Managing stress and taming perfectionism during the med school, law school, or fellowship application process

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Welcome!

• Please use the Zoom Whiteboard to share anonymously any comments, questions, concerns, or stuck points related to your application process.
What do we hope you take away from this event?

- Normalize: You are not alone
- Educate: Define and dissect
- Equip: Strategies and resources
We look forward to your questions following the presentation!
What are some common student concerns related to applications?

- **Failure** - what happens if it doesn’t work out?
- **External influences** - will my family be disappointed if I don’t get in where they want me to? What if all my peers get in and I don’t?
- **Past trauma** - can I write about this and how do I feel about/after writing about it?
- **Fear of commitment** - will I be able to say yes?
- **Self-doubt** - I’m not good enough, why am I even trying? What if I don't get my top choice?
- **Exams** - will I get a high enough score to be a competitive applicant?
- **Finances** - can I afford to do it if I get in?
- **Number of applications** - am I applying to enough?
- **Time Management** - will I have enough time to make this a quality application?
What is stress?

• A physiological and psychological experience that arises as a reaction to challenge or demand

• An evolutionarily adaptive response to challenge or threat that can become interfering if chronic or overwhelming
What are some experiences related to stress that might emerge in the app process?

- Anxiety
  - Role of appraisal
  - Physiological, cognitive, behavioral
  - How to cool it . . .
- Perfectionism
  - Striving for v. demanding excellence
  - Adaptive v. maladaptive
  - How to tame it . . .
- Impostor syndrome
  - Relationship to the new and unknown
  - Thought traps
  - How to challenge it . . .
What about identity and stress?

• Identity-based Impostor Syndrome
  • Difficulty believing you belong in positions where people with your identities have been historically marginalized/excluded
  • Potential antidote: Seeking out exemplars

• Stereotype Threat
  • Anxiety or concern about situations in which you have the potential to confirm a negative stereotype about your social group(s)
  • Potential antidote: Self-affirmative statements
Managing stress effectively for peak performance

Building blocks of well-being
- Sleep
- Eat
- Move
- Connect
- Reflect

Goal setting & Incrementalism
- Values-driven goals
- S.M.A.R.T. goals
- What is the first step of the first step? What is the first step of the next step?
Managing stress effectively for peak performance

• Sustain motivation through self-coaching (versus self-criticism)
• Conceptualize procrastination as emotion regulation
• Pace yourself and remember to rest
• Additional tips & tools:
  • Try the 20-10 or 40-20 techniques
  • Do a 5-minute meditation on Breathe
  • Use an app or journal to build self-awareness about your stress signs
When to consider reaching out to CAPS

- No bad reason

- The 3 Ds (+ 1 S)
  - Distress
  - Dysfunction
  - Disconnection
  - Safety
CAPS Services & Resources

- northwestern.edu/counseling
- northwestern.edu/breathe/ (NU Help App)
- Daytime and afterhours crisis services (847.491.2151)
- TeleTalk
- Workshops and supportive spaces (e.g., Cope and Connect)
Other important aspects of the app process

• Self-reflection and self-awareness
• What are you goals?
• Beyond the transcript
• Remaining open to opportunities and alternatives
How NCA Can Help

- Career Counseling appointments
  - Assessing your career values, interests and skills
  - Self-reflection and goal-setting
  - Making decisions on career options
- Career Advising appointments
  - Finding gap year experience
  - Considering alternatives and creating a plan b
  - Articulating your skills and accomplishments in your resume/CV and professional narrative
  - Interviewing best practices and mock interviews
- Pre-law Advising appointments
  - Application process support
  - Determining if law is the right path for you

https://northwestern.joinhandshake.com
Questions?

Feel free to use the 'raise hand' feature to be called-on or type your question into the chat box.