

Stress peaks now

by Sylvia Kaptein

Stress is at a high point for students during March and April, with final exams and term paper deadlines fast approaching, said Dr. Johnson of Student Health.

Everyone is affected by stress at some time, said Johnson, but the end of the academic year brings an especially large number of people with stress-related problems to Student Health.

Both Johnson and Victor Day, a psychologist with the Counselling and Psychological Service, agree that stress can be caused by many things. Exams, seminars, long hours of studying, and impending term paper deadlines are a few of the causes which especially affect students.

Problems associated with personal relationships are others. Sharing an apartment with people who are quite different from oneself, high expectations of family and friends, meeting many new people, and boyfriend-girlfriend problems can all cause stress. This is the time of life when these factors are especially important, said Johnson.

Another very serious worry of university students is, "What am I doing here? Where am I going to?"

Although the majority of people can cope with stress themselves and do not need professional help, most can, nevertheless, benefit from help, said Day.

At Counselling and Psychological Services, students can take advantage of individualized counselling or take part in one of the many group programs offered. Some of these are exam anxiety reduction, thesis writing, shyness and public speaking clinics.

The basic idea of all of these clinics is to coach people to handle their stressful situations differently. They guide them to think about the situation differently, to reevaluate it. They teach new skills in the belief that improvement of skills brings confidence, which, in turn, reduces stress. They also instruct people in relaxation techniques.

According to Day, the best solution to stress is to remove the cause. Thus for a shy, lonely person, the best remedy is to eliminate the loneliness by making him or her more socially outgoing. However, some sources of stress, such as exams, cannot be eliminated. In this case, the person can be helped to cope with the situation.

Johnson said that often the best remedy for stress is just talking about it and understanding the underlying cause. One has to be realistic about oneself, and one's goals and abilities, said Johnson. One must also face up to reality, not just ignore it and hope it will pass.

Johnson also stressed the importance of being examined medically. Sometimes the symptoms of stress (such as headaches, sleeplessness and heart palpitations) can be indicative of a medical disorder. Prolonged stress may also cause a physical breakdown. Besides, just knowing you are healthy can reduce stress, he added.

Besides final exam time, Johnson said that Student Health treats an especially high number of students with stress-related problems at Christmas exam time and during the Christmas break, when many foreign students feel particularly lonely.

Cutbacks

Psychology

Department

by Paul Creelman

"We haven't experienced anything that we're unable to survive at the moment," says Dr. R.S. Roger of the Dalhousie Psychology department, regarding budget cutbacks.

"We're perhaps fortunate in that the psychology department here has always been oriented more towards biology and experimental psychology. Many of our graduate students receive research grants from various government bodies and corporations. For instance, one of the faculty members recently received a grant for over a million dollars for research in to the organization of the brain . . . using goldfish, believe it or not . . ."

"I imagine that the art and

socially oriented programs are suffering a bit more than we are in that respect. Of course all of the science programs are suffering from the fact that almost all of the scientific equipment and supplies that we need to purchase are increasing in price faster than the cost of living."

A proposal to implement a post-graduate school for clinical psychology has been held up by lack of funds from the MPHEC (Maritime Provinces Higher Education Council).

"When we were approached with this idea after the Ferguson Report was published (concerning the feasibility of such a school for the Maritimes) the Senate and Board of Governors both ratified the proposal on the condition that funding was made available.

Rogers estimates that this school would require a \$150,000 budget.

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