

How anxiety affects your studies

Studying can be challenging when you live with anxiety. Your body is hard-wired to fight or flee from threats (real-life threats or threats to your sense of self) on campus, and can significantly impact on your wellbeing, performance, and quality of life. In this tipsheet we dive into the ways in which anxiety affects your studies.

FIGHT

- Study excessively to avoid failure.
- Focus all your efforts on studying and stop doing those things vital for wellbeing and performance - sleep, exercise, nutrition, and downtime.

THE STUDY THREATS

"This assignment has to be perfect!"
"What if I fail?"

FLIGHT

- Procrastinate.
- Avoid classes that may trigger anxiety (e.g. classes with participation marks)
- Avoid studying for fear of being overwhelmed by how much there is to be done.

FIGHT

- Practise and rehearse exactly what to say, being extra extroverted.
- Over-prepare for tutorials
- Over-prepare for interactions, down to having detailed scripts.

THE SOCIAL THREATS

"What if I make a mistake while talking in front of the class?"

FLIGHT

- Avoid all social events
- Attend social events but avoid in more subtle ways including using alcohol to cope, hiding behind more outgoing friends, or adopting a more sociable alter ego.

FIGHT

- Engaging in restrictive budgeting so you only spend on the absolute essentials.
- Over-prepare for everything in life so that you don't feel 'thrown' by unexpected events.

'STUDENT LIFE' THREATS

"How can I afford rent/food/socialising?!"
"How do I stop feeling so overwhelmed?!"

FLIGHT

- Avoid looking at your bank balance and instead get some retail therapy.
- Purposefully avoid budgeting even though you know that will help ease anxiety.

FIGHT

- Going all-in to the extreme.
- Adopt an identity (that you might not be sure about) but go 'all-in' to make it fit.

THE IDENTITY THREATS

"What if I'm not good enough?"
"Who am I?"

FLIGHT

- Avoid thinking about it altogether.
- Avoid speaking up and interacting with others.
- Being a chameleon, moulding your likes and interests to whomever you're with.



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