




Top Tips for Managing Exam and Assignment Stress and Anxiety



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Let's start with the good news - experiencing some amount of stress or anxiety is an indication that you're human. It's how your body reacts to the demands and challenges it's faced with. It is natural to feel anxious prior to an exam or stressed while juggling assignment prep.

While stress and anxiety can sometimes be overwhelming, they can also be an energising and healthy pressure that encourages you to grow your capabilities and take control of your situation.

So how are you able to strike a balance between too little and too much stress? This blog will cover some techniques you can utilise to help reduce and manage your stress and anxiety levels during assignment periods and leading up to your exams.

Slow down to speed up

True productivity requires downtime! Studying remotely has eliminated the daily commute or the act of physically leaving your university at the end of a day of studying. It might not seem like a huge deal, but those rituals are actually super helpful when it comes to telling your brain it's time to get out of work mode and into rest mode. And rest mode is incredibly important.

Our attention span is a limited resource – there are only so many things we can take in and process at any given moment, and to keep running on high-alert is cognitively expensive for our brains. In order to learn something or focus powerfully, we need to take breaks.

Schedule downtime in your daily plan, and stick to it. Take regular breaks during the day and make sure to switch off at night to recharge.



Early bird or night owl?

Not everyone is the same and no one size fits all when it comes to the best time of day for productivity. And it's unproductive to try and force yourself to study when your focus and productivity levels are low. You are better to try and use those times as your downtime to relax, catch up with friends, exercise, or do something you enjoy, and then make use of the times that work best for you.

Ask yourself these two questions:

When during the day do I have the greatest amount of energy and concentration?

When do I have the fewest interruptions and distractions?

For some, that might be first thing in the morning. For others, they might find the mornings challenging and have a habit of procrastinating until midday anyway. So rather than making yourself feel guilty for procrastinating, schedule in that time as downtime and kick off your studying session at midday.

Messy workspace, messy headspace

The physical environment of your workplace has a significant effect on the way that you work. Cluttered spaces can have negative effects on our stress and anxiety levels, as well as our ability to focus, our eating choices, and even our sleep.



A good routine

Hopefully, you already have a good routine in place, but if not there has never been a better time to start. Self-care doesn't have to cost a lot of money or take up heaps of time. Start with the basics, making sure you get enough sleep, drink enough water, eat regular meals and snacks, and get in some movement or time outdoors.

Then look to build on this, through self-care that helps you to relax. Remember - relaxing is not one activity, it's the outcome of that activity and how it makes you feel. And what works for your friends may not work for you.

Experiment and see what works best for you! From journaling, reading, different types of exercise, stretching, meditating, the options are endless. Pay attention to how you feel after each activity. Ask yourself, does this make me feel grounded and at ease? If so, schedule in some time each day to help you shake off the tension of studying, or to unwind after an exam.

Sleep!

Not only can sleep deprivation worsen anxiety but getting enough sleep is vital to feeling and performing your best, which is particularly important around exam time. Don't stay up late the night before or get up too early on the morning of. A good night's sleep is more valuable than an extra few hours of revision.



Write down worries

It's been proven that if you take a few moments to write about your fears just before you take an exam, it will help to reduce your anxiety and improve your performance. Write down what you are stressed about, why you are stressed, and what the outcome would be if those worries were realised. By writing down your worries, it can help you to put everything into perspective, and help you to feel lighter and less tense by emptying your worries from your mind and onto the paper.

Move your body!

You don't need to run a marathon every day, but movement is just as key to a healthy mind as it is to a healthy body. Exercise is considered healthy stress on the body, which can actually help your body fight off the effects of the "bad" kind of stress. Exercise in almost any form can act as a stress reliever.

Find support

Having people to lean on is great for your mental health. Make sure you let those close to you know if you are feeling overwhelmed or preparing for an upcoming exam. Not only can they help to support you emotionally, but they can also be on hand to help you in other ways (healthy study snacks anyone!).

If you don't feel as though you have people in your life that understand your stress and anxiety, that's what TalkCampus is for! Jump onto our global community and chat with other students that get it.



Schedule ahead

Outlining a routine is a tried and true therapy trick for keeping yourself on track. But make sure your schedule is realistic. If you schedule an unrealistic amount of exam or study prep, it will make it really hard to achieve and you may end up feeling disappointed with yourself at the end of the day. Instead, be honest with yourself, schedule in time to scroll on social media if you know that is usually part of your daily schedule! And make sure to prioritise rest and self-care in between those study sessions.

Manage distractions

Self-discipline may well be your greatest challenge when studying from home. With entertaining technology all around us, it can make it so challenging to stay focused.

Luckily, with this technology comes other forms of technology to help keep your distractions at bay. There are a number of fantastic free apps available for students that allow you to choose and schedule what distracting apps to block at certain times.

While all of these tips and tricks have been suggested with assignment and exam stress in mind, they are all also fantastic for your overall mental health and wellbeing and will be impactful throughout all other areas of your life where you may experience stress. By experimenting with these suggestions and finding what works best for you, this will help in maintaining your stress levels to just the right amount, to keep you motivated and focused, resulting in greater levels of optimism and confidence.

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