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Interpersonal Communication

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Stress No More: Emily Armstrong Final

For my final project, I wanted to focus on test anxiety in college students and ways to ease that anxiety. For the majority of my education so far I have had major test anxiety, this year however I was able to find ways that helped me in destressing. I wanted to do further research to learn more about test anxiety and how to manage it. Throughout my research I wanted my audience to be college students who experience test-taking with all the heavily weighted exams they take in order to show professor their understanding of the material

According to the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, test anxiety is defined as a combination of physical symptoms and emotional reactions that interfere with your ability to perform well on tests. Test anxiety can look different from person to person so it is important to look at symptoms physical, emotional, behavioral, or cognitive. Symptoms can include headaches, nausea, helplessness, difficulty concentrating, and procrastination.

In another source published in 2021 called *How To Overcome Test Anxiety in College*, it talks about understanding test anxiety. Leading up to an exam or test it is common to feel nervous or worried. However, when these feelings impact a student's performance and would rather avoid taking the test simply to avoid discomfort this is when there is a problem.

My resource in helping overcome as well as coping with test anxiety was by creating an Instagram account. I chose Instagram as my platform because the majority of college students are on social media and use it as a central location to receive information. On this Instagram I would post about strategies in helping destress, links to meditation to help get students relaxed

before the test, and encouraging words of motivation. After creating the Instagram account I came up with the idea of doing an Instagram story daily reminder. These stories were created as a fast way to let students have motivation without having to view the whole Instagram account. During finals week I put this account into action and posted all throughout the week to get a feel for how the idea would look visually. The account name for Instagram was @stress_nomore_ I felt it was short and sweet and when looking to find ways to manage stress it would come up. After searching it would let the follower know in the bio that the account was particularly focused in test anxiety. My audience was aimed toward college students, this I felt was the best choice because college students are under a lot of pressure to perform well and also have to take many exams in order to pass in classes. College students who struggle with test anxiety are given limited resources and I feel that they could all benefit from it. Being able to easily obtain coping mechanisms for test anxiety simply by checking your social media would be something I think lots of college students would be interested in.

To find resources about test anxiety I wanted to find out how many students experiencing test anxiety were academically affected. In a journal I found published by the bulletin of education and research called *The Relationship Between Test Anxiety and Academic Performance*. In this article they performed a survey in order to create a sample of the data collection. After receiving the results of their study they found that test anxiety had a significant impact on students performance. The article also drew attention to the fact that it is possible to help students to prevent going into a negative thinking cycle and letting test anxiety affect them academically.

Ways the article said could help was helping students stay motivated without constantly reminding them what consequences may arise if they fail the upcoming test. This aligns with my

Instagram idea because the daily reminder serve as a source of motivation while leaving behind all the negative thoughts around failure. This article lead closely with what I thought the results would be.

Another resource I came across was an international journal "*Anxiety, Stress, and Coping*." I looked in to this journal in particular because it had a specific section entitled *Dimensions of Test Anxiety: Relations to Ways of Coping with Pre-Exam anxiety and Uncertainty*. In this particular section it discussed how there actually is four dimensions in the experience of test anxiety. These four dimensions include: worry, emotionality, interference and lack of confidence. To determine if these dimensions showed specific relationships with ways of coping they created a survey that they had 163 students participate in. In the study they were able to find out that test anxiety was related to seeking social support. They also discovered that the four dimensions were related to coping. In the article it discusses how worry emotionality, and interference all have in common that they are task-oriented/preparation. However, lack of confidence is the only dimension that is related to avoidance only.

At the end of the article it says how coping no matter what dimension is achievable. It is important though to figure out the correct dimension so that you are using the correct coping strategies. In my Instagram I feel that different forms of coping is achieved. This is shown through the different content posted, some content is motivational, others are inspirational, and some are even social. On Instagram it also has the feature allowing you to see who the account follow as well as who follows the account. This can be helpful to anyone struggling with the dimensions worry, emotionality, and interference because it allows them to interact with others who may have similar struggles and joined the account in finding ways to cope.

Overall, this project was very informative but also equally as interesting. With this week

being finals week I started my research early to help myself in finding ways I could cope through my own test anxiety. It felt funny creating the Instagram photos posted later on because I was telling others struggling with test anxiety not to stress and that the test they were about to take would not mean game over even if they failed. When in reality I was doing the same thing. So I began to take all the advice I had found from my sources as well as my peer reviewed articles and determine if they actually would be successful. What I found was that the constant reminders helped me tremendously and that I was lacking a lot of confidence when it came to putting my knowledge onto a test format. So I started to cope in ways the articles had said to and for the first time ever in taking a test I felt confident, prepared, and not stressed. Academically I preformed the best on that test compared to any other test I had taken for the class.

Being able to cope when struggling with test anxiety is important for college students. Through my Instagram account these struggling college students will be made aware that they deserve better and that a break up with test anxiety could not come fast enough. By breaking a negative thinking cycle and finding what coping dimension you fall under are only the first steps. Following my Instagram page will promote that students struggling will no longer let test anxiety affect their accedemics and can finally stress no more.

Work Cited

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