

TOP 10 TIPS FOR COPING WITH FINAL EXAM STRESS

Here are some tips from the staff of GCSU Counseling Services in 210 Wellness and Recreation Center. If you would like to schedule an appointment to meet with a counselor, call (478) 445-5331.

1. Prepare in advance. Cramming is rarely effective and often produces far more stress than it's worth. Break your review sessions into small chunks of time and spread them out for several days leading up to your exam. Know what material the exam is likely to cover, and what exam format the instructor will use (such as essay, objective, take-home, etc.). Study when your energy and focus are at their best. Are you a morning person? Night?
2. Take care of your body. Be sure to sleep enough to meet your particular body's needs, eat nutritiously, and exercise to improve energy and mood. Have your normal amount of sugar and caffeine on the day of the exam. Try to breathe deeply from your diaphragm.
3. Avoid catastrophic thinking. Turn your negative self-talk into a positive statement. For instance, you might catch yourself thinking things like "I'm going to blow this test and flunk out of my major!" Turn it around and instead tell yourself something like, "I prepared well and will do my best. I can always explore other options if this major doesn't work out for me." Reset your expectations to aim for your best, not perfection. Visualize success.
4. Plan rewards to follow each study session or exam. You might call a friend, watch a favorite TV program, or take a nap. Just be sure to chill out periodically so you don't burn out! Some stress is good for you because it challenges and motivates you, but too much can create anxiety, depression, relationship problems, etc.
5. Avoid using drugs and alcohol.
6. Talk to someone who cares about you. It's ok to seek support from friends and family.
7. Just say no! Set boundaries with email, Facebook, cell phone, TV, etc. Find a quiet place where you can study without interruption. Set advance boundaries with friends and family to minimize or avoid interruptions in your concentration.
8. Consider setting two alarm clocks for each exam so you don't accidentally oversleep.
9. Arrive early for your exam with plenty of supplies: sharpened pencils, full ink pens, blue books, calculator, etc. Budget your time during the test. Rather than leaving as soon as you have finished, consider staying a few extra minutes to review your answers and screen for mistakes.
10. Learn from your experience. As you head into the next semester, ask yourself what you did well and where you need to improve with your studying and test preparation. Resolve to set a few goals for yourself to improve your academic skills.