Calm Before the Storm
Surviving Finals
Alysha M. Stucker, BA
Objectives

- Learn to cope with stress during finals
- Learn the power of positive thinking
- Practice Exam Success Visualization
Coping with Stress
What Does NOT Help

- **Uppers**
  - (Adderall, Ritalin, amphetamines)
  - May help you to stay up, but will negatively impact your memory
  - Risk addiction for a score on a test
  - Creates a cycle of sleeplessness
  - Adds to body’s stress

- **Eating greasy food**
  - Adds to body’s stress

- **All-Nighters**
  - Lower GPA
  - Constantly reminding yourself what is at stake
  - Studying for hours and hours without a break
Create a Study Schedule

- Make a calendar
  - Mark exam dates, and due dates for papers and projects
  - Estimate time needed to study/complete
  - Plan and set dates for group projects
  - Prioritize what needs to be accomplished each day
- Focus on small goals to avoid feeling overwhelmed
  - Break tasks up and do piece-by-piece
Study Strategically

- Reduce distractions
  - Quiet place, coffee shop, library
  - What helps you focus (quiet vs. music)
  - Disconnect from social media
- Take advantage of study guides
- Study in chunks

- Review tests, quizzes, and homework assignments
- Create study cards
- Highlight while reading, review highlighted area
- Avoid stressful people
Form a Study Group

- Interactions with others may help you relieve stress.
- Others may have strengths that complement your weaknesses.
- Research consistently demonstrates that groups help you learn more effectively.
  - Conversation helps you learn material at a deeper level, you are putting it in your own words.
- Form groups with people that can help you, and whom you can help.
Treat Your Body Right

- Get enough sleep
  - Sleep improves the consolidation of memory for recently learned information
  - Need AT LEAST 5 hours for retention of new info
  - Wakefulness (i.e., all nighters) can prevent new memories from consolidating

- Eat well
  - Fruits, veggies, and protein help you have brain strength

- Exercise
  - Decrease stress, increase energy

- Take Breaks
Picture Your Success and the End of Finals Week

- Imagine yourself taking the test and feeling confident
- Picture getting all the answers right
- Focus on how relaxed you feel
- Picture the A on the top of the paper
- Recognize the hard-work you HAVE done
Rational and Irrational Fear

**Rational**
- Being a little anxious is ok because it might help to motivate you
- Have you goofed off all year?
  - What is reasonable for you at this point?

**Irrational**
- I am a failure
- I never do anything right
- If I do not do well on this, then I may as well give up on everything
The Power of Positive Self-Talk

Approach unpleasantness in a more positive and productive way

- Increased life span
- Lower rates of depression
- Lower levels of distress
- Better psychological and physical well-being
- Better coping skills
- Reduced risk of cardiovascular disease

- Don’t say anything to yourself you would not say to someone else
- Be gentle and encouraging to yourself
- Be open to humor
- If negative thought enters, evaluate it rationally and respond with affirmations of what is good
Let’s Practice

Negative

1. It’s too complicated, I can’t do this.
2. I’m too lazy to get this done.
3. No one bothers to communicate with me.
4. This is too hard. I’m not smart enough.

POSITIVE

1. Let’s tackle it from a different angle.
2. I can re-examine some priorities to see if I can fit it into my schedule.
3. I’ll see if I can open the channels of communication.
4. I’m working hard, and doing my best.
Exam Success Visualization

- Stay CALM and deal with test taking nerves
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtF0T2fPvbI
- [Link](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kayla-hedman/its-the-final-countdown-c_b_4379538.html)
- [Link](http://www.uwcu.org/education/articles/articles/five-tips-for-coping-with-stress-during-finals-week.aspx)
- [Link](http://news.wustl.edu/news/Pages/5642.aspx)
- [Link](http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/memory-medic/201103/how-sleep-helps-memory)
- [Link](http://stress.about.com/od/studentstress/a/finals_stressor.htm)
- [Link](http://www.upb.pitt.edu/uploadedfiles/final%20tips%20newsletter.pdf)
- [Link](http://www.goodluckexams.com/test-anxiety/)
- [Link](http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/stress-management/in-depth/positive-thinking/art-20043950)