



Task Title: Learning About Exam Anxiety

OALCF Cover Sheet – Learner Copy

Learner Name: _____

Date Started: _____

Date Completed: _____

Successful Completion: Yes ☐ No ☐

Goal Path: Employment ☐ Apprenticeship ☐

Secondary School ☐ Post Secondary ☐ Independence ☐

Task Description: The learner will read about exam anxiety and answer questions.

Main Competency/Task Group/Level Indicator:

- Find and Use Information/Read continuous text/A1.2
- Communicate Ideas and Information/Write continuous text/B2.3

Materials Required:

- Pen/pencil and paper and/or digital device

Task Title: LearningAboutExamAnxiety_P_A1.2_B2.3

Learner Information

Most students experience some anxiety about exams. It is normal to feel nervous and worried about something you have worked hard to prepare for. Learning how exam anxiety happens, and strategies for managing it, can help students succeed.

Read “Learning about Exam Anxiety”.

Learning about Exam Anxiety

Almost everyone feels nervous before an exam – it's normal.

- “Butterflies” in the stomach
- “Will I be able to answer the questions?”
- “Have I done enough preparation?”

Can Some Exam Anxiety be Helpful?

A certain amount of exam anxiety can keep us energized, motivated, alert, and focused. Too much anxiety can interfere with exam performance by blocking our recall or thinking abilities.

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal reaction to any perceived threat or anticipation of danger. It may include feelings of apprehension, tension or uneasiness.

If we believe something important to us is being threatened, and we overestimate the threat, underestimate our ability to cope with it, or underestimate the resources we have available to cope with it, then we'll feel anxious.

Exam anxiety often involves apprehensions of performing at levels below those at which we'd like to perform, or even apprehensions of failure. This type of anxiety may be caused by underestimating our abilities to perform to our desired levels on exams. Exam anxiety may also be the natural result to insufficient exam preparation.

Exam anxiety can result in:

Physical Indicators	• Perspiration, sweaty palms, feeling too hot or cold • Headaches, upset stomach, nausea • Rapid heartbeat, shallow/irregular breathing, dizziness • Muscle tightness
Emotional Indicators	• Feeling guilty, angry, depressed, uncertain
Behavioural Indicators	• Procrastination and avoidance • Excessive study • Over/Under eating; poor nutrition • Sleeping too much or too little • Fatigue or inability to relax • Alcohol or drug misuse
Cognitive Indicators	• Negative self-talk • Excessive worry • Difficulty concentrating • Difficulty organizing, integrating or expressing your thoughts • Going blank on exam questions

Some things that can increase exam anxiety are:

Insufficient Exam Preparation	• Cramming the night before the exam • Inadequate time management • Poor study habits
Worrying About...	• Past exam performance • Negative consequences of poor performance • How others are doing on the exam compared to you
Stimulant Use	• Caffeine • Nicotine • Amphetamines

If the anxiety is severe, persistent, or generalized beyond exam situations, you may benefit from seeing a physician or counsellor.

Medical conditions like hyperthyroidism, hypothyroidism, vitamin B12 deficiency, or hypoglycemia can increase anxiety levels if left untreated. College and University health centers have counsellors available to help students who wish to build strategies for managing exam anxiety.

In the weeks before the exam:

Study Habits	• Study throughout the semester to avoid last minute cramming • Learn to concentrate on the material you are studying • Generate questions from textbooks and lecture notes • Focus on key words, concepts and examples • Make charts and outlines to organize information • Take short breaks while studying • Learn and practice good time management habits • Avoid procrastinating
Healthy Living	• Practice good nutrition and maintain regular exercise • Create a balanced schedule that includes breaks, exercise, and social activity • Sleep well • Set realistic study goals

[Source: information modified from Simon Fraser University's "Overcoming Exam Anxiety" handout]

Work Sheet

Task 1: List the behavioural indicators of exam anxiety.

Answer:

Task 2: Think about the physical, emotional, behavioural, or cognitive indicators of anxiety you have experienced. How can understanding your own experiences of exam anxiety help you in the future?

Answer:

Task 3: Explain why it would be important to know if anxiety is caused by a medical condition.

Answer:

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Task 4: List three (3) specific things you could do to support healthy living in the weeks before an exam. Think about what examples like “regular nutrition” “taking breaks” and “sleeping well” look like for you.

Answer:
