

COPING WITH EXAMS AND

EXAM ANXIETY

For most UNO students, exam time is particularly stressful. Paradoxically, many students attempt to deal with this stress in ways that are counterproductive or even self-defeating; their behavior and attitudes tend to diminish their performance on exams, rather than enhance it.

While there is no guarantee for an easy time on exams, there are some specific guidelines that students can follow which will help them learn more efficiently during exam time

Remember that you are not alone; almost everyone gets somewhat anxious at exam time.

It is clear that it *does not help* to put added stress on yourself by:

- keeping irregular hours
- pulling all-nighters
- eating irregularly or eating junk food
- relying on ineffective learning strategies

GUIDELINES

1. Try to stay on a reasonably regular schedule of reviewing, eating, sleeping and relaxing. Start at least a week, or preferably two, before exams begin.
2. Don't attempt to study 24 hours a day; your efficiency and capacity to retain material will rapidly decrease. Lay out a realistic study plan that includes time to sleep, eat, and includes a little relaxation in between studying.
3. Don't force yourself to study beyond your normal limits of concentration. If you find yourself able to concentrate for only ten or twenty minutes, study for only that period of time and then take a short break. Your concentration should return. In fact, *short* and *regular* study periods are more productive than lengthy single sessions.
4. Try the "power hour" study method. Spend 10 minutes reviewing or planning out what you want to accomplish, 35-40 minutes studying/making study materials/reading/working on a paper or project, and then take a 10-15 minute break. When the break is over, start again.
5. Eat a well-balanced diet and drink lots of fluids. Excessive amounts of caffeine may produce confusion and even disorganization of thought processes. Try chewing gum instead of drinking more caffeinated drinks. This will help keep you alert without the negative side effects of excess caffeine.
6. Avoid drugs and alcohol—they can decrease your ability to think clearly. Take medication only under the supervision of a physician.
7. Be conservative and reasonable about the demands you place on yourself.
8. Set boundaries with family, friends, and loved ones. Clearly communicate your needs and your time constraints. You may not have time to make phone calls or hang out during exam times. Let them know this up front to avoid hurt feelings.
9. Communicate your exams with your job. This is especially important if you won't be available to be on call or will need time off in order to study.

10. As the need arises, communicate with your instructors. Don't risk repeating a 15-week course because you were afraid to have a 15-minute conversation.

Contact the Learning Resource Center for additional suggestions and advice.