

Combating stress through exercise

Flight or fight reaction causes stress

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Students are not the only people on campus who cope with stress.

Lisa Taylor, assistant family and consumer sciences professor, said she thinks professors spend more time preparing for class than students do.

"Preparing for each lecture is like writing a term paper," she said. "The research, making sure your facts are right, for me, at least, takes a lot of time."

Between finding time to grade midterms, finishing their required research and serving on whatever committee, faculty members are as stressed out as students.

"I think time constraints, such as trying to find time to prep for class, is the most stressful part of a faculty member's job," Taylor said.

Mark Kattenbraker, a physical education instructor, agreed.

"That seems to be so," he said. "The day-to-day tasks of the job require a lot of time."

Taylor and Kattenbraker attended Wednesday's faculty development event, "The Wholesome Professor: Reducing Stress While Providing, Teaching, Research, and Service."

Stacey Ruholl, assistant physical education professor,

explained to attendees how exercise helps them manage the stress the "day-to-day tasks" cause.

Ruholl started the lecture by asking each attendee what triggers stress for them. Their answers varied from, Bill Weber, associate vice president for academic affairs, who had a one-word answer of "Banner!" to Taylor's answer of "new house, new job, new state."

Ruholl then explained what the physical effects of stress are and how they relate to the primitive fight or flight instinct.

"The thing we have to keep in mind is that we're no longer in the caveman days, but these things are still happening," Ruholl said.

"For example, if a car cuts in front of you and the kids are in the back seat, your reaction is to break quickly and your adrenaline pumps," she said.

So the human body still reacts with its primitive instincts by triggering the "fight or flight" mindset, but a person doesn't actually fight or flee, Ruholl said. This causes stress.

"Exercise is a wonderful way to get rid of all this extra energy your body has from this flight or fight reaction," she said.

She said that an effective exercise program should consist of three type of exercise: cardiorespiratory endurance, muscular strength and flexibility exercises.

"There's lots of things we can do without going to a fitness center," she said. "You don't have to spend a lot of time or money going to a gym, but you need to prioritize and set aside a time to improve you're stress rate."

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