NYU Stressbusters – Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Stressbusters program and who are the Stressbusters?
Stressbusters is an incredibly fun and far-reaching community wellness program. “Stressbusters” is both the name of the program and the collective name of the volunteer students who provide backrubs as part of the program. We dispatch volunteer teams of undergrad and grad students to provide FREE five-minute backrubs and stress information to other students at campus events, residence halls, organization meetings, libraries and wherever else the stressed gather – day and night. However, we are pausing request based events during the 2017-2018 school year in lieu of new program initiatives.

What’s new with Stressbuster’s this year (2017-2018)?
We want to expand certain aspects and reevaluate others. In particular, we want to add a component where Stressbusters conducts research on campus about the ways in which stress affects students and how that information might inform new initiatives around stress. We will still offer backrubs to students during the twice weekly sessions but have decided to pause the aspect of the program where individual groups can request backrubs. Pausing will provide time to develop the research aspect of the program and time for continued evaluation of the bi-weekly backrub sessions.

Although Stressbusters is a popular program, we want to make sure that it is impactful in a meaningful way. We want to identify and address stressors within the NYU environment and design initiatives that support students in managing their stress beyond the immediate benefit of a 5 minute backrub. So, moving forward, there will be two working arms to Stressbusters: backrubs and research. No matter which component you decide to participate in, you will still go through the traditional Stressbusters volunteer training and learn how to do a backrub.

Who can apply to be a Stressbusters volunteer?
Current full-time undergraduate and graduate NYU students may apply. Volunteers must be able to commit at least one year to the program. Experience with research, backrubs or health education is not necessary. We are looking for students who are eager to learn and provide a valuable resource to their peers at NYU.

How do I apply?
Interested students may apply online by visiting the Health Promotion office website (www.nyu.edu/health/promotion). Upon reviewing your completed application, we may invite you to a brief interview to learn more about your interest in Stressbusters. If we feel that you are a good fit for the program, we will invite you to our next training session (held once per semester).

How are the volunteers trained?
During the required training session led by a Licensed Massage Therapist, volunteers learn and practice the following:
- The logistics of the Stressbusters program
- Basic stress and stress reduction information
- How to provide simple, low-intensity Swedish style backrub techniques to a person’s shoulders, arms, back and neck
- Essential communication skills with backrub recipients
- Important campus wellness resources and how students can access them
- Strategies for successful backrubs and Stressbusters events
**Do Stressbusters receive compensation?**
Stressbusters are volunteers. Their training in no way qualifies them to provide services akin to what a Licensed Massage Therapist, Physical Therapist or credentialed chiropractor offers for a fee. However, being a Stressbusters has many great benefits, such as learning effective backrub and other stress reduction techniques, taking part in a popular health initiative on campus, improving the quality of someone’s day, and having fun and meeting other students!

**What is the time requirement for being a Stressbuster?**
After completing the required training sessions, Stressbusters must commit to at least 7 hours of volunteering per semester. Stressbusters events last one hour and their location and time will vary depending on what has been requested. Thus, volunteers may sign up for events that best fit their schedule. Many Stressbusters choose and are welcome to give more time to the program.

**Do I have to wear a uniform?**
Stressbusters volunteers are required to wear a t-shirt with the Stressbusters logo on it when participating at Stressbusters events. We provide each Stressbuster with a t-shirt after successful completion of training and acceptance into the program.

**Where are Stressbusters events held and will I ever be the only Stressbuster at an event?**
You will never be the only Stressbuster present at an event—we’re a team! You will always be with other Stressbusters, providing backrubs in public spaces on the NYU campus, such as the Kimmel Center for University Life, Bobst Library, residence halls, and the Student Health Center.

**Do these backrubs really make a difference for people?**
Yes! According to a 2004 University of Illinois review of 37 studies on the effects of backrubs and massages, brief one-time backrubs such as those provided by Stressbusters reduced anxiety, blood pressure, and heart rate. The review also revealed that individuals with limited training were able provide backrubs that produce beneficial results. In addition, Stressbusters provides backrub recipients with valuable stress management resources that they may use after they leave the event.

**It seems like it might be weird to give or get a backrub in public—is this true?**
It can seem strange, but most concerned first-time Stressbusters and backrub recipients say that once you participate in an event, those apprehensions disappear. For volunteers, the popularity of Stressbusters events combined with the great appreciation that most backrub recipients express tend to override the initial concern. If you’re thinking about attending an event, the Stressbusters volunteers will make you feel comfortable by communicating about the backrub and other stress reduction techniques. Once you get a backrub, you’ll understand why we’re always around campus busting stress!

**Who can request Stressbusters?**
Any NYU student leader, staff, or faculty member may request a Stressbusters event for their student group. Our event requestors include student clubs/organizations, professors, Resident Assistants, Student Affairs offices, and academic departments. Stressbusters can be invited to participate in a larger event (e.g. Wellness Expo, building-wide relaxation event) or we can be the event (e.g. inviting us to a classroom or meeting).

**Does the Stressbusters program bring food or therapy dogs?**
No, we do not provide food or therapy dogs at our events. In addition to providing relaxing backrubs, we always come equipped with health information and resources from the Student Health Center’s Health Promotion office, such as stress reduction guides, stress toys and Tip Cards. However, requestors are welcome to provide additional resources for their students (e.g. food, study supplies), especially if Stressbusters is part of a larger event.

When can I participate in a Stressbusters event?
Since Stressbusters is comprised of student volunteers, we only hold events during the fall and spring semesters. We start our weekly events during the second week of classes, and continue holding events until the last day of classes. We typically hold events during the afternoons and evenings during weekdays.

How else can I stay connected with NYU Stressbusters?
In addition to the Student Health Center website, our fans can find us on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/nyustressbusters. We use this page to post upcoming events, share stress reduction tips and resources, and connect with our volunteers and fans. In addition, you can join the Stressbusters Alert! listserv by sending an email to nyustressbusters@gmail.com with “Alert me” in the subject line. The weekly Alert! email shares events for the week as well as valuable stress management resources.