

Test Anxiety Tips

Mansum Yau
Production Editor

Finals are just around the corner. Now you are probably thinking, "I know, and I don't need a newspaper column to tell me." Do you know how to effectively manage test anxiety though? Did you know that it would be unnatural if you did not feel stressed out at all? Stress is a natural reaction to threats and fear, defending us from danger or motivating us to achieve. That said, it can have a detrimental effect if not managed properly. Overestimating threats such as an exam or underestimating one's ability to deal with them can greatly increase your anxiety level. As the Greek philosopher Epictetus once said, "Man is not disturbed by events, but by the view he takes of them."

According to Mike Connolly, one of the three full-time counsellors at UPEI's Student Services, the biggest pitfall for students during exams is viewing tests as a measure of their own self-worth. He stressed that "A test is a measure of what you have learned. It's not a measure of who you are."

One tip he gave is to take deep breaths. Visualize yourself first in a relaxing place. Then visualize yourself

doing well on your test. Focus not on your anxiety, but on the task at hand, which is to give the information that you have learned.

Here are some other tips:

Before test

-Study the material and *practice* in the same way you will have to perform.

-Do something fun. Research shows that engaging in an activity that you enjoy like going for a walk can greatly decrease your test anxiety level.

-Try not to engage in discussions on what you studied, what you did not study, what you think needs to be studied, so on and so forth before a test; it only feeds your anxiety.

During a Test

-Tell yourself to *stop* when you catch yourself thinking irrationally.

-Repeat a mantra, a word or phrase that you can repeat to yourself when stressed.

"Man is not disturbed by events, but by the view he takes of them."
Epictetus

Student Services

Location: W.A. Murphy Student Center
2nd Floor North

Phone #: 566-0488

Fax: 628-4318

Email: stuserv@upei.ca

Website: www.upei.ca/student-services

Hours:

Monday-Friday 8:00-4:00 PM and the following evening hours:

Tuesdays, 4-6pm - Career/Academic Counselling

Wednesdays, 4-8pm - Academic/Personal Counselling

The Adaptive Technology Centre will also be open both evenings during the hours indicated above.

Stress at School Keeps Students Wide Awake

Paul Choi
The Ryersonian (Ryerson University)

TORONTO (CUP) — Tamara Lang, 18, has spent many a night staring at her ceiling.

Burdened by the anxieties of first-year university life at Ryerson, the RTA student says falling asleep, and getting enough when her eyes finally close, is proving to be a challenge.

"My brain just doesn't stop working," says Lang, who, like many of her university peers, is currently in the midst of writing final papers and studying for exams. "I've once lied in bed for two hours because I couldn't sleep. Then I went back downstairs to go on MSN."

Lang is not alone in her nightly battles with the pillow. Getting little or no Zs has become an outright trend among Canadians, young and old.

A recent study by Statistics Canada reveals one in seven Canadians 15 years or older have trouble falling asleep and getting enough shut eye when they finally enter dreamland, suggesting they suffer from insomnia.

One-quarter of the people surveyed in the study cited life stress as a reason for their sleep deprivation.

According to Dr. EeVon Ling, a Toronto-based naturopathic doctor, university students - especially first-year students - are susceptible to insomnia because of drastic lifestyle changes and the new pressures that can accompany post-secondary life.

"Stress and anxiety can definitely play a part," says Ling, who has treated numerous university students suffering from insomnia at the Pacific Wellness Institute, a downtown clinic specializing in alternative medicine.

"Modern life is very stimulus-filled," she adds. "We've got images

thrown at us all the time, we have televisions, computers, we're trying to listen to music, we've got papers, and we've got deadlines to meet. We have all of these things. You're always winding up the brain, but there are a lot of people who are not good at winding down."

Gabe Knox, 22, also a first-year student, can attest to that.

"I can't go to bed early. My body won't just let me fall asleep," the student complains. Knox says he usually gets about six hours of sleep a night, which is far below the national average of seven and a half.

According to Ling, students who take more than an hour to fall asleep or wake up intermittently during sleep can be safely classified as insomniacs.

The doctor says the problem for students can be commonly traced to their pre-sleep routine, or lack thereof. Students, she said, frequently hit a roadblock when they hit the bed immediately after doing something mentally taxing, such as studying.

"With students for example, you're living in residence and doing your homework, when you immediately try to roll over and fall asleep," Ling says. "You should have some sort of routine - a pre-sleep routine, or what they say is good sleep hygiene."

To help avoid fits of sleeplessness, Ling advises students to spend at least an hour winding down before hitting the hay, avoiding heavy meals and strenuous activity in the process.

Doing light exercises before bedtime, such as yoga and stretching, can also help students grab a good night's rest, Ling says.