

Learning Tip:

On Stress Management

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What is Stress?

- ▶ When the brain perceives a threat, it activates the **stress response**, preparing the body for a fight-or-flight reaction.
- ▶ During the stress response, adrenaline and cortisol surge. This makes muscles stronger and attention sharper, while resources are diverted from non-urgent functions such as digestion and immune activity.
- ▶ Stress can enable short-term performance gains, but it becomes detrimental when:
 - ▶ The perceived threat doesn't require fight-or-flight (e.g., inflammatory social media content, minor domestic annoyances).
 - ▶ The stress is prolonged and chronic (e.g., consistently long work hours, an abusive relationship).

How to Manage Stress

- ▶ To manage excessive stress, we can
 - ▶ Identify and, where possible, eliminate the stressor.
 - ▶ Notice stress signals and use calming techniques (e.g., deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation) when needed.
 - ▶ Schedule regular breaks and dedicated relaxation periods (e.g., prioritized sleep, social support, walks, regular exercise) to let the body recover.
- ▶ A moderate amount of stress — often called **eustress**, can boost motivation and learning.
- ▶ Conversely, excessive or chronic stress is linked to cardiovascular disease, immune suppression, and mental-health issues. Pay attention to warning signs and prioritize self-care.