

Tips for Learning with Mental Health Issues

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Consider these struggles that may impact your learning and their related strategies;

1. **Inability to screen out external stimuli such as sounds, sights, smells**
 - ✓ *Try This:* Move away from the air conditioner. Sit near the front of the class. Practice the “Tunnel Vision” exercise below (see number 10).
2. **Struggling to concentrate:** Feeling fidgety, short attention span and difficulty remembering verbal directions, trouble focusing on one assignment long enough to complete it.
 - ✓ *Try This:* Chunk large projects into smaller parts. Take a break when each part is completed. This will help you to stay motivated, knowing that a break is coming upon completion of the task.
3. **Retaining and retrieving:** Processing large amounts of information can be overwhelming.
 - ✓ *Try This:* OVER-LEARN the material. Use a memory strategy with instant feedback, use self-made or end of chapter quizzes. Correct previous test/assignment errors. Preview lecture material before class. **Review class notes ASAP!** We forget 80% of what we hear within 1 hour of hearing it!

Ask your counselor for a worksheet to help you get started managing your time.

4. Develop and use a schedule, plan for the week and break it down to daily items. Your schedule should be **very specific. Carry it with you everywhere!**
5. Learn to prioritize and purpose to **not** procrastinate! Procrastination will lead to stress and anxiety.
6. Precise note taking is crucial. Find a notetaking system that helps to format and organize your notes. **Make use of note-takers and recording devices** to help you focus more on the lecture in class.
7. Plan for Breaks! At work you get breaks. College learning is work! Take 10-15 minute breaks while studying but to **SET AN ALARM** to remind you to get back to studying after break time is over. The general rule is; for every one hour spent in class the student should spend 2 hours studying.

Practice these concentration/study techniques to see which one(s) work best for you:

8. **EAT FROGS!** Start each study session with the least appetizing, most difficult, subject or assignment.
9. **GET CENTERED:** Control the things you can when you sit down to study. Clear your mind of distractions that can disrupt productivity. When thoughts distract you, practice telling yourself silently to “STOP!” Turn off all devices – put up a “silence” sign, tell yourself to “Be Here NOW!”
10. **TUNNEL VISION:** While at home or someplace outside of school, practice tunnel vision by focusing on one thing while people move around you.
 - ✓ *Try This:* When having a conversation with someone, practice keeping your attention on that person (you might want to tell them ahead of time so they don’t feel weird)... look at her face, and note what is being said. Let the rest of the world just be "out there."

Recall this practice when in the classroom or while studying. Say to yourself – “Let them be out there.”

Your DSPS team is here to help you overcome the hurdles and challenges of learning with Mental Health Challenges. We can also help you to **turn your differences into strengths.**

