

Academic Wellbeing presents. . .

Resources for Anxiety

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Anxiety

What is Anxiety?

According to the American Psychological Association, “Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure. [It] is not the same as fear, but [the words anxiety and fear] are often used interchangeably. Anxiety is considered a future-oriented, long-acting response broadly focused on a diffuse threat, whereas fear is an appropriate, present-oriented, and short-lived response to a clearly identifiable and specific threat” (para. 1).

Many college students fear they are alone in their struggle with anxiety. However, experiencing anxiety during college is normal because it is a major transitional phase of life. The Spring 2023 National College Health Assessment revealed that 36.1% of college students that participated in the assessment reported experiencing anxiety during the school year, and of those students, 77.2% reported seeking mental health care related to their anxiety within a 12-month period. You are not alone!

Coping Strategies & Tips

- **Check in with yourself and know your limits.**

Throughout the day, students may experience different levels of anxiety based on what's going on both inside them and around them. Building awareness for when your anxiety is at its highest and lowest points during the day can be super helpful for students. Check ins can be whatever you want them to be; consider using a feelings thermometer and rating your anxiety from a scale of 1 to 10 or maybe keep a journal of how you are feeling throughout the day.

10. Out of control

9. Can't handle it

8. Really tough

7. Pretty tough

6. Getting tough

5. Not too good

4. Starting to bother

3. Just a little uneasy

2. Still quite easy

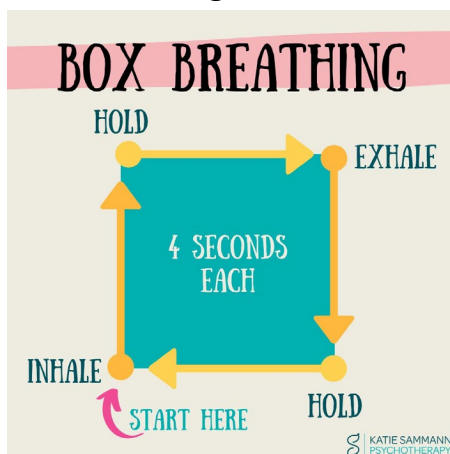
1. Easy

- **Engage in positive self-talk and affirmations.** Remember to believe in yourself and celebrate your wins, no matter how small!

- **Try using a [30-day coping calendar](#)**

- **Consider using a self-care app like *Finch*.** ***William & Mary does not directly sponsor any apps; however, this app has been found to be very helpful by many students who use it. ***

- **Finch** is a self-care and goal setting app that allows students to develop healthy self-care habits and set and complete simple goals each day. One notable feature of this app is its “First Aid Kit” which provides app users with guided breathing exercises, meditations and reflections, and calm down activities. Need an accountability buddy? *Finch* also allows you and your friends to send each other little messages of support and encouragement throughout the day.
- **Journaling.** Oftentimes, students find journaling helps them process their thoughts and feelings, increasing their self-awareness. In addition, students can use journaling to explore their anxiety by fully unpacking the emotions involved. ○ Want a journal? Feel free to stop by the Office of Academic Wellbeing, Sadler 184, to pick one up.
- **Breathing Exercises and Calm Down Techniques**
 - **Box Breathing**



- **Butterfly Hug**
 - 1 Cross your arms over your chest and make a butterfly shape. Interlock your fingers.
 - 2 Hands and fingers as vertical as possible, pointing towards the neck.
 - 3 Eyes can be completely or slightly closed. Focus on the tip of your nose.
 - 4 Move your hands like a butterfly gently flapping its wings, tapping your chest. Breathe deeply.
 - 5 Notice any thoughts, images, feelings, and physical sensations impacting you.

- **5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique**

Breathe slowly and think of the following things.

- 1 Think of 5 things you can see. Examples: Colors, objects, people, your hands
- 2 Think of 4 things you can feel. Examples: Calluses on fingers, heat of sun on face.
- 3 Think of 3 things you can hear. Examples: Birds chirping, water running, fan, trees rustling.
- 4 Think of 2 things you can smell. Examples: Flowers, baked goods, freshly cut grass.
- 5 Think of 1 thing you can taste. Examples: Toothpaste, last snack you had.

- **Video Walkthrough Links:**

William & Mary does not directly sponsor these videos; however, they have been found to be very helpful by many students exploring how to properly use these breathing exercises and calm down techniques.

- [Box breathing relaxation technique: how to calm feelings of stress or anxiety](#)
- [The 5-4-3-2-1 Method: A Grounding Exercise to Manage Anxiety](#)
- [Introduction to 5-4-3-2-1 and Skill Practice](#)
- [Intro to Focused Breathing and Skill Practice](#)

Test Anxiety Resources

What is Test Anxiety?

The American Psychological Association defines **test anxiety** as “tension and apprehension associated with taking a test, frequently resulting in a decrease in test performance”.

They also note that **test anxiety** is a more specific form of **performance anxiety**; **performance anxiety** is the “apprehension and fear of the consequences of being unable to perform a task or of performing it at a level that will raise expectations of even better task achievement.”

Although **test anxiety** can be overwhelming at times, please know that you are not alone! Many students experience stress and anxiety related to test-taking and performance.

General Skills

1. Manage outside pressures such as peer pressure, competitiveness, and performance anxiety.
2. Use a step-by-step approach to build a strategy and not getting overwhelmed accomplishing tasks can be overwhelming
3. Reviewing your past performance on tests to improve and learn from experience
4. Prepare by taking practice exams
5. Make an educated guess and go with your first (gut) answer.

Strategies to Manage Test Anxiety

Before Test Day

1. **Prepare and study ahead of time** - create a consistent and personalized study routine. Cramming the night before is typically not an effective way of studying for most students. Instead, review and practice problems a little bit every day to ease stress and improve learning. As you get closer to test day, you can focus on the topics and questions you don't understand as well.
2. **Manage time effectively** - designate specific time blocks to studying and self-care. This should help hold you accountable and provide structure to how you spend your time.
3. **Avoid spending time with people who express negativity or who will distract your preparation** - negativity and distractions often hinder your ability to effectively study and prepare for an exam. Try to avoid spending time right before an exam with individuals who may express more negativity or distract you from your studying.
4. **Get a good night's sleep** - many students have the misconception that staying up late the night before studying will improve their performance on tests. Research actually shows the opposite. Students who get a good night's sleep the night before a test are found to perform better on exams than those who stay up late cramming.

On Test Day

1. **Eat** - in order to do your best on an exam, it is important to have energy. Eating allows your body to replenish any energy it has used during the day. Consider

7. **Identify and mark clues (i.e. qualifiers and absolutes)** - as you read test questions, try underlining key words or important facts. Oftentimes, professors include marker words that are supposed to indicate how a question should be answered.
8. **Don't be afraid to ask questions!** - when in doubt, ask. If a professor can't answer your specific question, they will tell you. However, oftentimes, asking a question allows the professor to clarify how they want you to approach their question.
9. **Breathe and engage in positive self-talk** - remember to breathe and believe in yourself!
10. **Proofread at the end** - if you have time, do a final double check of your answers before turning in your test. This allows you to potentially catch any small or unintentional errors before submitting.

After Test Day

1. **Reward yourself (celebrate with friends/family, get yourself a present, etc.)** congratulate yourself for your hard work. A little self-praise can go a long way.
2. **Regardless of how the test turns out, be proud of yourself for trying.**
3. **Identify what strategies worked and what strategies didn't work** - This evaluation will allow you to improve your test-taking skills in future. If you realize a strategy was unhelpful, don't be afraid to change it up and try something new.
4. **Make specific plan for improvement** (e.g. get tutoring, use a study group, attend workshops on topics tested on the exam, organized your time effectively)
5. **Speak to the professor for performance feedback and how to improve** attend office hours and discuss with your professor what you mixed up and how to improve your mastery of content moving forward.

General Tips for Balancing Academics and Wellness

Taken from Dr. Alan Farber and Linda O'Brien's book, 51 Tips for Academic Success: College Edition.

1. **Make the most of your study time** - Manage your time effectively when you can. Organization and consistency allow for better maximization of your time and efforts.
2. **Get enough sleep** - No matter how much energy or effort you put into studying and other activities, you will not be able to perform at your best if you aren't getting enough sleep.
3. **Set your priorities** - There is a difference between an urgent task and an important task. Urgent tasks should be done first because there are consequences if they aren't completed. Typically, important tasks are moderate-to-low priority tasks where there is a little more flexibility with when they need to be accomplished.
4. **Just say no** - Many students struggle with FOMO (fear of missing out) and, as a result, tend to overexert themselves. Learning how to advocate for yourself and say "no" to different things based on your personal needs is an essential part of growing up. Remember, there is no shame in looking out for yourself and your own limits!

"True friends will understand that sometimes you have to hit the books, or just get some rest" (Farber & O'Brien, 2016, p. 59).

5. **Get to know your professors** - professors typically love it when students are actively engaged in class and seek out their help during office hours. It may seem scary to approach your professors at first, but after the initial interactions your professors may become some of your biggest allies and advocates.
6. **Stay busy but not overwhelmed** - Balancing a hectic schedule seems almost innate to the college experience. A healthy dose of busyness can be good for students because it teaches them valuable life skills such as prioritization and time management; however, being busy becomes overwhelming to students when they forget to build in time to rest and care for their mental and physical wellbeing.
7. **Learn to relax and manage your stress** - In order to live well, students should set aside time each day to relax and recharge. Self-care looks different for each person; find what works best for you and practice it judiciously.
8. **Strive for excellence (not perfection)** - Realize that things won't always work out the way you want them to. The important thing is that you put in effort and do your best!

"Pat yourself on the back when you succeed, learn from your mistakes when you fall short, and accept the fact that you can't be great at everything" (Farber & O'Brien, 2016, p. 91).

9. **Seek academic help** - attend individual or group tutoring sessions, meet with the Office of Academic Wellbeing about different study or time management strategies, or visit your professors during their office hours if you need academic support. The more often you engage with these resources, the more likely you are to understand and master course material.
10. **Take advantage of student services** - The campus offers many resources and services to help you succeed during your time in college. The best students seek out and build connections to campus offices and resources before they are experiencing challenges.

“Seeking help is not an indication of weakness - it is a sign of wisdom” (Farber & O’Brien, 2016, p. 87).

Campus Mental Health Resources

- **Care Support Services** - Sadler Center, Suite 161
 - Care Support Services provides outreach, advocacy, and support services that assist and empower students in identifying and managing interpersonal, academic, and wellness concerns. In addition, they handle the student emergency notification system. To learn more, visit the [Care Support Services website](#).
- **Counseling Center** - the 2nd Floor of the McLeod Tyler Wellness
 - The Counseling Center offers a range of mental health services to students wanting help with personal concerns. The staff specializes in providing care related to the developmental issues and clinical concerns common to college students such as relationship and family issues, academic and personal stress, identity development and personal growth. For more assistance, you can [make an appointment to meet with a counselor](#).
 - **Need an appointment right now?** The Counseling Center partners with *TimelyCare* so that students are able to access 24/7 virtual care if needed. For more information about this service, visit the [TimelyCare website](#).
- **The Haven** - Sadler Center, Suite 146P
 - The Haven is a **confidential**, welcoming and inclusive resource center for those impacted by sexual violence and harassment, relationship abuse

and intimate-partner violence, stalking and other gender-based discrimination. For more information, visit the [Haven website](#).

- **Student Health and Wellness Center** - the 1st Floor of the McLeod Tyler Wellness

- The Student Health Center provides students a full-range of primary care services including the evaluation, treatment and prevention of all kinds of acute or chronic physical, mental and social health issues. For more information, visit the [Student Health Center website](#).

Resource Links

<https://www.apa.org/topics/anxiety>

<https://mywellbeing.com/therapy-101/what-is-the-333-rule-for-anxiety#:~:text=It's%20an%20easy%20technique%20to,move%20three%20different%20body%20parts.>

<https://3.files.edl.io/4a5f/20/05/27/162035-3e0c2427-73f1-47a6-bd69-ad121cf2f5ef.jpg>

<https://timelycare.com/blog/stress-and-anxiety-in-college-students/>

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Newsletters/January-2020/Battling-Test-Anxiety?st=NJ>

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/newsletters/january-2020/coping-with-student-anxiety?st=NJ>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/anxiety-in-college-what-we-know-and-how-to-cope-2019052816729> [https://anxietyintheclassroom.org/student/university-college-students-dealing-with-ocd-](https://anxietyintheclassroom.org/student/university-college-students-dealing-with-ocd-anxiety/navigating-young-adulthood-with-anxiety-ocd/)

<https://childmind.org/article/tips-for-beating-test-anxiety/>

<https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/test-anxiety>

<https://www.cuny.cuny.edu/testing/strategies-better-manage-test-anxiety>

<https://timelycare.com/blog/the-importance-of-self-care-for-college-students/#why-is-self-care-important-for-college-students>