Counseling and Testing Service

Stress Management & Biofeedback Center

Idaho State University
DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR?

I am so stressed out!!

How will I get it all done?

I hope I'm not getting a cold!

Oh no, not another migraine!

I'm so nervous, I can't get to sleep!
OF ALL THE SKILLS YOU LEARN AT ISU...
Learning to manage stress may be the most important.

In fact, it could change your whole life!
HUMANS HAVE DEVELOPED AMAZING SYSTEMS TO SURVIVE THREATS:

- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze
- Faint
OUR BODIES AUTOMATICALLY REACT TO GET US READY TO FACE THE PERCEIVED THREAT

**FIGHT or FLIGHT**

**NOTICEABLE EFFECTS**
- Pupils dilate
- Mouth goes dry
- Neck + shoulder muscles tense
- Heart pumps faster
- Chest pains
- Palpitations
- Sweating
- Muscles tense for action
- Breathing fast
- Shallow + hyperventilation
- Oxygen needed for muscles

**HIDDEN EFFECTS**
- Brain gets body ready for action
- Adrenaline released for fight/flight
- Blood pressure rises
- Liver releases glucose to provide energy for muscles
- Digestion slows or ceases
- Sphincters close — then relax
- Cortisol released ( depresses the immune system )

F. Hedges
DURING THE FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE...

- Muscles: Tense Up, Poised for Action
- Mind: Instinctive; Higher thinking shuts down
- Stress Hormones Released: Adrenalin, Cortisol, etc. (immune repair shuts down)
- Stomach: Digestion shuts down; “Butterflies”
- Heart Rate: Speeds Up (blood flows to large muscles)
- Breathing: Shallow and Quick
- Sweat Glands: Active
- Emotions: Strong—Fear, Anger, Panic
THE PROBLEM IS, THESE RESPONSES DON’T HELP US COPE WITH THE KINDS OF STRESSORS WE NOW FACE MOST OF THE TIME...

- Deadlines
- Paying the bills
- Lack of sleep
- Exams
- Difficult relationships
- Role conflicts
- Job decisions
- Driving
AND OVER TIME, THESE RESPONSES TAKE A TOLL ON OUR PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING
NOW THAT WE HAVE YOUR ATTENTION...

Just as you weren’t born knowing calculus, you also have to learn how to recognize your body’s response to stress and find ways to bring your systems back to equilibrium.
WHERE CAN YOU LEARN BETTER STRESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS?

The Stress Management & Biofeedback Center through ISU Counseling and Testing is here to help you do this through education, skill-building, and practice, all tailored to your specific needs.

…and it is FREE!
WHAT IS BIOFEEDBACK?

bi·o·feed·back  n. The technique of using monitoring devices to furnish information regarding an autonomic bodily function, such as heart rate, muscle tension, hand temperature, or sweat gland activity in an attempt to gain some voluntary control over that function.
Biofeedback is a learning process that teaches an individual to control your physiological activity.

The aim of biofeedback training is to improve health and performance. Changes in thinking, emotions, and behavior often accompany and reinforce physiological changes.

Through practice, these changes become independent of external feedback from instruments.
HOW CAN IT HELP PEOPLE MANAGE STRESS?

Remember those *fight, flight, freeze, faint* reactions?

Biofeedback provides readings of our physical response to stress which allows us to train stress management skills.
Stress Management is like learning to drive

- Our Stress Response, in the Sympathetic Nervous System, is like a **gas pedal** which **revs up** our mind & body in reaction to physical danger or stress.

- Our Relaxation Response, in the Parasympathetic Nervous System, is like a **brake** which **calms us down** when we’re speeding out of control from stress.
ACTIVATING OUR RELAXATION RESPONSE

Our inner gas pedal is automatic.
- We go from 0 to 60 in an instant in response to any stressor
- Our mind does not differentiate danger from stress

Our inner brake can be strengthened through awareness and practice.
- Catch ourselves “speeding”
  - Develop skills to relax “at will”
  - Maintain appropriate cruising speed
  - Make braking more automatic
BREATHING AS A BRAKE

- Diaphragmatic breathing is our best defense against Stress

- Slower, deeper, smoother and gentler breathing is immediately calming

- Diaphragmatic breathing brings our Stress Response System, our Gas Pedal and Brake, into balance.

- Autonomic Balance = Increased Heart Rate Variability = Calmness & Mental Clarity = Peak Performance

- Peak performance comes from the balance of the energy of the stress response and the calmness of the relaxation response
YOU CAN ALSO PRACTICE BY PLAYING ONE OF OUR BIOFEEDBACK GAMES

1. Dual_Drive
This car racing game requires that you keep yourself calm through diaphragmatic breathing to win the race. Train yourself to stay calm as you study, work, or are under any type of stress.

2. Relaxing Rhythms
This program measures heart rate variability and sweat gland activity. Learn greater calmness, patience and emotional balance through biofeedback games. Learn meditation, relaxation skills, and greater emotional regulation from expert teachers.

3. EmWave Heart Rate Variability Program
This program teaches diaphragmatic breathing for immediate calming, improved concentration and memory, and peak performance. Learn to change your heart rhythm pattern to create coherence, a scientifically measurable state of harmony in psychological and physiological processes. The technology collects pulse data through a pulse sensor and translates the information from your heart rhythms into computer graphics.
WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT WHEN YOU MAKE AN APPOINTMENT?

• We will schedule a personalized assessment and training session with a counselor using our state-of-the-art biofeedback equipment.
• Together, you will decide what you want to target and what biofeedback techniques you would like to try.
• You will receive detailed instruction for continuing to use what you learn as you go through your day.
• You can also come in and play the biofeedback games on your own.
Call ISU Counseling and Testing Service @ 208-282-2130

Monday – Friday, 8:00-5:00

Visit us online: www.isu.edu/ctc/biofeedback.shtml

The Stress Management & Biofeedback Center is located on the top floor of the University Health Center (near the Bengal Pharmacy).

Some biofeedback services are also available at ISU Counseling and Testing Service.

And, of course, we offer free, confidential counseling for almost any personal concern.