

10 tips for anxious students

Last month, Anxiety UK launched a student guide to anxiety. Here are Anxiety UK and Dr Rudkin's top 10 self-help tips:

1. If you feel yourself start to panic, tell yourself: don't panic; you can do this. **Self-talk** can reduce anxiety.
2. Work on controlling your breathing. Try breathing in through your nose for four seconds, holding for two seconds, then breathing out through your mouth for six seconds.
3. If you find large busy lecture rooms a problem, start by sitting near the exit. Record lectures so you can listen back to any bits you missed.
4. Break coursework and essays into small chunks. This takes a bit of planning and means not leaving it all to the last minute, but it staves off anxiety.
5. Most research into young people's attention spans suggests a limit of 40 minutes, so work in half-hour chunks with short breaks between for a drink or a breath of fresh air.
6. Procrastination can be the anxious person's biggest enemy. Convince yourself to work for just five minutes. Once you've started you may be able to keep going. If not, at least you have achieved five minutes of work.
7. Be kind to yourself – but disciplined. It is easy to become your own worst enemy. Accept that things are tough right now and think about how you can work with your brain to make things happen.
8. Moderate your caffeine and alcohol intake. Excessive caffeine increases symptoms of anxiety and although alcohol is a relaxant it may not help the next day.
9. Remember you are not alone. Everyone else may look as if they are coping fine but many of them are struggling too. Talk to people.
10. Follow a healthy routine of eating, sleeping and exercise. Even 30 minutes walking a day can reduce anxiety. Disrupted sleeping and eating are classic accompaniments to anxiety and can create a vicious cycle. If this is happening, seek help.

Source: Rix, Julie. "How Anxiety Scrambles Your Brain and Makes It Hard to Learn: Levels of Stress and Anxiety are on the Rise among Students." The Guardian. November 21, 2015. http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/nov/21/how-anxiety-scrambles-your-brain-and-makes-it-hard-to-learn?CMP=fb_gu