

## Managing Anxiety

Medical students often face challenging situations – during campus learning, the clinical workplace, in preparation for and during assessments, or managing multiple demands. Sometimes these situations can provoke anxiety in a way that stops us from performing to the best of our ability. It's also possible to feel anxious more generally, rather than just in response to an event or a one-off performance based situations. This is more than just feeling stressed. Signs that anxiety is impacting you could be; feeling worried a lot of the time, finding it difficult to calm down, and/or avoiding situations that make the anxiety worse.

If you think you might be experiencing performance based anxiety or anxiety more generally, please read on.

The following list suggests a range of resources to help you identify support systems that may help you to reduce and/or manage your anxiety. We encourage you to select one or more of these that you feel might be both useful and achievable.

- (1) You could seek psychological support from the University Health and Counselling (UHCS) service if in Auckland (please note they offer at least one late night per week, so if you are on clinical placement, this might be more achievable for you). If you are out of Auckland, there are psychological services arranged at each site. Please see the 'Where To Get Help' documents on the portal in order to identify how to access these services in your area.
- (2) You could see your local GP, particularly if anxiety seems to be influencing other aspects of your life. If you are at an out-of-Auckland site, you could speak with your site coordinator to find out practice recommendations in the area.
- (3) You could check out the self-help resources listed on [this](#) UoA Student Health and Counselling website for helping to manage anxiety.
- (4) Look up the [Anxiety Trust NZ](#). They have a range of services including support groups, courses, and a free 24/7 helpline (0800 ANXIETY or 0800 269 4389).
- (5) You could do an online course on managing anxiety. We recommend [this](#) free online course called "Mindfulness For Peak Performance" run by lecturers at Monash University. There is also another course you can do on a smart phone led by [Dr Bob Stahl](#). To access this course, download the app "[Meditation&Me](#)", select the course called "A Mindful Way Through Anxiety", and unlock the programme. It costs \$7.49 and is an in-app purchase. There are also other mindfulness courses around, which you can do in person (however they usually involve a larger fee). For example, "Mindfulness Auckland" teaches the "Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction" (MBSR) programme, which has been shown to benefit a range of psychological and physical health conditions, including reducing anxiety. There are also other teachers of the MBSR around the country.
- (6) On the topic of apps, you might like to check out [this](#) website, which lists the top 5 anxiety apps of 2017 based on user reviews and scientific literature.
- (7) You could also check out [Toastmasters](#), a community group around NZ that runs courses for individuals who seek to grow their public speaking skills and confidence.
- (8) Find out whether there are practice OSCE sessions you can attend. If you are tagged to a Clinical Medical Education Fellow, they might be able to practice OSCEs with you, or, if you are an international or MAPAS student, please speak with your Student Support Advisor

about practice OSCEs. Alternatively, you might find a friend or senior student to practice with.

- (9) Finally, perfectionism and anxiety often go hand in hand. If it is the case that you often set somewhat unrealistic and demanding goals for yourself (which only serves to increase your anxiety), you may find resources that foster self-compassion helpful. Indeed, self-compassion is a great antidote to perfectionism. I recommend checking [out Dr Kristin Neff's website](#) for information, practices and meditations on self-compassion. I also highly recommend the book: "The Gifts of Imperfection" by Brene Brown, PhD.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with your Student Support Advisor for help accessing or finding services (including determining which the most appropriate services for you are) and brief psychological help.