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## MANAGING EMOTIONS TO SUCCEED IN UNIVERSITY STUDY

**When we study and face an exam we experience emotions. What is their real purpose and what role do they play during the study process? Is it important to learn how to recognize and manage emotional states and the negative effects they could have on academic learning?**

The lessons have already started... and what about studying? "I'm going to study!! What an interesting class/lesson!/? It's a "challenge" to understand this topic!" or "I don't want to study!/? What a boring class/lesson/topic!! It's too complicated for me!!". Academic learning requires learning strategies... but that's not enough!... we have to consider our beliefs (I'll do it! I won't do it!) and our feelings (before and during learning!).

**We can experience different emotions during different steps of the learning process (first, when we understand, elaborate and memorize the topic, when we face the exam, after the exam, while we wait for the result and after receiving it):**

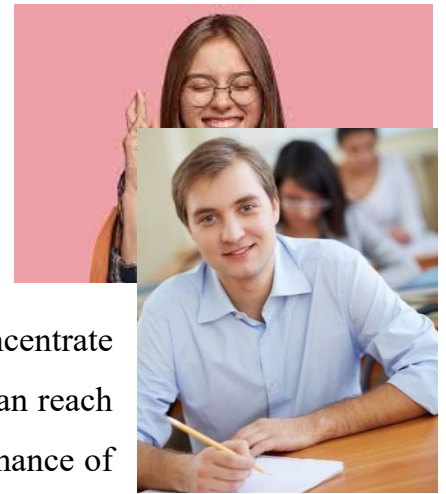
- **While learning**, that means reviewing notes, reading the textbook, integrating information to better understand and memorizing. One can experience different emotions, such as enthusiasm ("I love this subject! It's a pleasure to study it!") or boredom ("This subject is too difficult! I'm bored when I study because I don't understand anything!"). Being bored while studying (you feel like dozing off or thinking about something else) is not necessarily a bad thing,



because it can spur you to find a more effective learning strategy; for example, you could study with your friends or use videos that explain the topic more clearly.

Try to monitor your emotions by reflecting on how they may affect your learning process while studying and what strategies you can implement to overcome difficulties, to make studying more engaging.

● **Before the exam** it is possible to experience emotions such as anxiety. We can recognize it because we can't react or do nothing (*"I'm afraid I won't pass the exam and have to postpone my degree!"*), we can also experience palpitations, shortness of breath, nausea. You should remember it is possible to experience emotions such as anxiety. We can recognize it because we don't feel able to react or do nothing (*"I'm afraid I won't pass the exam and have to postpone my degree!"*), we can also experience palpitations, shortness of breath, nausea. You should remember that anxiety is characterized by an increase of arousal (physiological activation) and, within certain levels, can help us concentrate better and stay focused on the goal. On the other hand, sometimes, it can reach such a level that we can no longer manage it and it disrupts the performance of the task.

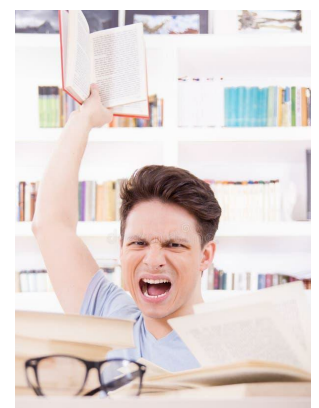


You can also feel "challenged". You can recognize this emotional state when you feel able to face your task even if it is difficult (*"I want to do it and get a good result, even if it is difficult!"*), you also feel strong and full of energy to achieve your goal.

As the exam date approaches, let's pay attention to the emotions you experience and how these are supporting or hindering you;

● **While having an exam,** you can experience different emotions, such as anger (*"I was sure I remembered this topic and now I don't; I'd like to break the desk"*) or engagement (*"I'm facing the task, I can do it!!"*). Learning to recognize your emotional state can facilitate emotional self-regulation, you can also learn how to develop more useful thoughts and behaviors that help you accomplish the task.

Try identifying your thoughts and how they influence your emotions, try to discriminate the irrational ones, i.e. thoughts not based on real facts such as *"everything always goes*



*wrong for me*", and try to replace them with a more useful thought that can help you during the task, such as *"Sometimes I fail in these kind of exams"*;

- **While waiting for the result of your exam**, you can experience hope (*"Let's hope it went well"*) or hopelessness (*"I feel I won't pass it"*). Just because the exam was difficult, it doesn't mean it is impossible to pass. Resize your expectations in order to reduce the level of unpleasant emotions before the outcome!;

- **When you get the result**, you can feel joy and satisfaction (*"I worked hard and I got the result I hoped for! I'm really happy!"*), if it corresponds to your expectations; or sadness (*"I'm so sorry I didn't pass the exam despite my efforts!"*), if you passed it but not with the result you expected or if you didn't pass it.

The emotions you feel at the end of the exam will influence how you'll approach learning and studying a different topic.



### **Remember:**

- In each step of the learning process, you can experience different emotions, sometimes the same but with different intensity.
- It is important to recognize, monitor and know how to self-manage your emotional state.
- Reflecting on personal thoughts and behaviors is useful to find the most functional strategy to stay motivated
- Effective strategies and study methods are not enough, it is also important to learn how to recognize and self-regulate emotions, during the different study phases.



To learn/know more:

Ben-Eliyahu, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13598139.2019.1568828>

Moé, 2021, <https://www.laterza.it/scheda-libro/?isbn=9788842096221>