
Lesson 8

Nonacademic Skills: Personal

If students do not come to class emotionally ready to learn, chances are efficient learning will not happen. We have already covered mindset. The other three factors that tend to have the biggest negative impact on students' academic performance are anger, anxiety, and difficulty collaborating (Lawson, 2002). Help them understand and address these needs.



VITAL VOCAB

adrenaline: A hormone that is released in the body of a person who is feeling a strong emotion, such as excitement, fear, or anger, causing the heart to beat faster and giving the person a short-term boost in energy.

anger: A natural response to unexpected or disappointing circumstances. However, students who demonstrate consistent anger might be struggling with other feelings or emotions that should be addressed.

anxiety: A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome. Although some anxiety is natural, excessive anxiety can impede learning.

collaboration: Working with others to share ideas or make something. Collaboration skills are expected to improve with maturity and self-awareness.



TEACHER TAKEAWAYS

- When students act angry or are uncooperative, it might be their way of masking other emotions or challenges. Try to break through and understand the root cause of the anger.
- Although a little anxiety can be a good thing, too much anxiety impedes learning. Working memory, attention, and processing speed are often most impacted by anxiety (Eysenck, Derakshan, Santos, & Calvo, 2007).
- One key source of anxiety is when there is a mismatch between expectations for a student (from teachers, parents, or the student) and the student's abilities and achievement.
- Health management can play an important role in helping students manage anxiety and stress. Promoting healthy habits such as a good night's sleep, eating a balanced meal, and getting daily exercise can help.
- Collaboration is an important life skill. Give students opportunities to work in groups and manage the challenges, perhaps without a grade attached. Learning to work with students who have different styles and habits is important. Consider grouping students with different cognitive strengths and needs so they begin to appreciate that everyone thinks differently and how different approaches can be equally successful. Sometimes combining approaches results in the best outcomes.



STUDENT TAKEAWAYS

- Everyone feels anxious at times. Classmates who say they don't care or aren't nervous might very well be feeling anxious but do not want to admit it. You are not alone in feeling anxious or stressed.
- Anger and anxiety can interfere with learning. Certain strategies will help, some as easy as using a stress ball. Share your concerns with a trusted adult who can help you find the best supports.

- One major source of anxiety is fear, whether it is fear of the unknown or fear of making a mistake. Although it can be scary, the best way to overcome this type of anxiety is to jump in and try the task. The more you practice, the better you get and the less anxious you will be. Avoiding the task is only likely to make you more anxious.
- Many students do not enjoy group projects. Differing personalities and concerns about grades are just two of the reasons. However, group work is exactly the type of challenge you will face in the “real world.” Learning how to find common goals and interests and giving everyone the opportunity to actively participate will minimize conflicts and maximize performance.



MINDPRINT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS

- Self-Empathy (<https://my.mindprintlearning.com/toolbox/toolbox-demo/product/12528>) (T, S)
- Strategies to Reduce Anxiety (https://my.mindprintlearning.com/toolbox/toolbox-demo/search?name=&academic_topics=&cognitive_skills=2&interests=&product_types=3.10.11.12.13&age_range_min=3&age_range_max=21&order_by=bestfit_score+desc&uses_recommendations=&pills=cognitive_skills%7C2.&page=1) (T, S)
- Strategies to Develop Collaboration Skills (https://my.mindprintlearning.com/toolbox/toolbox-demo/search?name=&academic_topics=510&cognitive_skills=&interests=&product_types=10.3.11.12.13&age_range_min=3&age_range_max=21&order_by=bestfit_score+desc&uses_recommendations=&pills=academic_topics%7C510.&page=1) (T, S)



A CLOSER LOOK

- Games, Websites and Apps for Group Work; Mindprint Learning (https://my.mindprintlearning.com/toolbox/toolbox-demo/search?name=&academic_topics=510&cognitive_skills=&interests=135&product_types=1.2.4.5.6.7.8.9&age_range_min=3&age_range_max=21&order_by=bestfit_score+desc&uses_recommendations=&pills=interests%7C135.academic_topics%7C510)
- Wellness Apps; Mindprint Learning (https://my.mindprintlearning.com/toolbox/toolbox-demo/search?name=wellness&academic_topics=&cognitive_skills=&interests=.123&product_types=5.7.8.9&age_range_min=3&age_range_max=21&order_by=bestfit_score+desc&uses_recommendations=&pills=.interests%7C123)
- What Causes Mindblanks During Exams? The Advocate (www.theedadvocate.org/causes-mind-blanks-exams/)



LESSON ACTIVITIES

Direct Instruction

Understanding Personal Skills: Discuss the importance of personal skills. Use Figures 15-17. (E, M, H)

Teacher Background

All students, even those with the strongest academic performance, need to come to class ready to learn. Introduce the importance of personal skills in learning. Understanding strengths and difficulties in this area is as important for life success as understanding academic and cognitive skills.

Teacher-led Discussion

Personal skills include how we collaborate (cooperate) and communicate (listening, social language) with others. It also includes how we feel (happy,

sad, comfortable, anxious), how we approach work (mindset), how we make decisions, and our character traits. Give examples of each skill as you go through them. Encourage examples from students.

In the context of academic learning, the personal skills that tend to have the most impact on performance are growth mindset, anger, anxiety, and collaboration.

We are going to spend some time thinking about our feelings and what makes us anxious or frustrated.

What is anxiety?

How can some anxiety help our performance (adrenaline)?

How can anxiety interfere with our learning?

What are things we can do to help work through anxiety or frustration? Make a list with the class. What have you tried? What has helped? What have adults suggested? Refer to Mindprint Learning strategies to reduce anxiety (https://my.mindprintlearning.com/toolbox/uid/search?name=&academic_topics=&cognitive_skills=.2&interests=&product_types=3.10.11.12.13&age_range_min=3&age_range_max=21&order_by=bestfit_score+desc&uses_recommendations=&pills=.cognitive_skills%7C2).

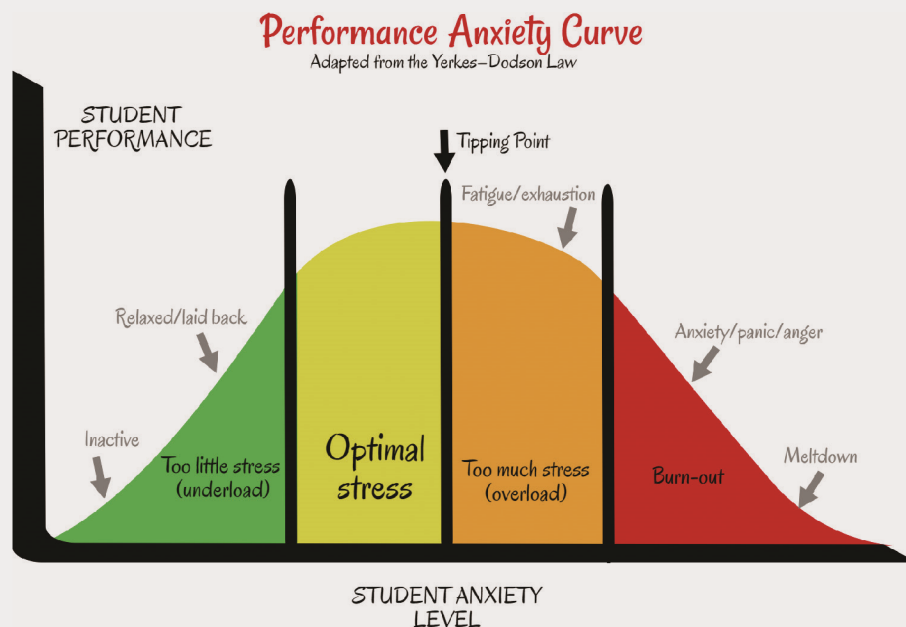


Figure 16: Performance anxiety curve

Share the Performance Anxiety graphic and explain the negative effects of anxiety and stress (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908). Although some level of stress is good to keep our minds energized and active, especially in time-sensitive situations like a test, too much stress can interfere with the mind's ability to think clearly and can impede performance. Discuss the importance of exercise, enough sleep, and good eating habits in reducing stress.

Student Activity

Throw Away Test Anxiety (<https://my.mindprintlearning.com/toolbox/toolbox-demo/product/1997>): Have students write their fears before a big test and "throw them away." (E, M, H)

Student Activity

Collaboration Skills (https://my.mindprintlearning.com/toolbox/toolbox-demo/search?name=&academic_topics=510&cognitive_skills=&interests=&product_types=12&age_range_min=3&age_range_max=21&order_by=bestfit_score+-desc&uses_recommendations=&pills=academic_topics%7C510.&page=2): Using the Mindprint Learning website, ask students to print out and read the Group Work strategy for their strongest and weakest skills. Add strategies to their Personalized Learning Plans or folders. (M, H)

Student Activity

Group Reflection: After a group project, have students individually reflect on the group's performance. Have the students fill out the sheet independently, perhaps at home. If appropriate, have the group reconvene and discuss their reflections. (E, M, H)

Coaching

Mental Health Breaks: Incorporate stretching, movement, and mindfulness into daily classroom routines. (E, M, H)

Coaching

Student Groupings: Take a deliberate approach to your student groupings. Consider when you want to group students with similar strengths or similar needs. At other times, consider grouping students with dissimilar skills so they grow to appreciate the strengths and needs of others.

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

Group Reflection

Name: _____

Reflect on what went well in your group and what you wish had gone better. Do not use other students' names in your reflection.

What was your favorite part of working in this group?

Do you think this group exceeded the performance of what you could have done independently? Why or why not?

What are specific areas where this group could have done better?

If you were the group's coach or leader, what would you suggest they do differently on the next project?