



EXAMS & MAJOR TESTS

Manage the stress

Student Life - Counselling Support

Stress Less Exams

If you experience exam stress you are not alone, many university students are in the same boat to varying degrees.

Stress in itself is not necessarily negative – the important thing is to ensure that the stress you experience is minimal, manageable and working for you rather than against you. “Helpful” stress can provide you with the energy to motivate you to achieve your goals.

Excessive stress can be incapacitating and have negative effects on your exam performance and results. However the good news is that there are things you can do that help reduce stress and prevent it from getting in the way of performing well in exams.

Preparation

This is the most important. Organise your workload throughout the year and during the lead-up to exams, ensure that you have planned your revision well and have allocated sufficient time to revise all of your courses. Knowing that you have prepared for the exam will help you think about the exam differently – to see it as an opportunity to show you have done the work rather than seeing it as a threatening or fearful event. Reviewing past exam papers can be helpful as this will indicate the likely format the exam will take.

Practicalities

Take care of the practicalities – a couple of days before the exam, pay a visit to the exam venue, know how much time it will take to travel there, give yourself plenty of time so that you are not rushed.

Decide whether you prefer to wait alone or with other students.

Avoid alcohol, caffeine and other drugs. Make sure you eat nutritiously and exercise regularly.

Ensure you have a good sleep the night before the exam – don't rely on cramming. “All-nighters” are not a good idea.

Plan

- Have a strategy for tackling the exam paper.
- When reading it, underline key words and phrases, ensure you understand the question or topic
- Allocate time according to how much each question is worth
- Do the easiest question first – this often provides more time and triggers information and ideas for the more difficult questions.
- Never leave the exam early – use any spare time to go over your answers
- make appropriate adjustments and enhancing your answers where needed.

Don't Panic

Should you start to feel panicky during an exam it can be a good idea to take a minute to re-centre yourself. Sit quietly with your eyes closed and take a long, deep breath as if breathing into your belly rather than the upper chest. Let it out slowly. Focus on noticing your breath. Repeat this 2 or 3 times.

You can also reduce stressful energy by alternatively tensing and relaxing the muscles (to a count of 10) in your feet or your fist and arm, repeating 3 or 4 times. If you practice these techniques several times a day before the exam, it will make them easier to use and more effective in the exam.

Visualise

Banish negative thoughts by practicing visualising a STOP sign and saying forcefully to yourself "Stop, I am capable, competent and in control". Allow yourself to strongly connect with your self-knowledge that you have studied well and that you have past experience of passing exams. As with the breathing and relaxation techniques, this will be more effective if practiced regularly.

Perspective

At exam time it can be hard not to feel totally consumed by the next exam – like you're existing from one exam to the next. However, it can be very helpful to take a minute or two to step outside of this context and to remind yourself of the "big picture". See the exam moving you one step closer to your ultimate goal of achieving a university degree.

Reward

After the exams are over, plan something to look forward to. Spend some time doing the things that were placed on the back burner whilst you were busy with exams.

For example, catch up with friends, go to the beach, have a massage, go camping, see a movie, read a book that's not a text book and relax.

Other Helpful Brochures

Procrastination,

Time Management

Counselling Support is available to assist students with personal difficulties that are affecting their study.

The service provides:

- Individual Counselling by appointment
- Telephone Counselling by appointment
- Mental health emergency response

Counselling Support

Ground Floor, Horace Lamb Building

The University of Adelaide

Ph: +61 8 8313 5663

After hours support: 1300 167 654 or sms 0488 884 197

This pamphlet was written by Flinders University Health and Counselling Services and has been reprinted as part of a collaborative project between the counselling services at Flinders and Adelaide University. Modified by Student Life Counselling Support.

Reviewed Feb 2017