

The Global Financial Crisis

November 3, 2008

Dear UC Davis Students:

The current global financial crunch affects nearly all UC Davis students in some way, often adding to already existing stress and anxiety about financial futures. Money and work already have been two of the top sources of stress for about 75 percent of people in the United States, according to the American Psychological Association's 2007 Stress in America survey.

Although stress can sometimes be helpful as it motivates adaptive responses to threatening situations, persistent and intense stress can reduce our ability to function effectively and this can spiral into a great deal of distress. Fortunately, there are healthy strategies for students to manage stress during tough economic times.

First, identify areas of personal control. Improving your self-efficacy, your sense of being capable of achieving your goals, is a great survival tactic and goes a long way to prevent despair and panic that can arise in situations like the financial crisis. For instance, you can choose to pay attention to relevant news about the economy, but avoid getting carried away by sensationalist panic that can contribute to poor decision-making. Instead of overreacting or becoming passive, choose to stay focused.

Second, directly confront financial stressors and create a plan. Write down your particular financial situation as well as specific solutions within your control for targeting the stressors. Confronting stressors can cause a bump in stress, but getting a plan down on paper can reduce stress. A plan can include gathering more information about options and reaching out for help. Once a reasonable plan has been developed, commit to it and review it regularly.

Third, identify and correct unhealthy coping mechanisms. Stress related to the financial crunch could drive some to drinking, smoking, gambling, or emotional eating as coping mechanisms. Financial stressors can strain relationships as well, making it particularly important to take a moment to gain perspective on the situation before pushing away or avoiding the very people who can be helpful to you. Choose healthier responses to stress, such as seeking the company of those who care about you, engaging in regular moderate exercise, and employing tools such as the guided relaxation MP3s at caps.ucdavis.edu/relax.

Last, but not least, look for the silver linings. Although difficult, challenges can offer opportunities. For example, the financial crunch can motivate you to find healthier ways to cope with stress, developing skills that last a lifetime. Hard times can bring loved ones

closer together to support each other. A recession can be a good time to be a student developing skills that will be valued when the economy looks up again—perhaps a challenging job market will motivate pursuit of one’s full educational potential. Mainly, see the opportunities behind the challenges.

If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed or simply dealing with very complex challenges, consider asking for professional support. Professional financial advice can make a huge difference early on. If you feel overwhelmed by the stress, you may benefit from talking with someone who can help you address the emotions behind your financial worries, manage stress, and change unhealthy behaviors.

CAPS would like UC Davis students to know that our office is available for support at no charge—our services are paid for through student fees. We are open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. to provide confidential counseling services to students who are experiencing stress related to the financial crunch.

Students may contact CAPS during regular office hours by calling us at 530.752.0871. Students with an urgent need to speak with a counselor can call that number anytime to speak with someone, or simply come directly during office hours to our office located on the second floor of North Hall and tell reception that you would like to speak to our Urgent Care Counselor.

We hope this information is helpful to you.

Sincerely,

Dorje Jennette, Psy.D.
Psychologist

Emil Rodolfa, Ph.D.
Director, Counseling and Psychological Services