

Managing Test and Exam Stress

STUDENT COUNSELLING UNIT Mental Health Awareness Series JUNE 2022

What is stress?

- Stress is a response to a physical, mental or emotional pressure.
- Stress is something everybody experiences throughout life.
- It is how the body and brain react to any need or demand that it perceives as a challenge or obstacle.
- Stress is not necessarily negative. Short-term relatively mild stress can be motivating.



Understanding your stress

- Stress is normal and can be positive.
- Are you experiencing it as positive or negative?
- Program your mind with positive realistic thoughts eg I will be able to pass my exams with good grades.
- Use positive self-talk and reaffirming statements.

Stay mentally fit

- Be aware of and acknowledge your emotions.
- Identify what you can or cannot control.
- Use reflective journaling.
- Think of what you need to start doing today.
- Change how you perceive the situation.
- Stay positive and realistic.
- Realize that a certain amount of stress is essential.



Ways to manage your stress

- Be as well prepared as possible.
- Organise your work space and study material.
- Do not postpone- procrastination breeds anxiety.
- Draw up a revision timetable.
- Allocate more time to the subjects you are unsure about.
- Practice your work as that will improve your exam performance.



Develop problem solving skills

- Identify the stressful situation.
- Think of all the possible solutions.
- Think of the projected outcomes of all the possible solutions.
- Choose one solution out of all and act on it to solve the stressful situation.
- Re-evaluate the solution and change if necessary.

Add physical activity in your daily routine

- Take a brisk walk daily.
- Cycle for 15 minutes a day.
- Indulge in any sport; practice the same at least twice a week.
- Maintain proper posture; this also helps with better concentration.

Take study breaks

- Evaluate your concentration span and take breaks in between studies.
- Indulge in fun activities such as games or watching a TV/web series episode for a short period of time.
- Do not exceed a break of 20 minutes in between studies.



Sleep hygiene

- Students commonly face insomnia due to exam stress. Try spreading out your sleep and wake cycles.
- Don't take naps after 3pm, and avoid naps longer than 20 minutes.
- Avoid medicines that might have stimulants.
- Consult a doctor if you aren't able to sleep properly.



Department of
Student Affairs

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Kgoro ya Merero ya Balhuthi

Reference list
• Putwain,D. (2008) Examination stress and anxiety, 21 (12), 1026-1029.
• Hopper,C. (1998). Practising college study skills. Boston: Houghton Miffling.

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For more info or self-help resources, check the Student Counselling Unit's website
<https://www.up.ac.za/student-counselling>

For 24 hr support, call the UP Careline 0800 747 747

For academic support consult with your Faculty Student Advisor:

<https://www.up.ac.za/teaching-and-learning/article/2494904/faculty-student-advisors-fsas>

For therapy/counselling_email: studentcounselling@up.ac.za