



Creating a Positive Headspace for Exam Success during COVID-19

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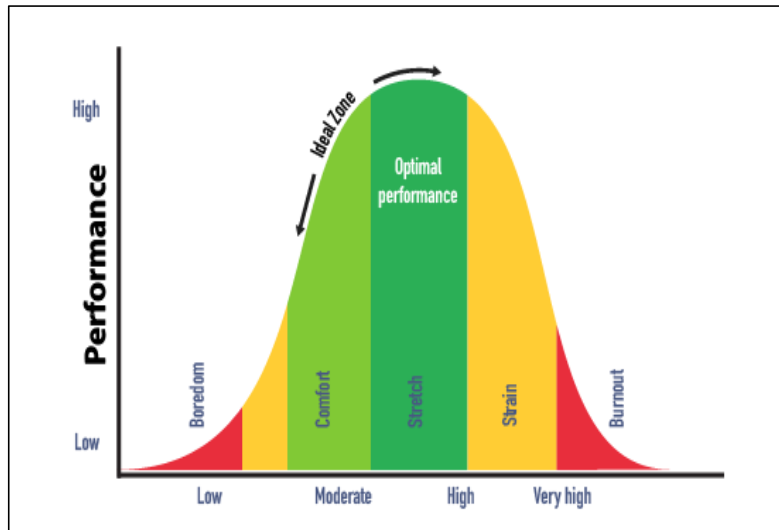
Exams and COVID-19

You can use the same strategies for exams that you have used in the past.

You may have to alter them slightly:

1. To suit home exams as opposed to those used for in Allard exams, and,
2. To match the level of stress you feel from COVID and resultant course/exam changes.

Emotions and Performance

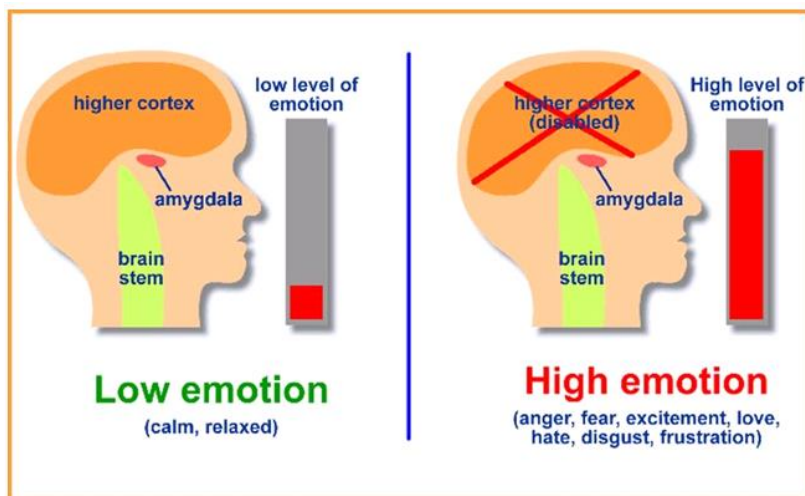


You will be feeling lots of emotions and strong reactions during COVID which exacerbate your exam stress. These emotions can impact your performance.

Any emotion produces the same response in the body. Notice this is “good” and “bad” emotions – same response in the brain and body. Our brain attributes good and bad - distress or eustress. In moderation stress is not a bad thing. It increases motivation and productivity. But prolonged, excessive or cumulative stress can lead to burnout.

- Too little stress = ‘rusting out’, boredom, apathy and fatigue.
- Optimal stress = high productivity, alertness, concentration, excitement, enthusiasm.
- Too much stress = ‘burning out’, decrease in productivity, health, emotional, psychological problems.

Emotions and the Brain



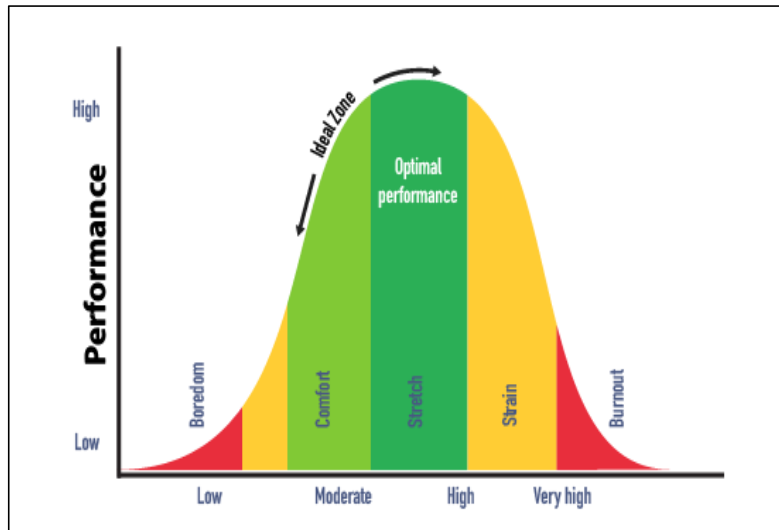
Why does emotions impact performance – what happens in our brain?

- Too much stress (high emotions) cause us to go into code red (stress response - fight/flight/freeze) and functions necessary for survival are optimized, and our higher cortex (where all your law information is stored) is disabled as its not needed for survival.

Do you have difficulty remembering things when you are stressed? Find yourself in front of the cupboard and wonder what you came to get. Stare at the computer screen with no recollection of what you are working on... That's because your cortex is shut down..... Lots of these pieces of information are not required for survival.... The knowledge of law is not required to fight a bear.

This response is triggered at times like COVID-19.

Regulating stress



Now we know what happens to us, how do we intervene?

We need to reduce stress to stay in the optimum level, the “ideal zone” and have an alert cortex where we can access our law information.

So, how do we reduce stress?

Regulating Stress

Cognitive - Brain based

- Affirmations
- Reframing
- Thought stopping
- Mindfulness

Relaxation - Body based

- Breathing: deep, toe, color visualization, windmill
- Quick Progressive Muscle relaxation

Preparation - Behaviour based

- Sleep, diet, etc
- Study plan
- Exam plan



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Also see the Allard Student Services fb page for daily stress management tips during We love law students week
<https://www.facebook.com/allardlawstudentservices/>

Regulating stress: Cognitive - Brain based

- **Reframing** “I can’t do this” to “I can do this even though its unusual circumstances”
- **Affirmations** “I have studied, I have knowledge, and I am on my path to be a lawyer”
- **Thought stopping** “stop thinking of COVID right now, I can think about that after the exam”
- **Mindfulness** “I am in my room where I can see my computer”

Focus on exams for now and not COVID –

- **Be aware of your purpose for attending law school and your hopes for the future**
- **Remember what you are able to control and not control**
 - **You can not control COVID or the fact that you have take home exams**
 - **You can control your response and stress and you can focus on studying**

Regulating stress: Relaxation - Body based

- Deep breathing
- Quick Progressive Muscle relaxation
- Combination: toe breathing

Deep Breathing (turns off stress response)

Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to push the air down deep into your tummy.

Concentrate on moving your tummy and keeping your chest still. Focus on the sound and feel of your breathing...in.....out....in.....out.....in through your nose.....push the air deep into your tummy.....then breathe out through your mouth.....in and out.....in and out.

Quick Progressive Muscle Relaxation (relaxes the body)

Shoulders: Push your shoulders back and down.....tighten the muscles.... hold..... feel the tension and then release. Let your shoulders return to their usual position.....feel the relaxation. Repeat as needed.

Hands: Tighten your hands into fists....very, very tight... as if you are squeezing a rubber ball tightly in each hand.... hold... feel the tension..... and then release. Shake your hands gently, shaking out the tension.....feel the relaxation. Repeat as needed.

Jaw: Tightly close your mouth, clamping your jaw shut, very tightly....your lips will also be tight and tense across the front of your teeth....hold....feel the tension in your jaws..... and then release. Wiggle your jaw....feel the relaxation. Repeat as needed.

Toe Breathing (combines breathing and PMR)

Breathe in through your nose.

Visualise the air moving down your body all the way to your toes.

Use the air to push your toes into the ground. Feel the tension...hold.

Release your toes.

Pull the air back up your body and breathe out.

Repeat

Regulating stress: Preparation – Behaviour based

- Sleep, diet, etc
- Study and exam schedule
- Study
- Complete assignments
- Complete CANs

Actually do the work 😊

Scheduling

24	25 MARCH 2019	26 create study plan + exam script	27 class prep study area	28 class prep study area	29 class RELAX	30 prep E1 Relax prep E2 Relax
31 prep E3 Relax prep E4 Relax	(*)	"I am anxious but I can do this" "Take a breath and release my brain ☺"		(*)		
Sup	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
APRIL 2019	1 class prep? Relax	2 class prep? Relax	3 class prep? Relax	4 class prep? Relax	5 RELAX Study E2 Relax	6 Study E2 Relax
7 Study E1 Relax	8 Study E1 Relax	9 EXAM 1 Relax	10 Study E2 Relax	11 EXAM 2 Relax	12 Study E3 Relax	13 Study E3 Relax
14 Study E3 Relax	15 EXAM 3 Relax	16 REST DAY	17 prep E4 Relax	18 Study E4 Relax	19 Study E4 Relax	20 REST DAY
21 REST DAY	22 Study E4 Relax	23 Study E4 Relax	24 EXAM 4 Celebrate	25 Recovery	26 →	27 →
28 →	29 →	30 →	"I want to help others self actualise" "I want to self actualise"			

On your study/exam schedule, place:

- Your academic tasks
- Your stress regulation tasks
- Your purpose
- Your affirmations

Stress Regulation Strategies

To create the best headspace I will:

- Breathe
- Affirm “I studied and I will do the best I can, and my best starts with a clear brain”
- Focus on my exam and not the COVID right now

Be proactive, it builds resilience



When you have decided upon which strategies work for you, make them into a poster, and put this above your desk where you will take the exam. Being proactive means that you practice these strategies even when you do not feel stressed. This builds your resilience to cope.

Questions?



Email Anna Kline, Student Wellbeing Counsellor
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GOOD LUCK!!!!!!