

Depression

Symptoms that interfere with learning:

feeling unmotivated, lack of sleep or sleeping a lot, having a hard time showing up, fatigue, loss of concentration, a loss of interest or pleasure in doing activities, and feeling a sense of hopelessness

Common Barriers

Symptoms of depression, such as fatigue, loss of interest, feeling unmotivated or even hopeless often interfere with the ability to:

- Show up for class
- Take quality notes from verbal lectures and PowerPoint slides
- Study for midterm and final exams
- Complete graded assignments/projects on time according to the due date
- Interact with others in clubs/organizations, with classmates, or even hobbies

Strategies

GOAL SETTING

Write down SMART (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**imed) goals and make sure your planned activities align with your main goals, such as college, work, close relationships, but also your physical and mental health

TIME MANAGEMENT

- 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. It helps you to focus on what needs to happen in the present moment only to avoid feeling overwhelmed
 - 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, spending time with your family and/or friends, and relaxation activities – this will help you keep the planner attractive
 - Avoid getting overwhelmed by breaking activities down in smaller tasks and plan them by spreading them out over time (follow the schedule from your instructor/syllabus)
 - Get in the habit of checking your calendar each morning before you start your day and throughout the day

Common Barriers

Strategies

PLANNING

- 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 (not used as an escape but used as a reward)
- Plan big papers well in advance to allow time to meet with professor to discuss topic, do library research, editing, rewriting, and organization, and use of several drafts
- Plan relaxation strategies frequently throughout the day, such as naming 3 things you are grateful for, journaling on something positive that happened over the past 24 hours, exercise, breathing techniques, yoga, or meditation

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. It helps you understand that you know what you are supposed to know and creates greater confidence.
- Create study guides on your own or with classmates to help study for tests/exams in your courses

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

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 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

LIFE -STYLE TIPS

- A good living environment (i.e., on campus residential hall/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
- The Grounding Technique
- Test Preparation Strategies
- Test 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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