Coping Mechanisms

Taking Care of Yourself is Key
Stress: How do I deal with the pressure?

- Identify and eliminate some of your stressors. What is causing you stress and what can you do without?
  - Positive self-talk. You’re not the only one going through this.
  - Laugh! Take some time out for yourself and let go.
- Use relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or relaxing music/sounds.
  - Work out and eat healthy. Take time to plan and do it!
- Lean on your support system or seek out others who can talk with you.
Prepare before the test!
This will lower stress and anxiety!

- Develop good study habits
- Review daily, **NO** cramming
- Manage time well
- Ask for help
- Attend lectures
- Write and answer test questions
- Practice for the real thing
- Say it out loud
Take care of your physical body

- Get adequate rest
- Move: Incorporate exercise daily
- Eat well by planning ahead
- Hydrate
Attitude

- Develop reasonable expectations.
- Avoid irrational thoughts.
- Reward yourself for dedication.
Control the fear

- Relaxation techniques
- Positive affirmations
- Believe you can
- Prepare
- Leave all your cards on the table
Anxiety and Depression

- Medical students experience anxiety and depression at a higher rate than the general student.

- Medical students are less likely to seek treatment for their symptoms.

- Both anxiety and depression can be managed.

- LUCOM has resources available to you in many different formats.
Anxiety

- A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.

- A nervous disorder characterized by a state of excessive uneasiness and apprehension, typically with compulsive behavior or panic attacks.

- Can negatively impact the ability to study, prepare, and perform successfully.
Depression

- Causes feelings of severe despondency and dejection.
- Is a serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act.
- Has a variety of symptoms, but the most common are a deep feeling of sadness or a marked loss of interest or pleasure in activities.
- Can cause a change in the way you feel about yourself, your abilities, and your relationships.
The stigma:

You know you’re not ok and yet you choose not to get help. WHY?

- Peers won’t respect me or my opinions and most likely won’t take me seriously
  - Faculty will see me as weak, unable to handle pressure situations, and doubt my abilities to be a competent physician.
- A medical diagnosis could jeopardize my future and career.

What would you tell a patient with the same symptoms you’re experiencing?
You’re stressed? You’re not alone.

- Students enter medical school with mental health profiles similar to those of their peers but experience depression, burnout, and anxiety at higher rates.
  - There is a tendency for medical students to be highly self-critical.
  - Many think that one cannot be vulnerable, weak, or less than perfect.
  - Competition with others for further training or positions is common, i.e., class rank, GPA, and offices held.
- There may be perceived obstacles to seeking help. Is it safe? Will it affect my future? How will others view this if they find out?
Life balance:
What are you neglecting right now?

- Mental/cognitive: Pay attention to thoughts, the way you think about yourself, others, and the future
- Physical: sleep, nutrition, physical exercise, getting adequate health care, use of relaxation strategies
- Relational/social: nurture relationships with family significant others, peers, and friends. Find balance.
- Spiritual: devoting daily time to pray and connect with the Lord.
What can you do?

- Seek balance by using time management skills
- Combat the stigma of getting help for mental and emotional distress for yourself and others.

What would you tell a patient going through the same thing?

- Use self-care measures. Seek support from trusted friends or family. Use the resources LUCOM has made available to you. Get professional help.
- Be realistic about your expectations
ADD/ADHD

What is it?
Inattention and distractibility which makes organization and follow through extremely difficult.

Adults with ADHD may have difficulty following directions, remembering information, concentrating, organizing tasks, or completing work within time limits.

How to make it work:
Integrating structure, routines, planning, and smaller tasks can increase overall performance.
Signs and symptoms of adult ADHD

- Anxiety
- Chronic boredom
- Chronic lateness and forgetfulness
- Depression
- Difficulty concentrating when reading
- Difficulty controlling anger
- Employment problems
- Impulsiveness
- Low frustration tolerance
- Low self-esteem
- Mood swings
- Poor organization skills
- Procrastination
- Relationship problems
- Substance abuse or addiction
Self-management

- Become a clock watcher
- Use timers to keep you on schedule
- Give yourself more time than you need in case you get off track.
- Write down appointments 15 minutes earlier than needed to allow adequate time.

- Decide what’s first, i.e., what’s most important and start there.
- Take things one at a time. Break down large tasks into smaller more manageable ones.
- Be realistic about how much time you can devote to a task and stick to it.
Get your environment under control

- Set aside daily time for organization.
- Use colors and lists
- Prioritize
- Keep your work space uncluttered and free of distractions.

- Add a fan for white noise or use earplugs to avoid unwanted noise.
- If other obligations or tasks start popping into your mind, write them down so they aren’t forgotten, then get back to the task at hand.
Mood management

- Have structured fun time. It’s ok to let go for a bit. Because of the tendency to get off track, relax time has to have a time limit in order to get other tasks done.

- Give yourself a time-out. When you’re upset, frustrated, or overstimulated, stop. Go away and calm down. Just be aware of your time and when ready, get back to it.

- Expect depression after success. When the chase or challenge is over and the high stimulus has calmed, it’s normal to feel a let-down. It’s ok to miss the conflict and high drive.

- Diet and exercise are key to keeping a healthy productive outlook.

TAKE TIME TO JUST BE YOU FOR A FEW MINUTES WITHOUT THE STRESS AND PRESSURE!