



How To Manage: College, Work, & Family Life

by Crystal Gordon

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Preface

In order to survive college, students must develop both a foundation of skills and an understanding of the key elements critical to achieving academic success. I wrote this ebook to provide a framework for learning these necessary skills in a way that emphasizes the uniqueness of each student's situation. Successful college transitions are about balance. This text emphasizes skills needed to create and maintain balance with increased academic demands, workloads, tasks and activities—which are the essence of higher learning. Balance takes time. Until students can experience being in college, it is up to other entities to provide them with the conceptual foundation and introduce them to the skills necessary for understanding and implementing a successful college transition. This text will help with guiding students through these challenges. I had three main goals in writing this text:

- **Accuracy**

This book is the result of many years of studying, researching, mentoring, tutoring, and writing academically. This book ensures that skills are evidenced based on current research.

- **Simulation of the college experience**

To describe and explain college concepts, this book uses realistic examples to help students get inside what college is really like.

- **Easy, cost-effective approaches**

These are introduced in Chapter 1 and integrated throughout the book to be used at the student's disposal.

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Chapter 1: Self Care

The process of transitioning to college can expose students to trauma. It becomes traumatic for some who are unprepared to complete their college applications or others unfamiliar with financial aid. Some develop anxiety about living away from home for the first time while others are uneasy about choosing majors that lead to lucrative careers. Additionally, students are often experiencing the growing pains of increased self-awareness while simultaneously coping with everyday challenges and interpersonal stressors. These stressors are major, numerous, and often unlike anything they have encountered prior to transitioning.

As a result, learning to engage in self-care activities can help students better manage the stress associated with college transitions. Self Care does not need to be expensive. In fact, engaging in most stress management activities is free. You may want to engage in:

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Acupressure2. Art3. Autogenic Training4. Breathing5. Eating Healthy6. Exercise7. Group Support8. Imagery/Visualization9. Journaling	<ol style="list-style-type: none">10. Laughter11. Meditation12. Mindfulness13. Movement14. Music15. Prayer16. Qi Gong17. Self Massage18. Tai Chi
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These activities are fundamental approaches to Mind-body medicine. They focus on the powerful ways in which emotional, mental, social, and spiritual factors can interact and directly affect health. It views illness & stress as an opportunity for personal growth and transformation. *Try It!*

Chapter 2: Time Management

The most important thing to have for time management is some kind of system. Try some of these techniques to keep on track:

- **A Month-at-a-Glance Calendar**

Write all important dates down. Note when assignments, reports, and research papers are due. Highlight dates for quizzes, tests, mid-terms, final exams, and presentations. Referring often to your calendar will help you keep focused on your goals.

- **A Weekly Priority List**

Take into account things that you need to accomplish during the week. First, identify what needs to be read, reviewed, or written for your courses. List specifics (e.g., chapters and pages). Then review test schedules and long-term assignments and specify time for preparation. Use your weekly priority list to consolidate your course load into manageable pieces and to monitor your progress.

Try these mobile apps for students to help keep track of your tasks too:

- **Evernote** for note-taking
- **Dropbox** for cloud storage and sharing
- **Wunderlist** for scheduling and tracking your tasks
- **Questia Online Library** for researching on the go

Also, many campuses offer assistance with time management. Set an appointment with your academic adviser or an on-campus counselor. Additionally, utilize the resources that your campus health center offers. You can also seek support from a peer mentoring program.

Chapter 3: Procrastination

Everyone procrastinates and they do so for various reasons (e.g., perfectionism, distractions, a fatigue causing illness, or plain slothfulness). But, procrastination creates more stressors and rarely yields the best results. It takes time to do a good job so, try some of the following tips to get started on getting finished with your work:

- **Quantify time.** Break it down into smaller units. For example, if you have a paper due in three months, think of it as 90 days. Or, if you have a project due in three days, think of your deadline as 72 hours away. Psychologically, this can help you bring the future into the present. Most likely you'll focus on immediate goals.
- **Use the five-minute plan.** Resolve to work on assignments right after they are given, for at least five minutes. When the time has elapsed, decide whether you want to keep working. Usually you will. This can make the daunting task of beginning seem low-risk and less of a challenge to tackle.
- **Change surroundings.** Eliminate Distractions. Find a quiet place, and try to make your time count. (BTW: you won't get it back).
- **"Action Sessions."** Gradual daily progression, adds up, and over time increases confidence in the subject matter. Schedule 15 or 30 minute sessions to take action on your assignments. Keep realistic goals in mind, and start completing them.
- **Visualize success or completion.** Incentive to stay motivated.

Chapter 4: Don't Obsess

Everyone is unique. So, people define, practice, and experience balance differently. But achievement of college, work, and family balance may have some universal commonalities. A basic change in *outlook* can make a significant impact. Below are some tips to improve balance and harmony in life by refocusing your attention:

- **Fear of Missing Out.** Do not become paranoid about not getting every last drop of life out of our college experience or feel like you have to always be moving. Do the things you want and need to do instead because it would be impossible to experience every awesome thing that ever happens in the world. Try investing your time in the activities that will truly make you happy.
- **Having It Figured Out.** You are not expected to have it all together. It is okay to be confused. College isn't about knowing all the answers, rather; it is about exploring the possibilities. It is about learning to become cultured and discovering who you truly are.
- **Don't Sweat The Small Stuff.** Do not obsess over grades. The difference between an A- and B+ is not worth the emotional trauma, stress, and tears. Let things go. Recognize that things do not really have much impact in your life and allow yourself to let them go. Move on. Do not become stagnant because of a situation. Resolve to look into next steps.
- **Take Breaks.** Periodically schedule short breaks in between studying to rejuvenate your mind so that you can refocus on the task at hand when you get back to work. Don't do too much at once or you will burnout.
- **Get Help.** If it is too much, seek help. If you get too worried or anxious, talk to a professional (e.g., doctor, therapist, etc.).

Chapter 5: Nurture Yourself

Find an activity, like those mentioned in Chapter 1, you would like to maintain in order to create a healthy sense of balance in your life. Some enjoy walking in nature to remind themselves of the serenity and peace of mind it brings. Others enjoy exercising and doing yoga for the experience of guided mindfulness. And, many more enjoying the rush of multi-player gaming communities, or living vicariously through characters in a apocalyptic world overrun by flesh-eating zombies on *The Walking Dead*. Whatever, your preference, just remember to set aside time for your hobby.

Nurturing yourself is not a waste of time. In the long run, **it will energize you** and thus **make you more productive**. Listen to your true self and give it the care it requires. Eat well, balanced nutritious meals. Make time to be with friends, family, and loved ones. A super support system will give you the strength to keep calm and carry on.

Do not feel guilty about nurturing yourself. By taking personal time, you are not neglecting anyone. Rather, you are generating energy to care for those you cherish or are in need of your support. At stressful times, parents should definitely hire a babysitter for a few hours, if affordable.

And, **take a break from technology**. After a hectic day, steer clear of all emails and voice mails. Turn off cell phones, iPads, and laptops because they perpetuate the constant busyness, hurry, and worry of modern life. Instead, spend time alone and enjoy the silence. It is important to step back from these things from time to time lest you become bombarded. Or, take a break from technology by spending quality time in person communicating and really connecting with others.

Chapter 6: Sleep More

Sleep deprivation adds to your stress and affects your productivity. Having healthy sleep habits is often referred to as having good “sleep hygiene.” Try some of these tips to get as much ZZZ’s as possible:

Implement a **sleep schedule** with the same bedtime and wake up time, even for the weekends. This will help regulate your body's natural clock and perhaps even aid in falling asleep or staying asleep longer.

Practice a relaxing **bedtime ritual**. A routine activity right bedtime conducted away from bright lights (e.g., television) to help separate your sleep related activities from those, which can cause excitement, stress or anxiety. Light can make it more difficult to fall or remain asleep by throwing off your circadian rhythm.

If you learn to take **power naps**, you will have more energy throughout the day. Although you may lose some time from napping, you will be able to work more efficiently, which will give you more time. And, try to nap during the day because it allows you to pay off your sleep debt without disturbing your natural sleep-wake rhythm, which often times backfires in insomnia and throws you off your sleep pattern for days or longer.

Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and heavy meals in the evening. Alcohol, cigarettes and caffeine can disrupt sleep. Eating large or spicy meals causes indigestion that can make it uncomfortable to sleep. Avoid large meals for two to three hours prior to bedtime. Try a light snack (e.g., apple or granola bar) 45 minutes before bed if you’re still hungry.

Aromatherapy is an inexpensive, non-toxic approach to sleep aids.

Chapter 7: Support System

The National Cancer Institute's Dictionary of Cancer Terms defines social support as a “[network of family, friends, neighbors, and community members that is available in times of need to give psychological, physical, and financial help.](#)” Social support is exceptionally important for maintaining balance. Overall, it appears that positive social support of high quality can enhance resilience to stress. Try some of the following tips to build a social support system:

Turn to family and friends. They can encourage you when the chips are down and help take the weight off your shoulders. Sometimes just talking to family and good friends can lift your spirits. Having someone trusted listening to your concerns can give you a sense of support and understanding, which in turn encourages you to change your outlook.

Find other people in similar positions. Networking is quite helpful when doing this. The business-oriented social networking service *LinkedIn* is helpful because it has user groups purposed for professional change. Especially if you have a health related issue, seek health groups, doctors, physical therapists, online groups, and all others who are in similar situations. Keep searching for people in similar positions.

Check out various **support groups** locally and on the Internet. Examples include: Toastmasters, Guilds, Chambers of Commerce, etc.

Reach out to people in your **community** who already have a lot of support. Ask them to share how they built their network.

Personal Message from Crystal D. Gordon:

I hope you find this ebook useful and that it helps you to create your own highly successful balanced life!