

THREE RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE STRESS AT HARVARD

RECOMMENDATION FOR ADMINISTRATION



WHAT? Administration should allow students to take *summer classes online for credit*. This would help students with existing mental health issues for whom stress can be especially damaging. They would experience less stress due to their *reduced course load* on a consistent basis, and it would also mean less stress during *finals and midterms*.

WHY? The current situation with COVID-19 has demonstrated that *online classes can be effective* for learning and teaching. Additionally, it is important to find a balance between *demands* (class schedule) and *resources* (time and energy), and when demands exceed the student's resources, trauma can occur (Lazarus, 1999). By allowing students to spread out the course schedule throughout the year, a *healthy balance* can be achieved more easily.



RECOMMENDATION FOR FACULTY

WHAT? Faculty should *address any stress* that students may be feeling surrounding exams, and provide *reappraisal information* that encourages students to *reinterpret* the stress symptoms they are experiencing as *neutral* or even *beneficial* (e.g., an email the night before or a brief discussion during the last 10 minutes of class before the exam)

WHY? A powerful study (Brady, Hard, and Gross, 2017) found that students who received a *message of stress reinterpretation* before an exam *performed significantly better* on the exam and overall in the class than students who did not receive such a message.



RECOMMENDATION FOR STUDENTS

WHAT? Students will receive *a weekly email* that includes easy ways *to get active* on campus (e.g., Running Club Updates, IMs, Harvard on the Move etc.) in an effort *to reduce stress* and negative emotions!

WHY? Physical activity is associated with *reducing negative emotions* for people who experience difficulty with emotion regulation. Exercise helps to *reduce depressive symptoms* and *elevates mood* (Bernstein and McNally, 2017).