- If spirituality plays an important role in your life, utilize your belief system as a way to cope with stress. This could involve connecting with others who share your spiritual beliefs, confiding in your spiritual leaders, or participating in your spiritual rituals (e.g., prayer, meditation).

- Having a positive cultural identity and strong sense of self is particularly helpful in combating race-related stress, stereotype threat, and the Imposter Phenomenon. Take classes that focus on the historical experiences and contributions of your cultural group and join campus organizations that celebrate your cultural norms and ideals. Your campus Office of Minority Affairs is a great place to start forming connections.

- Make positive reinterpretations of negative thoughts and reframe negative situations with a three step process:

  1. **Identify negative feelings.** For instance, a failing grade on an examination may lead to the negative thought "The admissions committee made a mistake when they accepted me."

  2. **Perform a reality check.** Understand that your feelings can often distort the reality of the situation. Think of examples that counter the negative thoughts and feelings that you are experiencing. For instance, the admissions committee most likely made their decision because your past academic performance fit their acceptance criteria. Additionally, failure on one examination does not automatically indicate that you cannot succeed in any of your classes.

  3. **Make a positive reinterpretation.** You can reframe the initial negative thought by saying "The admissions committee accepted me because they believe in my potential to succeed" and "I know I am a highly capable person and I can improve my academic performance with additional support." You can also reframe your experiences with racism with statements such as "This can only make me stronger" or "My elders have gone through this and persevered and so can I."

- Become involved in social action.

  - Document acts of racism or intolerance. Don't ignore or minimize your experiences, and think broadly about what could be an act of racism. It doesn't have to be an overt act (e.g., professor consistently not calling on you or minimizing your contributions, racially biased curriculum, etc). Talk to someone you trust and report it.

  - Be strategic in social action. When attempting to change policy or procedures, it is important that you do this effectively by:
    - Be clear about what it is you want to see change.
    - Be clear about how you see that change being implemented.
    - Make sure you talk to the person/department that will most likely be able to get you want you want.
    - Be mindful about timing (e.g., when is it the time to share your experiences and frustrations, when is it time to work on change and demands, when is it time to negotiate).

    - Don't work in isolation. Get a team so that the work on these tasks aren't so daunting for any one person.

  - Call people out when you witness acts of injustice and intolerance.

  - Try not to get discouraged. Change doesn't happen over night and movements are a long process. Remember that you are one cog in the wheel, and your contribution, no matter how small you may think it is, is a vital component of the movement.

  - Don't underestimate the power you have to make change. Student involvement has been instrumental in starting major movements through out history.

Additional Resources on the Topic:

Clance, P. R. (1985). *The Impostor Phenomenon: Overcoming the Fear That Haunts Your Success.* Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers.
Sue, D. (2003). *Overcoming Our Racism: The Journey to Liberation.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

ILLINOIS

Coping with Race-Related Stress

The first year of college marks a significant milestone in your transition to adulthood. As you settle into a campus routine, you will most likely be tasked with adjusting to being separated from your family, forming new friendships, and coping with a more rigorous academic curriculum. Although it is often exhilarating to gain a new sense of independence and responsibility during this process, at times you may find it difficult to juggle the demands of your social and academic life. Unfortunately, among students of color, the common stressors of the college experience are often compounded by the burden of race-related stress, stereotype threat, and the imposter phenomenon. The purpose of this brochure is to define race-related stress and the impact it can have on the academic and social success of students of color. Additionally, it will provide tips on how to effectively cope with race-related stress and maximize one's academic potential.

Racism and Race-Related Stress

As a student of color, the additional frustrations you may experience might be the result of racism, which leads to race-related stress. Racist actions usually involve some form of racial prejudice and discrimination. However, at times you may find yourself questioning whether you were a victim of a racist act. This is a common reaction because modern-day racism tends to be covert in nature. Additionally, perpetrators may not recognize their actions as racist because their behavior does not mimic the more overt forms of racism commonly seen in the past. The uncertainty that can accompany perceptions of racism is often due to a misunderstanding of the behaviors that constitute racism. To understand racism it may be helpful to understand the concepts of prejudice and discrimination.

What Is Prejudice?
Prejudice refers to any negative beliefs, feelings, judgments, or opinions we hold about people based on their group membership. The group membership does not necessarily have to involve race/ethnicity. People can be prejudiced based on several group categories such as religious affiliation, political affiliation, membership in a sorority/fraternity, a particular major (e.g., believing that math/science majors are nerds), gender, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. Prejudice that is based on an individual's race/ethnicity is known as "racial prejudice." If we hold negative beliefs against members of a different group, these negative beliefs may cause us to discriminate against members of that group.

What Is Discrimination?
Discrimination occurs when a person is harassed or treated less

religious affiliation, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability status, socioeconomic status, etc. An example of discrimination is a student organization that refuses to accept members of a certain racial/ethnic group.

What Is Racism?
Institutional racism is racial prejudice that has been incorporated into the functions of major institutions, corporations, and social systems such as universities, healthcare organizations, banking, housing, or governmental policies. Racism leads to discriminating against a minority racial/ethnic group while maintaining the benefits and privileges of a majority racial/ethnic group which holds most of the power within the major institutions, corporations, and social systems. When the majority group in power makes decisions based upon racial prejudice, this can lead to unjust sociopolitical barriers and policies against the minority group.

Race-Related Stress

When students of color experience racism, it not only causes problems in their social and economic lives, but also negatively impacts their physical and psychological health. Race-related stress refers to the psychological distress associated with experiences of racism. It is important to understand that you can experience race-related stress even if you were mistaken that a racist act occurred. Race-related stress reactions only require that a person believes that they were the victim of racism. Below is a listing of the detrimental effects of race-related stress:

Intense Emotional Reactions:
Anger	Sadness
Anxiety	Frustration
Paranoia	Helplessness-Hopelessness
Fear	Resentment
Depression	Self-doubt
Self-blame	Isolation

Ineffective Coping:
Disengaging
Avoidance
Substance Use

Health Concerns:
Hypertension
Heart Disease
Muscle Tension

These psychological and physical effects can have a significant effect on your daily life. For example, if you feel isolated due to experiences of racism, you may be reluctant to interact with students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds or participate in campus activities such as student organizations, intramural sports, classroom discussions, and study groups. You may also experience a phenomenon known as stereotype threat, which involves the fear that one's actions will confirm existing stereotypes about a person's self-identified racial/ethnic group. Students of color who experience stereotype threat may begin to believe that their peers do not regard them as individuals, but

often accompanies stereotype threat can have a negative affect on your performance on academic tasks such as class participation, assignments, and exams. Stereotype threat can also lead to the Imposter Phenomenon if you internalize the negative racial stereotypes about the capabilities of your racial/ethnic group.

What is the Imposter Phenomenon?

The Imposter Phenomenon can occur if you do not believe that you are as intellectually capable as your peers or have the skills necessary to fulfill the requirements of your role as a student. These beliefs may lead you to dismiss any academic or career-related successes as based upon external factors such as beginner's luck, extra work effort, networking with influential people, or filling a perceived quota (e.g., "I was only offered the internship because they needed more female interns"). The Imposter Phenomenon can occur across gender, racial/ethnic groups, socioeconomic status, and careers. Therefore, if you suffer from feelings of inadequacy, you are not alone. There are surgeons, lawyers, architects, graduate students, accomplished novelists, performers, historians, and professors who also struggle with the Imposter Phenomenon.

Effects of the Imposter Phenomenon
Sadness	Guilt
Shame	Anxiety
Fear	Life Dissatisfaction
Denial of Competence	Paranoia
Overachievement	

Many people who experience the Imposter Phenomenon believe that they are the only ones who have these beliefs or feelings. They live in constant fear of the "truth" of their capabilities being discovered by their peers, superiors, students, partners, etc., and therefore, work very hard to succeed and gain recognition while wearing a mask of self-confidence. People with imposter feelings are often skilled at convincing others that they are confident, self-assured, and proud of their accomplishments. However, the disconnect between their outward appearance and their inner emotional state contributes to a feeling of overall life dissatisfaction. As a college student, if you suffer from the Imposter Phenomenon, you may avoid answering questions in class or having a professor review a paper due to fear of negative evaluations. A successful completion of a project may cause only temporary happiness because the success is not recognized as proof of one's capabilities. Likewise, an unsuccessful project may be perceived as validation of one's perceived lack of intelligence and/or skill.

Recommendations for Coping with Race-Related Stress and the Imposter Phenomenon

Fortunately, there ways to combat the negative effects of race-related stress and produce positive outcomes.

- Build a support network. You are not the only person dealing with race-related stress and connecting with other people with similar