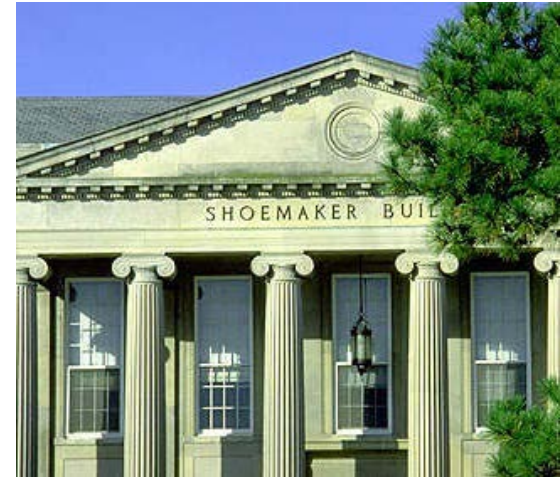




Managing Exam Anxiety

Counseling Center

- Accessibility and Disability Service
- Counseling Service
- Research Unit
- Testing Office



www.counseling.umd.edu

301.314.7651



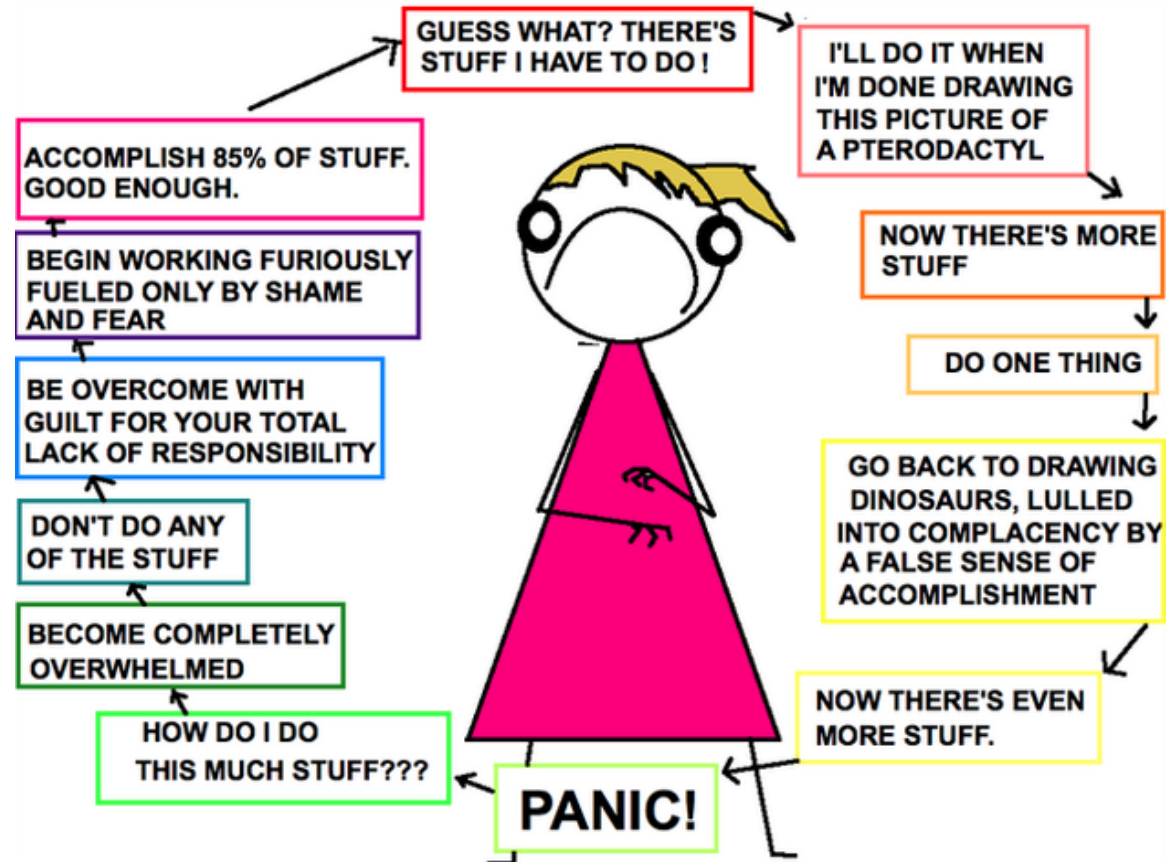
Workshop Objectives

In this workshop, you will learn the skills to manage exam anxiety.



Topics

- Warm Up Questions
- Definition
- Causes
- Signs
- Management



Warm Up

- Raise your hand if you've had the following thoughts while taking an exam:
 - “I should have studied more.”
 - “I'm going to fail.”
 - “Why can't I get this?”
 - “Ugh that person's already done.”
- Think of a time you did well on an exam. What was different about that exam?

Definition

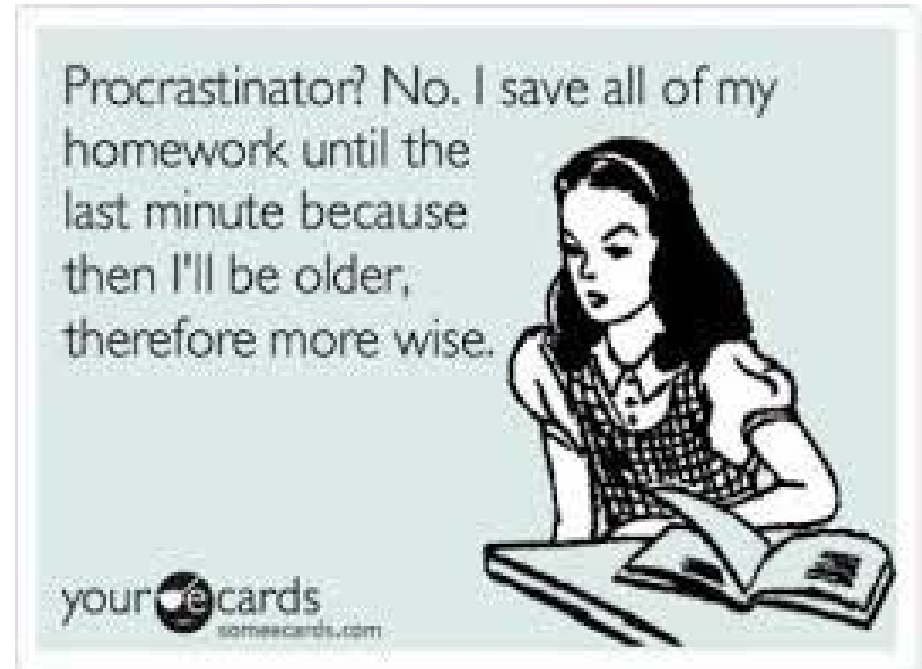
- Anticipatory: feeling distress when studying or thinking about the exam
- Situational: feeling distress while taking the exam

Some anxiety is normal and necessary for motivation, mental alertness, and physical energy



Anticipatory Signs

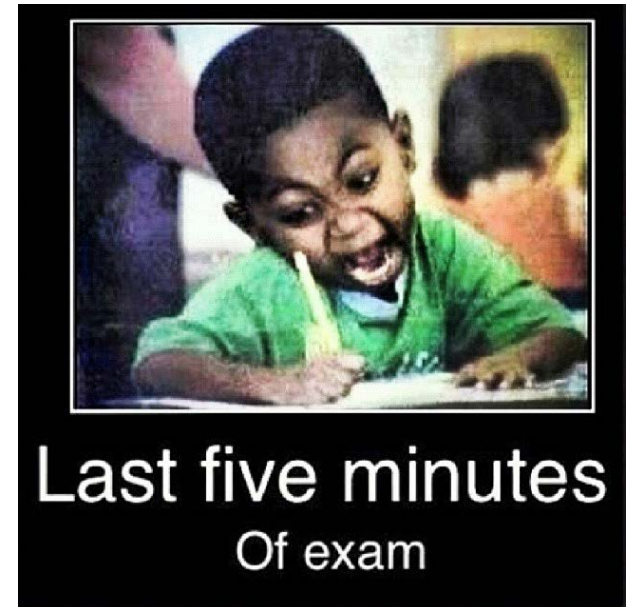
- Distracting yourself
- Avoiding studying
- Procrastination
- Negative thoughts
- Feeling paralyzed



"I can't even start"

Situational Signs

- Physical
 - headache, stomach upset, sweating, shortness of breath, increased heart rate
- Cognitive
 - “freezing,” confusion, self-defeating thoughts
- Emotional
 - low self-esteem, depression, anger, hopelessness
- Behavioral
 - Fidgeting, tapping, walking quickly



Causes

- Lack of preparation
- Fear of failure
- Poor testing experiences in the past
- Focusing on how others are doing on the test
- Issues outside of school
- Poor eating, sleeping, and exercise habits



Management

- Physical
 - Deep breathe
 - Make stress your friend
- Cognitive/Emotional
 - Reframe your thoughts
 - Self-compassion
- Behavioral
 - Put the time in to study
 - Exam desensitization

Challenge and normalize





Physical

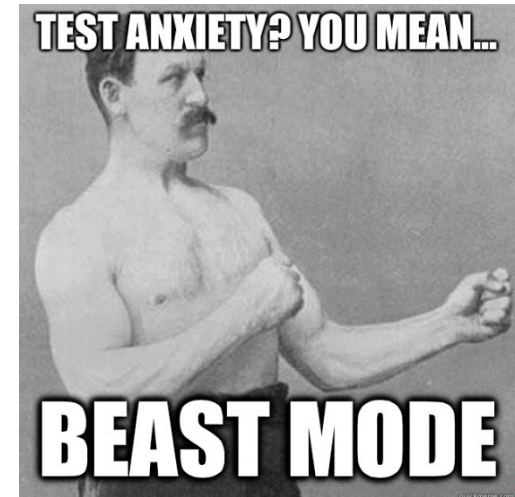
- Don't go to the exam on an empty stomach
 - Eat: fruits, vegetables, yogurt, lean meat
 - Avoid: energy drinks, processed foods, fried foods
 - *Eat a banana! Studies show they reduce performance anxiety*
- Deep breathe (activity)
- Tense and release muscles throughout your body
- Learn the difference between your anxious nausea and true nausea

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyBdA61GmJ0>



How to Make Stress Your Friend

- When you change your mind about stress you change your body
- The Social Stress Test (Harvard)
 - Participants were told to view their physical stress response as helpful
 - “Your body is energized and preparing you to meet this challenge”
 - “That pounding heart is preparing you for action”
 - “Breathing faster? No problem, you’re getting more oxygen to your brain”
 - Less stressed out, performed better, more confident
 - Physical reactions were the same as someone experiencing joy– and courage!





Cognitive/Emotional

- Visualize yourself doing well
- Strive for a relaxed state of concentration
- Reframe negative thoughts to positive ones
- Focus on the task at hand

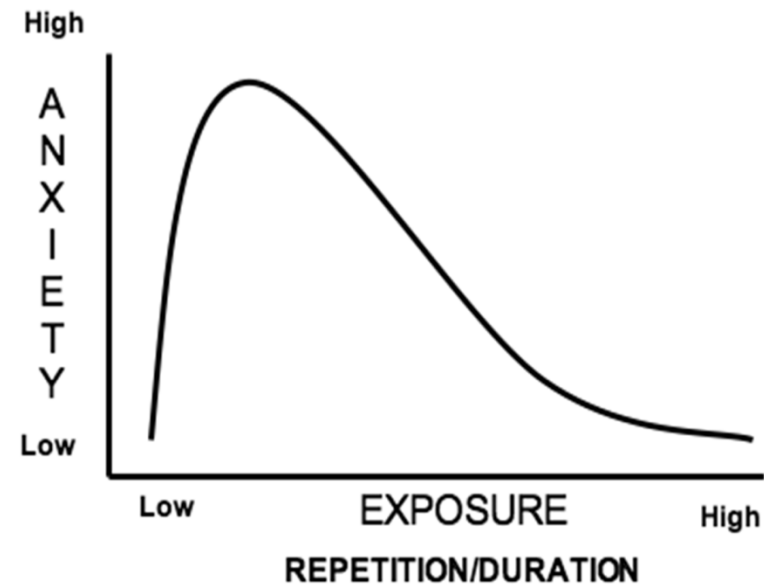


Stop shoulding on yourself!



Behavioral: Before Exam

- Allocate study time each week throughout the semester!
- Create study plan/study group
- Mimic the study environment
 - Complete homework and practice exams without notes
- Get a good night's rest
- Arrive 30 minutes early to acclimate to room and deep breathe





Sample Study Plan

Activity	Hours Needed	Dates to Do	Study Group or Tutor?	Meeting w/Instructor?
1. Contact study group	1	12/4	X	X
Topic A	4	12/4-12/6	Yes	Yes
1. Rational Functions				
2. Exponential Functions				
3. Linear Functions				
Topic B	3	12/7-12/9	No	Yes
1. Addition method				
2. Subtraction method				
3. Graphing method				
Topic C	3	12/10-12/12	Yes	No
1. Solve by factoring				
2. Solve using quadratic equation				
Final Review	3	12/13-12/14	No	Yes
1. Practice Tests				



THE STUDY CYCLE

BEFORE CLASS - PREVIEW

- Identify sections to be covered in the next class/lecture (use your syllabus)
- Take 10-15 minutes to look over chapter headings, keywords, & chapter summary
- Formulate questions you want to ask and answer during class.

Prepare for Success

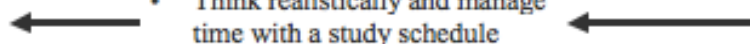
- Analyze returned tests and learn from the results. What worked well and what didn't?
- Think realistically and manage time with a study schedule
- Study when and where you're the most alert

TEST

- Arrive early to minimize anxiety
- Get an overview before you begin
- Read directions carefully
- Keep track of your time
- Practice relaxation & positive self-talk

STUDY - SELF-TEST

- **Interact with material** – Organize, develop concept maps, charts, tables, or diagrams, summarize, process, re-read, fill in notes, reflect, etc.
- **Rehearse** – Do practice problems without looking at the steps in your text or notes, boost memory with repetition, use mnemonic devices, etc.
- **Elaborate** – Explain ideas aloud (to self or others), write and answer practice test questions.
- **Apply** — Challenge yourself to apply the knowledge to problem-solving, or real-world situations
- **Retrieval** — Put material away and practice retrieval by recalling as much information as possible.



For multiple-choice exams, cover answers and generate your own response

DURING CLASS -

LISTEN & TAKE NOTES



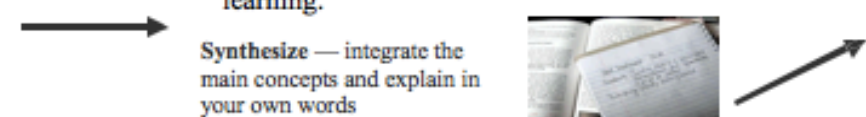
- Use an effective notetaking system during lecture
- Listen to find answers to your questions
- Include what the professor *says* in addition to material on the board
- Leave space in notes to add material later

Typically, students only remember 5% of lecture information that is not included in their notes.

AFTER CLASS - RSQC

- **Review** – As soon after class as possible, read notes and text material and fill in gaps.
- **Synthesize** the lecture and reading materials. Summarize your learning in a few sentences.
- **Questions** - Clarify questions using resources such as instructor, TA, text, other students, tutor, etc.
- **Connect** new information with previous learning.

Synthesize — integrate the main concepts and explain in your own words



Study Groups

- Get 3-4 classmates' numbers or email addresses at the start of the semester
- Meet once per week
- Have a group leader that keeps the group on track and on task
 - Decide as a group what material will be covered that week



Behavioral: During Exam

- Answer the questions you know first
- Only change your answer if you know it is wrong
- Remain positive, focused, and continue to deep breathe



Take Home Points

- Prepare well and desensitize yourself to the exam environment
- Breathe deeply and visualize yourself doing well
- Normalize your physical symptoms
- Challenge your thoughts and engage in positive self-talk before/during exam
- Stay focused on the task at hand