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 **Monikah Schuschu** — June 13, 2017 — 9 min read — 10th Grade, 11th Grade, 12th Grade, 9th Grade, Academic Tips and Info, Academics, Grades

6 Techniques for Dealing with Stress in High School

Stress is a fact of life for people of all ages. If you're a teenager, however, the experience of attending high school and preparing for college may expose you to a level of stress that's higher than any you've experienced before. That's part of growing up and taking on new challenges, which is a necessary and beneficial process. In the moment, though, feeling the brunt of that stress can be quite difficult to handle.

However, the challenge is far from insurmountable. Many people have been through this stage of life before you, including those of us who now work at [CollegeVine](#), and we've learned from the experience. Read on for some of our favorite strategies for managing your stress level, mitigating the negative effects of stress, and navigating high school in a way that will keep you healthy and happy as well as accomplished and successful.

When stress becomes a problem

As a high school student, you undeniably have a lot especially for challenging academic classes. Your aft extracurricular activities. Add in a part-time job, a s you're potentially facing a very busy schedule.

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to competitive colleges, that process can introduce additional stress as you contemplate how your high school record will look to admissions committees.

It's no wonder, then, that many high school students feel stressed. To a certain extent, this is normal and expected— everyone experiences stress, and many challenging and valuable experiences will also be unavoidably stressful. Stress can often be part of the experience of growth, and it's not something you can or should totally avoid.

When stress becomes a problem is when it begins to affect you in negative ways, which can manifest in different forms for different people. Some might experience physical effects like headaches or stomach troubles. Others might feel overwhelmed by worries, have trouble sleeping, or be more easily irritated. Whatever combination of negative effects you personally experience, it's not pleasant, and it can get in the way of your goals.

While feeling stressed in high school may be a natural response to a busy time in your life, you don't have to resign yourself to its negative effects. There are ways to work on managing your stress that can help you to stay healthy as you pursue your dreams. Below, you'll find a few of our favorite approaches for dealing with the stress of the high school experience.

Techniques for managing stress

Give yourself a break.

Don't feel bad about setting aside time in your life to do things that you enjoy and that make you happy, whether or not they seem "productive." In fact, you should feel good about taking breaks—it's an essential part of taking care of yourself. All of us need time to rest and refuel.

What you should do on your breaks depends entirely on you. Some people find that quiet activities like reading a book or watching TV are the best way to relax. Others prefer more active breaks spent working on personal projects, exercising, or spending time with friends. You can say which activities work best for letting you un-

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Clearly, your breaks don't have to be all about your friends. Spending time with friends can also be an important way to break up your schedule. Not only is this fun, it also helps keep you



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schoolwork, college applications, or whatever else is causing your stress in the first place. Getting distracted from your stressors, even if it's just for a little while, is a great thing.

If you have trouble remembering to take breaks, there's nothing wrong with making them an explicit part of your schedule—you can block them out in your calendar or even set an alarm to help you remember. Take your planned breaks even if you don't feel like you absolutely need it right that second. Don't wait until you're already burned out to get some rest—respect your need for rest and build it into your plans ahead of time.

Stay organized and create a good workspace.

Cleaning your room, or otherwise organizing your spaces and belonging, can be an annoying task, and teenagers are notorious for the lengths they'll go to to avoid tidying up. However, taking some time to keep things neat can pay off later in terms of stress relief.

Keeping a clean and organized workspace makes for a more pleasant working experience, and more importantly, it ensures that you're able to access what you need quickly and easily—no more frantically digging through stacks of paper for the one document that you really need. While it can't prevent every stressful situation, and unexpected things do happen, it does help eliminate one particular source of stress.

This can apply to your electronic spaces as well as your physical spaces—when's the last time you tidied up your hard drive and made sure important files were correctly labeled and easily accessible? As college applications become increasingly digital in format, it's just as important to keep your digital files where you can find them as it is to keep physical paperwork organized.

If you're spending a lot of time at your desk studying or writing, you should also ask yourself whether it's comfortable and healthy. Is your chair supportive enough? Do you have the right lighting? Is your computer's keyboard at the right height? Having a workspace that's well-suited to your needs can only help.

You may not be able to create the perfect study environment, but you can adjust your surroundings and your work habits. Staying organized may not come easily to you, but it can make your daily activities less stressful.

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your senses, potentially providing a potent distraction from your worries. Second, they're just plain enjoyable, making them particularly pleasant ways to take a break.

A scented candle or essential-oil diffuser provides one sensory experience that you might enjoy. The warmth of a long soak in the tub can physically help to ease muscle tension or soreness that you may have accumulated due to stress. Simply taking some time to lay down and rest, away from schoolwork and electronics and perhaps with a good book or some music, can also be very relaxing and rejuvenating.

Other spa treatments are popular too, of course. Whether you're into face masks, foot soaks, saunas, or scrubs, these activities can be really enjoyable, and are especially fitting if, for example, you're experiencing skin problems due to stress. Knowing that you're taking care of your physical self in one particular way can help you to relax in other ways.



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Check out meditative activities.

While some people feel that they get a lot from formal meditation practices, not everyone is interested in or enjoys pursuing that kind of practice. However, there are many activities that have a meditative quality that can help to ease your mind.

Coloring has become particularly popular as a meditative stress-relief activity. Art supply stores and bookstores now stock plenty of coloring books oriented toward teens and adults, which are far more detailed and interesting than those you might have used as a child.

Other forms of art and craft, from drawing to cross-stitch embroidery to woodworking to playing a musical instrument, can have similar effects. You don't have to be an immensely talented artist to benefit, both in terms of meditative concentration and in terms of simply doing something you enjoy and expressing yourself.

Many other activities can have a meditative quality. Some people find that spending time in nature fills this need. Others find a sense of peace in everything from writing to gardening to religious observations. The range of possibilities is broad, and ultimately, only you can say what feels right for you.

Get outside and get moving.

Getting outside, exercising, or participating in some other kind of physical activity can be a great distraction from stressful thoughts and tasks. Tiring yourself out physically can also help you to sleep better, and as we'll discuss in greater detail below, quality sleep is a valuable thing.

For some people, exercise feels good on a physical level, whether from endorphins or from the satisfaction of meeting a tough physical challenge. Others may find that physical activity helps ease the tension and other physical symptoms that can occur when they're stressed.

You don't have to run a marathon or join a competitive sport to reap the benefits of physical activity. Taking a walk in the park, playing fetch with your dog, or even scrubbing the bathroom tile can be helpful as well. The best physical activity is one that you enjoy and that you'll be motivated to do consistently.

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Develop better sleep habits.

Maintaining good sleep hygiene is hard. As a high school student, you don't have a lot of control over your schedule— school starts at a certain time, extracurriculars and part-time jobs may dominate your after-school hours, and then there's homework, a social life, and family obligations to juggle.

However, it's well worth the effort to prioritize your sleep and maintain a consistent sleep schedule. A good night's sleep provides your body and mind with a solid foundation from which to approach the next day's tasks. As a teenager especially, you're still growing and developing, and your body needs sleep to do this optimally.

One step that you can take is to try to eliminate things that can disrupt your sleep, such as light and sound. You may want to invest in tools that help you control these factors, such as light-blocking curtains, eye masks, earplugs, or white-noise machines. You should try to keep your room at a comfortable temperature—being too hot or too cold can also disrupt your sleep.

Caffeine can also be a problem for high-school students who depend on coffee or energy drinks to get through the day. Not only can excessive caffeine cause health problems, but getting too much caffeine, especially late in the day, can seriously affect your sleep. Try tracking your caffeine intake—you may be surprised at how much you're ingesting.

Finally, as much as you may hate to admit it, your electronic habits may be affecting your sleep. It's a good idea to step away from your screens well before bedtime. This includes your phone, no matter how strong the habit of checking for new notifications. Turning off your phone at night can help; for extra effectiveness, hide it from yourself in a drawer or another room.

Again, not everyone has the opportunity to exercise total control over their sleep habits. Whether it's your schedule or your siblings making noise at home, many factors can make your sleep less than ideal. However, whatever you can do to prioritize getting a good night's sleep is a step in the right direction.

What if I feel overwhelmed by stress?

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One strategy is to drop one of your existing activities, leaving you with more time and more flexibility in balancing your other obligations. As we've covered previously in our blog post [Managing Extracurriculars: A Guide to Strategic Quitting](#), it's better for you be involved in fewer activities in higher-quality ways than to spread yourself too thin and burden yourself with an excessive amount of stress.

Talking to people you trust can also help. Your friends are likely going through similar issues, and will be able to relate. Your parents, who know you well, may have advice that's particularly targeted to your needs. Your [guidance counselor](#) is trained to assist high school students with issues like these and can help you access resources at your school and in your community.

Finally, if you're feeling seriously worried about your stress level, talking to a counselor, therapist, or other professional can really help. A professional's education and experience allows them to provide you with specific tools, techniques, and insightful suggestions for how you can better manage your stress and look after your own well-being.

For more information

If you're a fan of the [CollegeVine blog's](#) advice on navigating high school and the college application process, check out our sister blog, the [CollegeVine Zen blog](#). You'll find a lighter and more personal perspective on being a high school student and transitioning to college, with insight and humor from those who know that experience.

Looking for help navigating the road to college as a high school student? Download our free guide for [9th graders](#), and our free guide for [10th graders](#). Our guides go in-depth about subjects ranging from [academics](#), [choosing courses](#), [standardized tests](#), [extracurricular activities](#), and [much more!](#)

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Navigating a Table Setting

Module Two Lesson 1

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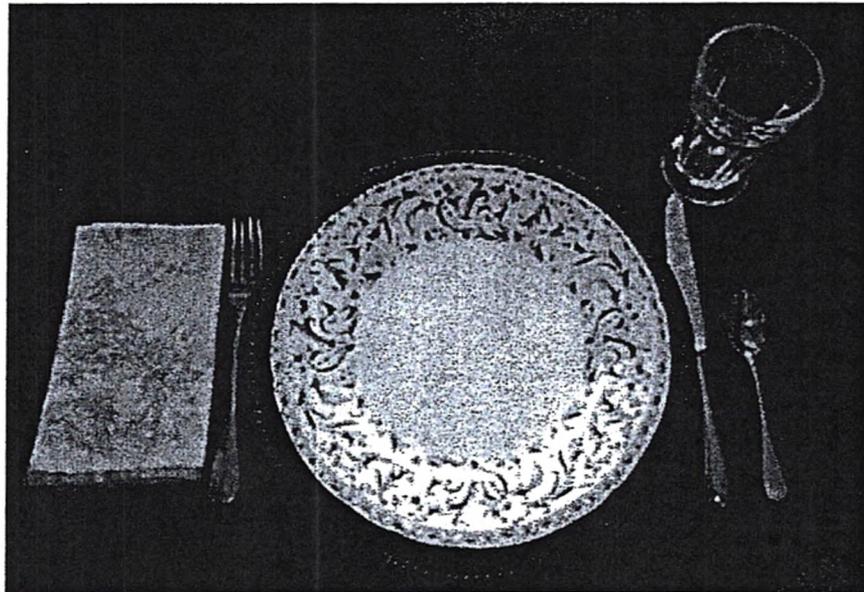


How to Set the Table

Let's get started with setting the table. For this lesson we will learn two settings, one that is casual and the other a bit more formal. Navigating a table setting is easy and not as daunting and stuffy as you might think.

Casual Table Setting

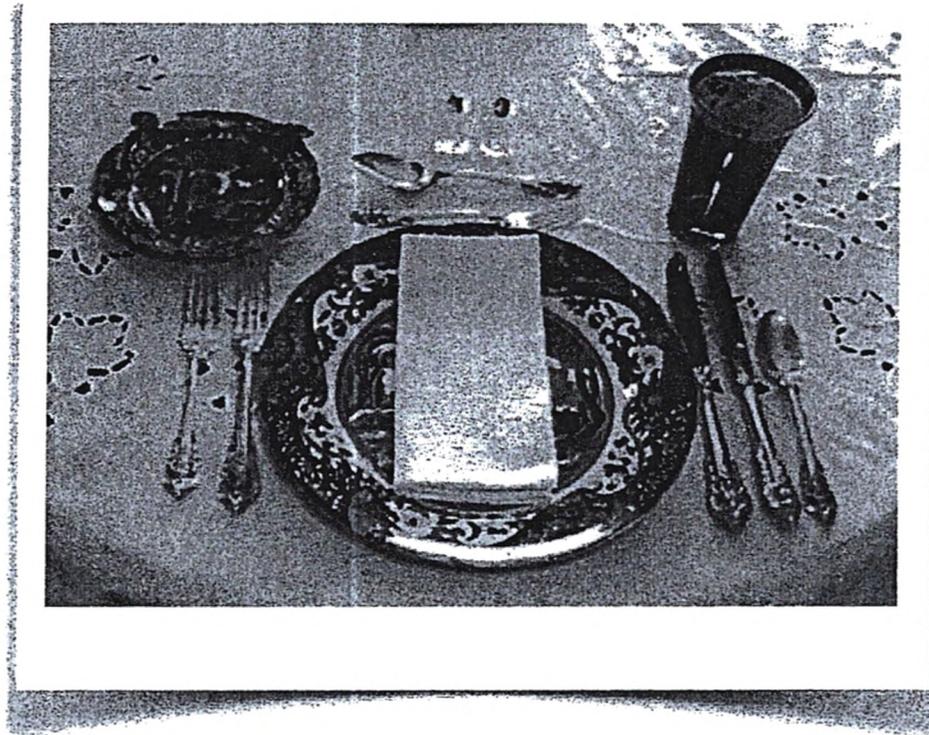
- What:** Casual Table Setting
When: Family meal, having friends over for dinner
Where: At home or a casual restaurant
How: See photo below



From left: Napkin, Fork, Plate, Knife, Spoon, Glass

Formal Table Setting

- What: Formal Place Setting
When: Formal or more festive event
Where: Dinner party, wedding, holiday celebration
How: See photo below

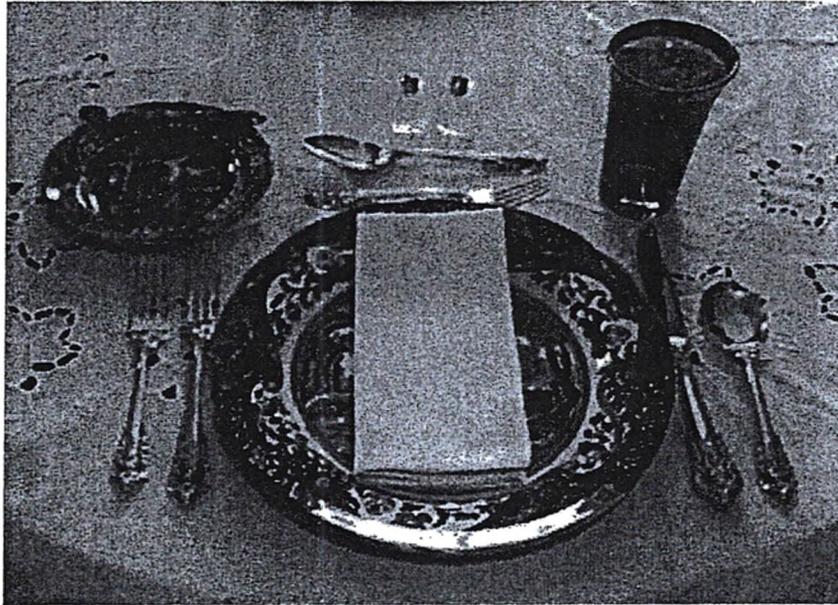


- Left Side: Bread and Butter Plate with B&B knife, Salad Fork, Entree Fork, Plate, Napkin
Right Side of Plate: Spoon, Salad Knife, Entree Knife (closest to plate)
Above Plate: Dessert Spoon and Fork, Water Glass, Salt and Pepper Shaker (optional)

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Formal Table Setting # 2

- What: Formal Place Setting
When: Formal or more festive event
Where: Dinner party, wedding, holiday celebration
How: See photo below: with soup spoon



Left Side: Bread and Butter Plate with B&B knife, Salad Fork, Entree Fork, Plate, Napkin

Right Side of Plate: Soup Spoon, Entree Knife (closest to plate)

Above Plate: Dessert Spoon and Fork, Water Glass, Salt and Pepper Shaker (optional)

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Think About It!

Whenever you sit down to a meal, think about a BMW. That's right, the car. Your bread plate is on the left, the meal is in the center and the water (or liquids) are always on the right. We promise, you will never forget it!



Bread

Left Side
Side

Meat

Middle

Water

Right

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Napkin Etiquette

Here is absolutely everything you need to know about the napkin.

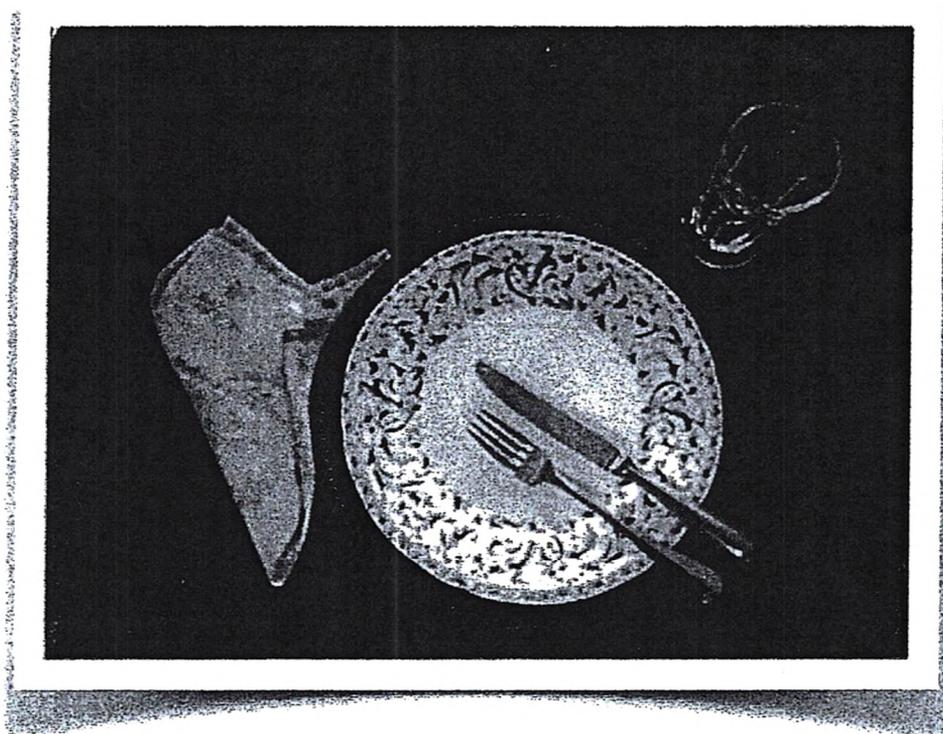
1. When setting the table, the napkin is placed to the left of the place setting. At times it may be placed with a napkin ring in the center of the plate.
2. Pick up the napkin by the upper left side and unfold it underneath the table.
3. Place the napkin in your lap with the fold facing your waist. This allows you to pick up the corner of the napkin to wipe the corners of your mouth after every few bites. If you are a guest, wait until the host or hostess had taken his or her napkin from the table.
4. Paper napkins are treated the same as cloth.
5. If you need to excuse yourself during the meal, place the napkin in your chair. Tip of the day: You do not need to tell where you are going. Simply say, "excuse me". In nice restaurants, when you leave during the meal, the waitstaff may refold your napkin and place it back on the table. When you return, don't forget to put it back in your lap.
6. At the very end of the meal, when you are pushing back your chair to leave the table, the napkin is placed to the left of your plate. The napkin is not refolded but picked up and loosely placed back on the table.

Don'ts

- Do not use the napkin as a wash cloth and wipe your entire face.
- Do not tuck the napkin into your shirt or tie.
- Do not place the napkin back on the table until the very end of the meal.
- Do not place the napkin over your plate at the end of the meal.

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Napkin Etiquette



Note: The napkin is loosely placed to the left of your place setting at the very end of the meal.

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PROSPER Student Assessment

Name:_____ Date:_____ Quarter:_____

Rate YOUR performance in PROSPER to date:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (1=lowest, 10=highest)

Please explain:_____

Rate YOUR respectable behavior in PROSPER to date:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (1=lowest, 10= highest)

Please explain:

Rate YOUR attendance in PROSPER to date:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (1= lowest, 10= highest)

Please

explain:_____

Rate YOUR Feelings/thoughts about PROSPER to date:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (1= Dislike,10= awesome)

Please explain:

Favorite Tour:_____

Why?_____

How would you explain PROSPER in one word?

What grade would you give yourself in PROSPER to date?

Grade:_____

Please

explain:_____
