



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 other may help you relieve stress
- Others may have strengths that compliment 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>

- <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kayla-hedman/its-the-final-countdown-c b 4379538.html>
- <http://www.uwcu.org/education/articles/articles/five-tips-for-coping-with-stress-during-finals-week.aspx>
- <http://news.wustl.edu/news/Pages/5642.aspx>
- <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/memory-medic/201103/how-sleep-helps-memory>
- http://stress.about.com/od/studentstress/a/finals_stressor.htm
- <http://www.upb.pitt.edu/uploadedfiles/final%20tips%20new%20letter.pdf>
- <http://www.goodluckexams.com/test-anxiety/>
- <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/stress-management/in-depth/positive-thinking/art-20043950>