

Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal response to perceived danger or threat. Some students may find it difficult to identify the exact cause of their anxiety. If you are concerned about a student these guidelines may assist you to help. In most cases the techniques listed here will be appropriate. If you are unsure, contact an Ability Advisor for more information and support.

Areas of Challenge

The symptoms of anxiety may be experienced as a racing heart, palpitations, dizziness, sweating, trembling and cold, clammy hands. The student may experience difficulty concentrating, feeling 'on edge', indecisiveness, or being fearful of taking action. Some students experience panic attacks during which the symptoms of anxiety occur spontaneously and intensely to the extent that they feel they may be in danger or dying.

Useful Techniques

DO

- Let the student discuss their feelings and thoughts – this often relieves a great deal of pressure
- Provide reassurance
- If a student appears to be experiencing a very high level of anxiety/panic attack, be clear and directive. Ensure that the student is supported to find a safe and quiet environment until symptoms subside.

DON'T

- Minimize the perceived threat
- Take responsibility for the student's emotional state
- Overwhelm the student with ideas or information to solve the issue

Teaching Strategies

- Use consistency and routine wherever possible – for example, use a class calendar and display a daily routine for students to see. Consistency is very reassuring and allows students to anticipate changes and pressures.
- Do not single students out
- Adjust work expectations by allowing more time to complete assignments whenever possible
- Take concerns seriously and refer to a Mentor or Ability Advisor if you feel anxiety is limiting the student's ability to function

Useful Links

- Mental Health Foundation <http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/a-z/resource/5/anxiety>
- Anxiety New Zealand Trust <http://www.anxiety.org.nz/>
- Beyond Blue <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/anxiety>
- Engage Aotearoa <http://www.engagenz.co.nz/>

References:

Anxiety New Zealand Trust. (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.anxiety.org.nz/>

Beyond Blue. (2015). Supporting Someone. Retrieved from <http://www.beyondblue.org.au>