

Suggested Strategies for Success in High School

By: Cymry DeBoucher – REACH Advocate

Use active versus passive study strategies. *Active strategies engage your brain more fully and therefore are more effective and efficient. Passive – reading or staring at your textbook or notes.*

- **Use study partners or groups. By working with other students in your class you will actively engage your brain because the act of communicating requires you to use a great many parts of the brain.** *The most successful high school students are those who form study groups in ninth grade. These groups often continue through graduation and deepen their commitment to each other as each year passes. The top students may be in competition with each other, however, they also always help each other to understand material, share notes, etc. They value each other's success as well as their own.*
- **Always take notes whether you think you need to or not.** *Taking notes engages a larger portion of your brain during class time.*
- **Always rewrite your notes the same day that you take them whether you need to or not. Rewriting helps you to add details to your notes and organize them for future work.** *Rewriting engages a far larger portion of your brain than re-reading and is about 10 times more effective as a learning and study tool.*
- **If you have trouble concentrating on the textbook when you study, take brief organized notes of the key ideas and content.** *This will help your brain be more engaged.*
- **Use a timer to study and do homework.** *Use a common kitchen 60-minute timer. Set a time of 15 – 20 minutes and concentrate for that long. Take a 5 minute timed break. Get up walk around, go to the bathroom, stare out the window, get a drink or snack during your break – DON'T TURN ON TV, VIDEO GAMES, OR CHECK YOUR E-MAIL! Return to your work for another concentration period and continue to alternate these with timed breaks. Try to always study in public at the kitchen or dining room table and not in your room.*

Learn and practice stress reduction strategies everyday.

- Most adults in today's world agree that stress reduction is a part of sound health, so you are developing a skill for life.
- The demands of school and maturing can be very stressful.
- Stress causes chemicals to be present in your brain and body that can lead to health problems, sleep problems, and difficulty learning and thinking.
- The body automatically responds to daily stress. If you are constantly stressed you will become tired. When you are tired you do not have a reserve of energy to deal with significant stresses.
- By practicing a form of stress reduction on a daily basis, you will maintain a lower stress baseline and when high stress situations occur you will not jump as high on the stress scale.

Stress reduction may include: *dance, walking, yoga, meditation, relaxation tapes. These things work because they engage different parts of the brain and use focus and breathing to moderate the effects of stress on the body. Sports, visual arts, instrumental music, are also useful methods for some people but not all – it really depends on how these activities are approached.*
Talking to a friend, reading, or writing in a journal, may also help to some degree. However, these activities require left-brain engagement and that is usually the part of the brain we need to rest.

Stress reduction is not: *watching TV, playing computer games, checking e-mail, etc.*