

Symptoms alert students to stress

By ERIKA GONZALEZ-LIMA, Ph.D.

College life can be fiercely competitive. Students scramble for classes and good grades, not to mention on-campus housing, parking spaces, friends and dates. Competition may prepare students for the real world, but too much of it can lead to stress.

Stress is the way our bodies react to sudden or drastic demands. It is an unavoidable part of living, and its interpretation as good (eustress) or bad (distress) is both unique and personal.

Students face many stress-inducing pressures such as choosing a major, finding privacy, fighting homesickness, adjusting financial responsibilities.

Personal, work and social commitments also demand time and energy, and there never seems to be enough time to accomplish everything. The result is stress.

The body responds to stress in three stages: alarm (arousal), resistance (defense) and exhaustion (breakdown).

When stress becomes prolonged or particularly frustrating, it becomes harmful. It weakens the immune system, thus increasing a student's chances of getting sick.

Diseases associated with chronic stress include hypertension, irritable bowel, eczema, coronary heart disease, headaches, ulcers, allergies, asthma, depression and emotional breakdowns.

John Moore, M.D., staff physician at the A.P. Beutel Health Center, sees a significant number of students with physical complaints probably related to stress.

"Upon evaluation, I treat any physical symptoms and then I refer the student to the Student Counseling Center if necessary," Moore says.

Moore adds that many students come for ulcer-like symptoms such as nervous diarrhea and acid indigestion (early signs of this psychogenic disease) and are often treated with anti-depressants. When depression is diagnosed, anti-depressants may be prescribed.

There are two types of signals, emotional and physical, that students must watch for as indications of being under stress.

Emotional signals:

Do you always feel rushed, without enough time to get things done well or at all? Are you unable to slow down and relax? Do you feel irritable and moody, angry, or want to cry for minor incidents? It may be a sign of stress.

Physical signals:

Do you have difficulty digesting food, leading to diarrhea, increased heart rate and blood pressure? Do you suffer from decreased skin temperature, frequent headaches and muscles aches due to chronic tension? Again, consider stress as a cause.

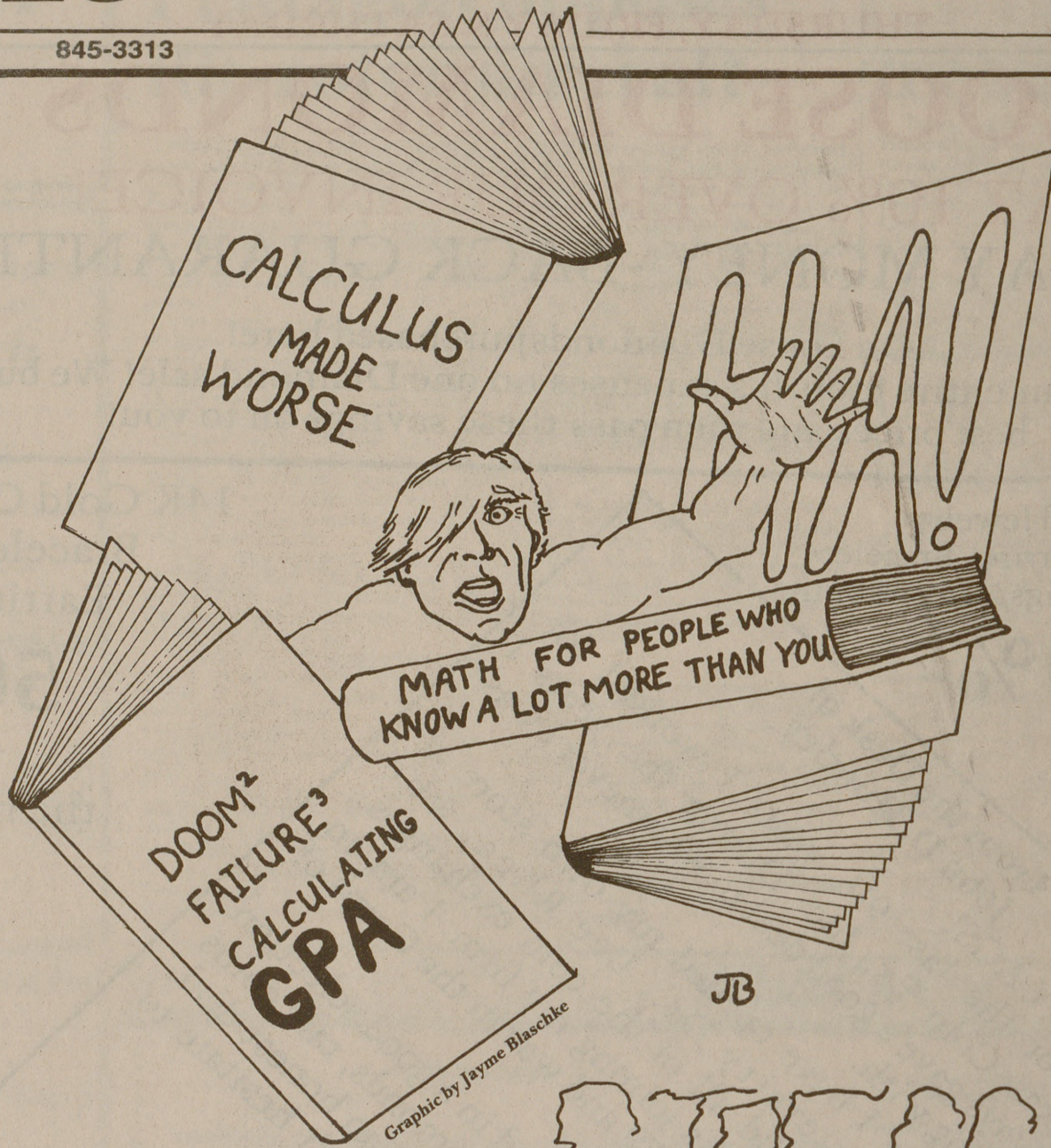
Some effective management techniques to reduce stress are:

- Exercise: Non-competitive exercise such as swimming, aerobics, walking, biking and yoga, done at least 30 minutes, three days a week, are excellent ways to relieve stress.

Regular exercise will also release endorphins in the brain which decreases depression and increases mental and emotional well-being.

- Good nutrition: Try to avoid stress-conducive foods such as those high in sugar, salt, refined grains, fats, caffeine (coffee, tea, sodas, chocolate) and alcohol.

Eat regular, well-balanced meals, with plenty of fruits, fiber and vegetables. With your physician's approval, take a multiple vitamin and a B-complex vitamin.



How to handle

- Get enough sleep: Get at least six hours of sleep every night to reduce fatigue. Fatigue greatly reduces your ability to handle stress.

- Assertiveness training: Learn to say no and not feel guilty. You have the right to make responsible choices without apologies. Saying "No" can prevent you from overcommitting yourself and therefore suffering undue stress. Also learn to delegate responsibility and to enlist the support of others.

- Time planning: Organize your time. Try to schedule your tasks in order of priority and leave some time for recreation.

- Improve your outlook: Have realistic expectations of yourself and others, improve your self-esteem, deal with your problems before they get worse and learn to use valuable techniques such as positive self-talk, posi-

tive imagery, communication skills and problem solving.

- Seek help: It helps to talk to someone about your problems. A friend, a relative, or a teacher can help. Sometimes it is better to talk with a professional counselor or psychologist who can be more objective helping you find a solution to your problems.

Stress consumes your energy and compromises your health. When you begin to incorporate stress management techniques in your life, you will have more energy to devote to school, work, family and friends.

Most of all, you will improve your health and well-being on all levels: physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual.

Erika Gonzalez-Lima is the Health Education Coordinator at the Texas A&M A.P. Beutel Health Center and a health columnist for Lifestyles.

Math adds anxiety to students' lives

By HELEN WOLFE

The word math has the ability to send chills up and down the spines of the bravest souls. But for those who continue to shiver, help is on the way in the form of a new book titled, "MATH! A Four Letter Word".

Authors Angela Sembera and Michael Hovis believe they have the answer to the problem of dealing with math anxiety and avoidance.

"There's a big mystique about math," Sembera said. "It's been said you either have a right brain for math or a left brain."

Everyone is capable of learning math but the first step is to talk to someone about any problems you're having, she said.

Sembera was a math teacher for eleven years at the high school and college level. She was inspired to co-author the book because of her experiences with students' negative feelings about math.

"Students would drop math, instead of sticking with it, the minute things got hard," she said.

Even elementary school teachers are afraid of math and don't like teaching it, she said.

Co-author Hovis, executive director of Public Film, Inc. added his expertise as a video expert and communicator.

Their original idea of dealing with math problems developed into a math anxiety video by the book's name.

"Angela works as the math expert and I put it into words so it's easily understood," Hovis said.

The video has been used in the educational sector only for a couple of years, Sembera said.

Major universities and high schools in the United States and Canada are currently using the video as teaching aid.

The video inspired the book which is for students as well as non-students.

The authors created characters named "Matt, the Math Hater," "Tony, the Test Anxious Student," and "Julie, the Family Joke" to aid in addressing different problem areas with math.

Sembera said negative things heard by friends and parents can also be part of the problem.

"It's passed on, like being afraid of going to the doctor," she said.

Another problem is the way math problems are perceived.

"The biggest reason for problems with math is there are so many ways to look at the same problem," Sembera said. "People are afraid if they don't catch on right away they're dumb."

Sophomore Pamela Lee said she loved math until Math 121-Analytical Geometry and Calculus.

The professor was too complex, she said. "I got a negative attitude and it went downhill from there," Lee said.

Sembera said that looking at a problem one way while someone else explains it another way causes difficulties.

The book attempts to extend an understanding of math.

Hovis says, "Anyone can do it as long as they don't get behind."

Though currently available only through mail order, stores will carry the book early next year.

There is also a math hotline (1-800-MATH 987) for anyone experiencing math anxiety or avoidance problems.

Helen Wolfe is a senior agricultural journalism major and a feature writer for Lifestyles.

Counselors offer ways to solve problem of math stress at A&M

By KRISTI LORSON

Math stress is "definitely a problem" at Texas A&M, but help is available to all students, according to two campus counselors.

Free tutor information, study skills manuals and special programs about test anxiety and concentration problems are available at the Student Counseling Service in the YMCA building.

Scott Parker, a doctoral intern for the Student Counseling Service, said most problems can easily be corrected with help from a counselor.

"We start by teaching them how to relax in a test situation, and teach them effective approaches to preparation and test taking," he said.

A positive attitude toward the math course is as important as the study skills, he said.

"Typically, people have a negative experience in mathematics when they're young and become unmotivated, or they labeled themselves as incompetent in math," he said. "Anyone who's able to attend this college can do math."

Parker stressed that everyone is equally qualified to succeed in math, regardless of gender.

"The cumulative body of research says there is no biological evidence of gender bias in mathematic success," he said. "Today, it is equally prevalent among males and females."

Dr. Clarence Dockweiler, the director of a math clinic sponsored by Texas A&M, agreed that students can succeed with some counseling guidance.

"Generally, a capable student should be

able to relieve stress and handle the class," he said. "We can usually diagnose and correct the problem relatively quickly."

Dockweiler said the lack of personal attention in large math classes is often a problem at Texas A&M.

"To lessen the difficulty of large classes, let your professor know you're a human being, not just a number," he said. "Some concern comes in and helps in the long run."

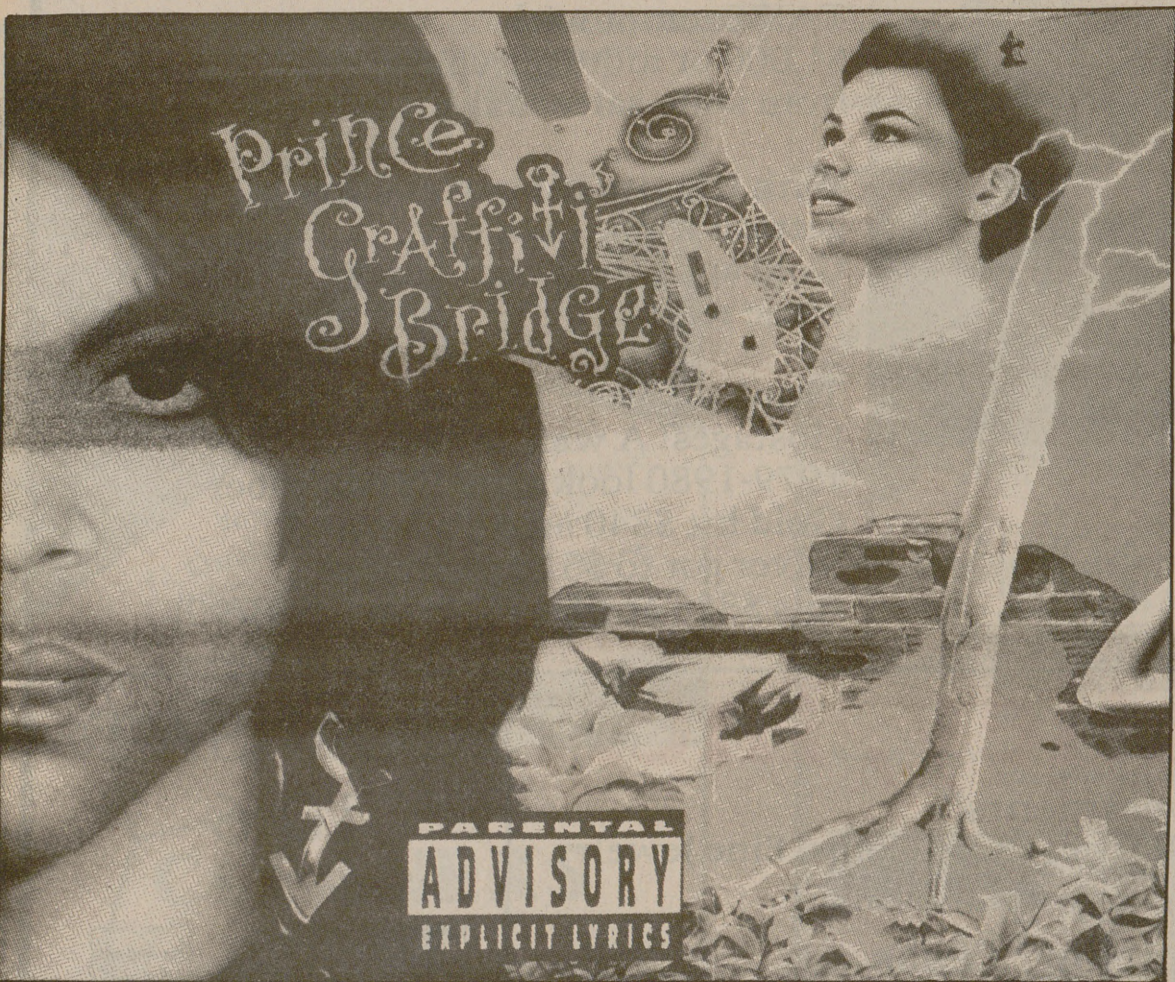
Professors can also help by tuning in to the needs of the students in their large classes, Dockweiler said. Encouraging ques-

tions and presenting the material in a more concrete and visual way will help the students relate math to what they already know, he explained.

Usually students with math difficulty have potential to handle math but for some reason, don't use it, Dockweiler said.

"It's phenomenal the kind of things the students can achieve (with help) in a relatively short time," he said.

Kristi Lorson is a junior journalism major and a feature writer for Lifestyles.



Prince paints blues, funk talent on new release Graffiti Bridge

By ROB NEWBERRY

Only the best of artists cover a lot of ground in one album. Prince's *Graffiti Bridge* certainly crosses a broad expanse. He puts forth some of his strongest work, while still throwing in some of his weakest.

His Royal Badness comes out with some '60's-feeling dance tunes and technotronic dance mixes. He explains more of his quest for the divine while keeping his worldliness intact. He rocks, rolls, funks, raps, preaches and moans the blues.

The 17-song *Graffiti Bridge* soundtrack from the forthcoming sequel to *Purple Rain*, opens with "Can't Stop This Feeling I Got." The number plays on the basic dance rock characteristic of the Beatles, but mixes in Prince's own dance style best heard on 1999 ("Delirious") and "D.M.S.R." and *Purple Rain* ("Let's Go Crazy" and "Baby, I'm A Star").

Next Prince gets tough with the anthemic tune, "New Power Generation." Right from the start, he tells you what bugs him: "Pardon me 4 livin', This is my world 2, I can't help what's cool 2 us, might B strange 2 U." With a very dance-club feel, Prince rants against the establishment in music, in government, in life and preaches the gospel of youth.

Joining Prince on *Graffiti Bridge* are The Time. The third track on

Prince has come up with an amazing release, after sacrificing a lot of originality for last year's Batman soundtrack. Most of Graffiti Bridge is a bundle of dancy tunes and sex, sex, sex.

the album, "Release It," grooves with drums and bass, as well as Morris Day's incredible ego shining through the lyrics, "Who's Stella is this?" Jerome Benton answers, "My Stella." Day breaks back in, "Then what's it doin' over here with me?...Release it, boy!"

Prince returns with electronically souped-up blues for "The Question of U." His soulful voice moves up and down a haunting melody before he tears into a guitar solo that puts him in the category with other blues greats.

With the four impressive numbers that open the album, you wonder if something will go wrong. It does. In "Round and Round," Prince puts overused lyrics together, attempting to match the creativity of the rest of

the album, but his effort falls apart. And "Shake" is just another dance tune, lacking that special Prince touch.

The most disappointing number on the album is the title track, "Graffiti Bridge." Prince brought along some extraordinary talent to back him, with gospel great Mavis Staples singing and Sheila E. carrying the percussion. But the lyrics and music are wishy-washy and trite: "Everybody's looking 4, everybody's looking 4 love." I hear that everywhere, and even Prince doesn't say it with style.

Prince still mixes up religion and sex to its full effect. In "Elephants and Flowers," Prince preaches. "There will be peace 4 those who love God a lot." Then in "We Can Funk," Prince and '70's funk king George Clinton substitute "funk" for the F-word everywhere they get a chance: "Pump 'em and funk 'em...Take off my clothes...I'll funk you."

Prince has come up with an amazing release, after sacrificing a lot of originality for last year's *Batman* soundtrack. Most of *Graffiti Bridge* is a bundle of dancy tunes and sex, sex, sex. And that's what Prince does better than anyone else.

Rob Newberry is a sophomore English/mathematics double major and a viewer for Lifestyles.