

Anxiety

Symptoms that interfere with learning:

feeling excessively anxious or worried, restlessness, difficulty concentrating, tiredness, and irritability

Common Barriers

- Academic pressures of meeting grade requirements, test taking, volume of material to be learned, expected independence in large assignments, and time management has been shown to be a significant source of stress for students and may lead to:
 - Fight, flight, or freeze response resulting in a reduced ability or sometimes an inability to focus/concentrate during lectures, studying, or tests
 - Inability to focus/concentrate during class time
 - Difficulty taking tests within a large group or within a time limit
 - Feeling anxious when attending certain classes

Strategies

PLANNING

- Use digital planners with repeat and reminder function, and sync with a phone app – this relieves you from the pressure and fear of mentally remembering all that is due and when to do it, and helps you focus on what needs to happen in the present moment only
- Organize time by the hour (instead of a to-do list), with space for breaks, rest, exercise, social time, and meals
- Plan for flexibility by allowing free time for fun things to do, i.e., spending time with your family and/or friends, and relaxation activities – this will help you feel centered and keep the planner attractive
- Get in the habit of checking entries each morning before you start your day and throughout the day

ATTENDING CLASS

- Find a seat at the front of the room so you will be less distracted by other students and their different strategies pertaining to note-taking and test-taking. It helps you focus on pay attention to your needs and worry less about how other students attend to their needs as their ways may not always fit your style

GOALS

- Write down SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timed) goals and make sure your planned activities align with your main goals, such as college, work, close relationships, but also include your physical and mental health

Common Barriers

- Academic pressures of meeting grade requirements, test taking, volume of material to be learned and time management has been shown to be a significant source of stress for students
- Symptoms can arise when you are triggered by stress and may result in increased procrastination as a coping skill. It may potentially also lead to missing deadlines, receiving lower grades, dropping classes, delaying graduation, or dropping out of college entirely

Strategies

TIME MANAGEMENT

- Reward yourself, i.e., with a small break, sending a text to a friend, a telephone call with a loved one, visiting a friend, TV time, a weekend away from campus (intended as reward not as escape)
- Plan big assignments and papers well in advance and break them up on smaller tasks. Smaller tasks are less intimidating and easier to get started on. Spreading the work of writing a paper out over time allows for meeting with professor to discuss the topic and related questions, doing library research, editing, rewriting, organizing, using several drafts, and meeting with writing consultants. You create emotional space as your work doesn't have to be perfect in one attempt.

ORGANIZATION

- Organize or join a study group with students at or slightly above your performance level to hold each other accountable and to gain clarification on key terms, concepts, ideas etc. to help you build confidence when understanding that you know what you are supposed to know
- Create study guides on your own or with classmates to help study for tests/exams in your courses.

RELAXATION & MINDFULNESS

- Plan relaxation strategies frequently and throughout the day, such as naming three things you are grateful for, journaling on something positive that happened over the past 24 hours, exercise, breathing techniques, yoga, or (guided) meditation
 - For mindfulness practice ideas watch:
The Happy Secret to Better Work – Shawn Achor:
https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work?language=en

Common Barriers

- High levels of anxiety negatively impact academic performance as the anxiety adversely influences concentration, memory, attention, organization of work, and performance on tests and other evaluative tasks

Strategies

LIFE -STYLE TIPS

- A good living environment (i.e., on-campus residential hall or off-campus apartment) can have a significant impact on your mental and physical health
- Getting 7-9 hours of sleep a night, a balanced diet to even out your blood sugar levels, drink plenty water, limit caffeine and alcohol, and regular exercise help building resilience to (flexibility in dealing with) stress
- Being actively engaged in extracurricular activities in college can positively impact how you perform academically
- Building a strong supportive network with fellow students, faculty and staff on campus, a mentor, academic advisor, academic coach, or other services as well as family can lead to the following:
 - feeling a sense of belonging/connectedness
 - feeling well supported
 - Increased resiliency to stress

DE-STRESS

Visit UND Learning Services website for more learning tips & tools <https://und.edu/academics/services/learning-services/learning-tips-and-tools.html>

- Stress 101
- Destress in Less Than 2 Minutes (Grounding Technique)
- Testing Anxiety

Advocating for Yourself

When Self help Strategies are Insufficient

- When dealing with overwhelming levels of anxiety, seek out assistance from UND's University Counseling Center or a therapist
- Depending on individual barriers students experience, they may connect with UND's Disability Services for Students Office to see if they are eligible for accommodations
- Visit with an Academic Coach at UND for more information about individually tailored strategies

References

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