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**IN FOCUS: ARTICLE**

## Get It Together!

by Erin Brereton, 09.20.02

Chances are, you're no stranger to time — as in, *time* to finish that English paper; *time* to respond to those nine e-mails from your best friend; and, at some point, after homework and phone calls and chores, *time* to get stressed about all you have to do!

So how much does stress matter? Plenty! Studies have shown that too much school-related stress can affect your nervous and endocrine systems and ultimately be hazardous to your health. According to the Mind Body Medical Institute, stress also contributes to diminishing efficiency — meaning, even though you're trying to do it all, you may not be doing *any* of it up to your full potential.

Symptoms of stress can include

- headaches
- stomachaches
- sleep problems
- crying or anger

Sound familiar? Stress is no joke — but when it comes to keeping the thousands of responsibilities in your life in order, how can you not get stressed? One word: **organization**.

Two words — stress and disorganization — often go hand in hand. As Ali, 14 years old, says, "I think I've gotten less organized over the years because I don't have as much time on my hands anymore to clean my room or, like, put my CDs in alphabetical order."

But before you throw in the towel — or toss it on the floor — keep in mind there are some simple ways to keep clean and organized.

**Room Rage**

Messy rooms can equal messy situations. "The floor of my room is the biggest shelf in the

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**Studies have shown that too much school-related stress can be hazardous to your health.**

house," jokes Jamie, 14. But she's not laughing when things get lost.

"I get stressed out all the time about being disorganized!" she says. Some possible solutions: taking 15 minutes each night to put things away can do wonders for a clean room, as can investing in a good closet or shelving unit to keep clothes in order.

And if your room isn't the only disaster area in your life, you're not alone. Behold: The Locker.

### **Love Your Locker**

Ali's school-related storage space fell victim to her busy schedule. "Last year, my locker was pretty messy compared to everyone's around me," she says. But she was too on-the-go to deal with it.

So what's a person with a metal box full o' books to do? First of all, less is more. If it freaks you out to throw things out, start a filing system at home to store your old stuff. Next, label your books and stack them neatly on the shelves, so you don't accidentally show up to history class with a loose-leaf full of algebra equations. Have trouble keeping track of tests? Try tacking up a mini-calendar in your locker, so you know what's coming up when.

### **School Supplied**

Got your room and locker down pat? Beware, because the stress mess can extend beyond those two places. The bottom line: You need an academic organizational system, too.

Adam, 16 years old, files all school materials religiously and keeps track of upcoming assignments. "I have separate folders for each school subject," he says. "I have a day planner."

And you might also want to think about organizing what you tote your folders/organizer/binders around in — 'cause carrying around a mess won't do you any favors stress-wise.

"My locker, is quite clean compared to my backpack," says Jamie. "That's where all the REAL trash ends up."

We hear ya, sister!