns on your stress response*
Relaxation Techniques

In addition to skills already discussed, relaxation is a great way to manage stress, but relaxing is more than vegging in front of the TV. Here are some tips!

Find activities that help you:
- Lower your heart rate for a long period of time
- Reduce your blood pressure
- Decrease your breath speed and allow you to practice abdominal breathing
- Exercise that increases blood flow
- Expel tension from your body
- Express your emotions in a positive way
- Build confidence and happiness

Biofeedback Lab:
Instruments in the Biofeedback Lab are used to detect your body’s subtle physical responses to stress. Once you’re aware of these reactions, you can learn to control them, and learn which relaxation technique can help calm these reactions down.

Body Awareness (Scanning) Exercise:
Try scanning your body from head to toe, searching for tension to release. Just like progressive muscle relaxation (mentioned below), this is designed to locate and release tension in your body. Mentally release that tension and allow your muscles to relax. It takes the conscious thoughts to help relieve the stress and tension.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation:
Excess muscle tension is both a response to stress, and a cause of stress. Have you ever felt your jaw clenching or your shoulders tightening? Prolonged tension can cause wear and tear on your body, as well as fatigue in your brain, leading to headaches. Learn to identify different muscles and distinguish between feelings of tension and relaxation.

Try it out!

Write out your biggest stressor at this moment:

Formulate a goal for removing it:

Write out the necessary steps: