

15 POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

45 STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THEM

SELF-MANAGING YOUR SUCCESS

By its nature, distance learning represents a challenge. Consequently, we have designed these flashcards to help you develop, consolidate, and perfect certain learning strategies so that you can manage your own success.

In our efforts to innovate based on an educational support model usually intended for face-to-face instruction, we believe that the context of distance learning can serve self-reflection in learners who are experiencing difficulties; even further develop metacognition. We hope these flashcards will enable you to persevere and ultimately to succeed, despite the obstacles you will encounter.

CONCENTRATION

- Procrastination
- Time Management
- Stress Management
- Motivation
- Reading
- Studying
- Writing
- Isolation
- Self-Esteem
- Taking Exams
- Balance
- Problem Solving
- Organization
- Perseverance



THE CHALLENGE: CONCENTRATION

DESPITE ALL THE DISTRACTIONS, STAY FOCUSED



Strategy

CHOOSE AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCTIVE TO INTELLECTUAL WORK

- Where there is good lighting and where the furniture is both comfortable and suitable
- Where the materials you need are within your reach
- That is free of any distractions

For some students, an isolated, quiet environment – such as an office or a bedroom – is more conducive to school work, while for others, a lively, noisy environment – such as the living room or the dining room – is much more motivating and inspiring. Experiment to see which environment works best for you.



Strategy

CREATE WORK RITUALS

- By taking into account your sleep/wake cycle
- By scheduling the same time every day to carry out school work
- By starting the selected task as quickly as possible after you are settled into your workspace

The main function of rituals is to give a feeling of security and emotional reassurance; knowing the procedure in advance gives you some power over what you are preparing to learn.



Strategy

CLEAR YOUR MIND OF PARASITIC THOUGHTS

- Take note of and then set aside thoughts about problems you may be experiencing
- Reassure yourself by telling yourself that there is nothing you can do to resolve the problem at the moment, but that you will definitely deal with it later
- Do not try to block your thoughts; they will only increase in intensity. Instead, let them circulate freely in your mind so that they come and go quickly

Parasitic thoughts work like this: think about them for a moment and nothing happens; think about them a little longer and they start to bother you to the point where you can no longer function effectively.

THE CHALLENGE: ORGANIZATION

GET ORGANIZED



Strategy

ORGANIZE ALL THE MATERIALS YOU WILL NEED IN ADVANCE

- Place all the documents or notes for the same course in either an electronic file or in a binder
- Regularly clean the files, reclassifying some documents and eliminating unnecessary ones
- Make a list of materials you will need to perform any given task in your paper or electronic agenda

We tend underestimate the time we really take to get down to work, and yet those first few minutes are crucial to motivating us to accomplish the task at hand.



Strategy

USE CHECKLISTS AND TO-DO LISTS

- Regularly check your list of the things you have to do, and check off the items that are finished
- Post your to-do list in a strategic location (e.g., on the fridge)
- Personalize your lists

Thoughts are constantly running through our heads, and a day or evening can get away from us when we haven't written them down anywhere. To-do lists are a flexible, fast, and accurate solution, enabling you to adjust your actions to your timeframe.



Strategy

USE COLOUR CODING

- To find things faster in your agenda, course notes, and textbooks
- To distinguish between important elements and secondary elements
- To categorize information (e.g., everything blue colour-coded is ..., everything green colour-coded is...)

The principle is to reduce the volume of information, to memorize only essentials, not details, and to tie information to visual indicators.

THE CHALLENGE: MOTIVATION

STAY MOTIVATED FROM START TO FINISH



Strategy

PLAN. SET REALISTIC OBJECTIVES FOR YOURSELF

- Break down your tasks into smaller parts
- Reward yourself when you reach your goal (rewards should match the effort and time required for the task)
- Set short- and medium-term objectives. It's more encouraging

Objectives encourage you to focus energy and effort, to measure your progress, and, ultimately, to achieve meaningful results.



Strategy

BE CONFIDENT IN YOUR ABILITIES AND REMEMBER YOUR SUCCESSES

- Maintain positive self-talk (e.g., "I already did a similar project with good results.")
- Look at mistakes and failures as opportunities to learn and to change the way you do things
- Having more difficulty means that you have to make a more concerted effort. Remember, "Practice makes perfect."

For the learner, remembering successes is as important to achieving success as the actual ability to succeed. These memories encourage effort, perseverance and a greater use of one's abilities.



Strategy

GIVE MEANING TO YOUR LEARNING

- "This assignment will enable me to see concrete applications of the concepts studied in the course."
- Determine the causes that explain why you find a task or a course frustrating so you can fix the problem
- Try to make the academic task pleasant (e.g., choose a topic that interests you)

Engaging in a project that you can relate to and over which you have some control will enable you to find meaning in the resulting learning.

THE CHALLENGE: SELF-ESTEEM

OVERCOME YOUR DOUBTS



Strategy

IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS, WRITE THEM DOWN, AND, IF NECESSARY, REREAD THEM

- When you have to carry out a more complex task or learn something new, reflect on your past successes
- Take the time to acknowledge your successes (good result, end of a project, etc.)
- Consult with people who know you well and ask them what they like about you

Your strengths are like superpowers that you can activate and rely on in any circumstance. The more you nurture your strengths, the greater your self-confidence and motivation will be. Knowing your strengths is the basis of all success.



Strategy

AVOID THE PITFALLS OF COMPARISON

- Be kind to yourself; what matters is your progress, not anyone else's
- Acknowledge efforts, not just results
- Tell yourself that each path is unique, and that a path with many obstacles is often more worthwhile

Your limits must be within you, not outside of you, because you are the person who sets them. You are the master of your self-esteem and of your progress. Excellence is defined by your ambitions, not by your environment.



Strategy

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH POSITIVE PEOPLE YOU CAN COUNT ON

- Mutual support of your respective strengths and weaknesses promotes personal development
- Hearing positive talk has a ripple effect
- Change your perception: try to see your difficulties as challenges to be met

Recreation and leisure activities are positive actions and choices that enable you to rebuild, repair and refresh your body and mind. Their personal, social and economic benefits are the essence of a healthy community and individual well-being.

THE CHALLENGE: ISOLATION

BREAK ISOLATION – IT *IS* POSSIBLE



Strategy

PUT LEISURE ON YOUR AGENDA

- It is important to recharge your batteries. Working or studying too much actually makes people less productive
- Taking a break from work often enables you to find new inspiration
- Leisure time slots could also be used for school tasks when you are stuck; in a way they are your safety net

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Strategy

DO NOT HESITATE TO USE THE AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- The teachers and staff at your cegep are available to listen to your needs and advise you
- Some teachers provide their students with a blog and discussion forum. Use them
- Do not hesitate to contact your student association. They offer services and activities in these times of lockdown

Identifying and using the resources in your environment (school, social, family, etc.) provides benefits for individual development, and has a positive effect on your perception of your competencies compared with those of others; on the attribution of the causes of success or failure; and on self-esteem.



Strategy

GET INVOLVED AND BE AN ACTIVE CITIZEN

- Create a (personal, professional) contact network
- Develop new fields of competency and interest; who knows where they could lead you?
- It is well known that giving boosts your happiness index

When you join a group (even a virtual one) whose activity means something to you, chances are it will bring out the best in you. And when you have fun, you feel connected to others because you have something in common with them.

THE CHALLENGE: PROCRASTINATION

SNEAKY WAYS TO BEAT PROCRASTINATION



Strategy

PLACE THE STUDY OR ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS IN PLAIN SIGHT

- With visual reminders, you can't ignore the tasks to be done
- Start work within 30 seconds; don't give yourself time to think of excuses
- Prepare in advance (e.g., the evening before) to make sure that you have everything you need to do your assignments

By organizing your time, space, and materials, you set yourself up for getting right to the work, and you minimize wasted time.



Strategy

IMAGINE WHAT THE ASSIGNMENT WILL LOOK LIKE WHEN COMPLETED

- Visualization can spur you on when you lack motivation. Top athletes use it. Picture every step you must take to finish the task
- Consult any examples that have been given; these will guide you and provide inspiration
- Make a diagram or a table containing all the ideas that you want to develop

Visualization has proven to be highly effective in driving successful action. By using your imagination, you will build confidence in your ability to succeed and you will improve your writing.



Strategy

REREAD THE INSTRUCTIONS AND, IF NECESSARY, ASK FOR HELP TO CLARIFY THEM

- When you know what is expected, you feel a sense of control, and your stress level drops, so check your understanding of each word
- If you are overwhelmed by an assignment, divide it into smaller tasks
- If possible, validate your understanding with other students or your teacher

In learning objectives, instructional words are associated with the evaluation objectives and indicate the level of understanding required by students for each element of the content.

THE CHALLENGE: STRESS MANAGEMENT

TAME STRESS



Strategy

IDENTIFY AND ACT ON ANXIETY-PROVOKING ELEMENTS

- Ask yourself what you can do to alleviate the “stressor” and assess the consequences
- Ease your mind by discussing your worries with your friends; they may help you find solutions
- Rationalize what you are experiencing (e.g., better to arrive late than never...)

They say that a good diagnosis is half the cure. To help you manage your stress, think about the causes and the various contexts of your stress. This will enable you to effectively direct your efforts to alleviate it.



Strategy

MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE MAKING PROGRESS WITH EACH OF YOUR TASKS

- Set realistic short-, medium- and long-term objectives, and revise them as needed
- Get a quick start on your assignments and your reading, especially when they are more complex or longer
- When you have free time, use it to get ahead

Stress is associated with a loss of control. By taking back power over the tasks you have to accomplish, you decrease stress considerably.



Strategy

ADOPT A BALANCED LIFESTYLE

- Get enough sleep, eat well and incorporate physical activity into your schedule
- Delegate certain tasks. This will let you focus on priorities
- Set aside time for virtual social activities. You need to break the isolation created by distance learning

We all know that regular physical activity and eating well can prevent many diseases, but these good habits also reduce stress, improve concentration, and above all, improve performance.

THE CHALLENGE: STUDYING

STUDY WITHOUT EXHAUSTING YOURSELF



Strategy

ACTIVATE YOUR BRAIN BY EXERCISING YOUR MEMORY

- By preparing and trying to answer potential questions
- By redoing exercises and tests you took during the course
- By explaining the concepts and notions you are studying to someone else

The more intellectual challenges you take on, the more connections you create in your brain, and the better your memory. The brain is, in fact, able to produce new dendrites and synapses throughout life. The best way to help your brain is to constantly stimulate it.



Strategy

SPACE OUT YOUR STUDY PERIODS

- Short study periods are more effective than continuous studying
- It is also better to study a variety of subjects rather than to focus on a single one
- During sleep, reactivation takes place in the brain, so studying before falling asleep pays off

Periods of rest are also needed to enable your brain to store information in long-term memory.



Strategy

KNOW THAT YOU CAN IMPROVE

- Mistakes are nothing more than an opportunity to review what was not understood and to improve
- Know that you can become better and that will motivate you to stick to it
- Be kind to yourself. Give yourself advice, and don't hesitate to acknowledge your progress

The more you practise something, the more neural connections are created in your brain, and these new pathways increase your chances for success.

THE CHALLENGE: WRITING

KEEP YOUR MOMENTUM WHILE WRITING



Strategy

PLAN YOUR WRITING PROJECT

- Specify the writing intention, make sure you understand the requirements of your writing assignment (type of text, number of pages, etc.); if necessary, contact your teacher
- Get yourself started on the right foot by using a concept map and by brainstorming how you will proceed and how you will organize your text
- Do research and gather information before you start

This will enable you to discuss possible content, and to explore and choose the ideas to use.



Strategy

MAKE SURE YOUR TEXT IS COHERENT THROUGHOUT THE WRITING PROCESS

- Observe the following rule: a paragraph = a main idea; a sentence = a secondary idea
- Write your conclusion first because it serves as a framework for the whole text
- Use speech synthesis (e.g., WordQ), or have your text read to you

It is essential to establish connections between the text's various parts and ideas to ensure that it forms a whole and is understandable to the reader/editor, especially if the text was not written in one sitting.



Strategy

STEP BACK, ANALYZE, AND EDIT YOUR TEXT

- If you lack inspiration, or after you have finished writing, take a break. When you go back to your text later, you will see it with fresh eyes.
- Proofread your text, or, even better, ask someone to read it and be critical
- Use a correction grid and reference tools to check spelling, grammar, syntax, etc.

Editing a text shows respect for the reader, increases the effectiveness of the message, and improves the clarity of the thoughts and ideas, so it pays to place importance on it.

THE CHALLENGE: READING

READ AND REMEMBER



Strategy

ADAPT READING TO YOUR NEEDS AND CONSTRAINTS

- If you want to do selective reading, have a look at the table of contents, read the introduction, and skim the chapters
- If you want to gain a minimal understanding, read the text at a normal pace (basic reading)
- If you are reading for an assignment or an exam, use active reading, making notes in or about the text; determine the structure to get a deeper understanding

An effective reader uses various ways of dealing with a text depending on its nature, on the objectives of the task to be carried out, and on what is found before, during or after reading.



Strategy

ASK YOURSELF QUESTIONS AS YOU READ

- Break up your reading; take breaks to stay alert
- Find a keyword or phrase that summarizes the passage, and note it in the margin
- At the end of a page, chapter, or book, create a questionnaire and try to answer it

It is important to self-regulate throughout your reading, to ask yourself what you have understood about a passage in order to go back if you need to so you can solidify your understanding and continue to build meaning as you read.



Strategy

TAKE A CRITICAL LOOK AT YOUR READINGS

- By making connections with prior knowledge
- By naming the emotions the readings evoke in you, by taking a position on the ideas expressed
- By doing more reading on the same topic to broaden your understanding

Editing a text shows respect for the reader, increases the effectiveness of the message, and improves the clarity of the thoughts and ideas, so it pays to place importance on it.

THE CHALLENGE: PROBLEM SOLVING

LEARN TO BOUNCE BACK



Strategy

PRACTISE RESILIENCE

- Have a Plan B – just having it makes a difference
- Keep your sense of humour: laughter has the ability to change our perspective on events
- Explore any kind of meditative/spiritual practice; it may help to put problems in perspective

It is possible to work on your ability to face adversity. The first thing to do is to not systematically see yourself as a victim. Resilience will follow if you put enough effort into it.



Strategy

CAREFULLY ANALYZE THE PROBLEM

- Collect all the relevant information in order to have an overview of the problem
- Explore the various possible solutions and their feasibility
- Take stock after adopting a solution (What is the current status? What lessons did you learn?)

Analyzing a conflict helps those involved to step back from their points of view, which are often strongly influenced by emotions.



Strategy

CHANGE YOUR PERCEPTION

- Be active, not reactive. You will feel less disoriented when faced with a new problem
- Enjoy using your problem management skills; see problems as an opportunity to learn, to surpass yourself
- Reassess the situation in a positive light to better deal with the situation from a psychological standpoint

Instead of seeing a problem as a source of worry or a threat, see it as a challenge, an opportunity to learn and to increase your self-knowledge and wisdom.

THE CHALLENGE: TAKING EXAMS

PREPARE FOR EXAM DAY



Strategy

USE RELAXATION METHODS

- Alternate contracting and relaxing all your muscles for a few seconds
- Try a breathing technique (e.g., the box method: breathe in for 4 seconds, and then hold your breath for 4 seconds. Next, breathe out for 4 seconds, and then hold for 4 seconds)
- Listen to music, it will mask the noise around you and help you to get centred

Relaxation techniques can help you to concentrate. The time spent on these techniques is a real investment, making you more efficient and less prone to making mistakes.



Strategy

LOOK THROUGH YOUR EXAM TO GET AN OVERVIEW

- Assess the time you will need to answer each question
- In the margin, next to specific questions, note any related information that comes to mind (activating your working memory)
- Use the clues in some questions to answer the more difficult ones

It is crucial to have a work strategy when assessing an exam. It gives you a sense of control throughout the exam, and that's where you pick up the most points.



Strategy

AFTER YOU FINISH THE EXAM, REVIEW YOUR ANSWERS

- Make sure that you covered every point in every question
- Show your work. Remember, even if you are unsure of the answer, marks are often given for work
- Pay particular attention to spelling, grammar, syntax, and vocabulary

Reviewing your exam maximizes your chances of success. It is your opportunity to make sure you have answered each question and to correct careless mistakes.

THE CHALLENGE: PERSEVERANCE

MAKE INFORMED CHOICES



Strategy

IDENTIFY HOW COLLEGE STUDIES BENEFIT YOU

- Ask yourself what motivated you to go to college; what you want to achieve, or, conversely, what you want to avoid
- You have the right to doubt and to be undecided, but you are responsible for the path you take. Get the information you need to clarify your goals
- Give meaning to your academic project

When you identify the results you want to achieve, you will make better use of your time and stay motivated longer.



Strategy

ASSESS YOUR RESOURCES

- By identifying your strengths, your abilities, your shortcomings
- By asking people close to you (that you can count on) to support you and help you succeed in your studies
- By asking yourself how to finance your education (personal savings, family help, financial aid for studies)

When you know yourself well, you increase the chances of making good choices.



Strategy

ALLOW YOURSELF TO MAKE MISTAKES

- Dropping a course or changing programs should not be seen as a failure. It is better to start from scratch than to get bogged down in a choice that is not right for you
- You evolve at your own pace, and life is full of surprises. Stay focused on your needs and make consistent choices
- Cultivate optimism; the sky will not fall if your work is imperfect this semester

Don't be afraid to change your mind. No choice is final. You are in control.

THE CHALLENGE: TIME MANAGEMENT

TAKE TIME TO MANAGE TIME



Strategy

BECOME AWARE OF THE AMOUNT OF WORK TO BE DONE AS WELL AS THE PACE YOU WORK AT

- Note deadlines on a calendar to get an overview of your semester
- Record all your activities for a week, and use that information to design a realistic schedule
- Evaluate the time you require for each task, in accordance with your abilities



Strategy

CREATE A LIST OF WEEKLY OBJECTIVES

- Prioritize the tasks to be accomplished based on the closest deadlines
- Identify time-consuming activities and minimize them
- Reward yourself when you attain an objective

Setting objectives helps to efficiently distribute efforts over time. It also motivates you, and makes you less dependent on your mood for getting started.



Strategy

REGULARLY EVALUATE YOUR USE OF TIME

- We often underestimate the time required to complete a task; plan for more time rather than less
- Some tasks require more concentration, so choose the times when you are the most alert
- Certain times (e.g., end of semester) are more demanding, so minimize your commitments

Looking closely at your use of time enables you to become aware of the activities that consume more time than you thought and, above all, to better understand your workload.

THE CHALLENGE: BALANCE

LEARN TO JUGGLE MANY BALLS



Strategy

INVOLVE THOSE CLOSE TO YOU IN YOUR ACADEMIC PROJECT

- Create a win-win situation. For example, if you are balancing studies and family, get your children to do activities on an educational website to keep them busy while you study
- Discuss your situation with those close to you; they will be more understanding and may even help you find solutions if you are having difficulties
- See if you can adjust your schedule (e.g., to work an extra hour every week to accumulate time for a monthly study day)



Strategy

BE REALISTIC - THERE ARE ONLY 24 HOURS IN A DAY

- Assess the urgency and importance of each of the tasks you want to accomplish
- Accept that some things are not perfect; that they will not be ideal
- Change your relationship with time

You must reconcile your actual availability with the ideal learning time in order to make good decisions (number and choice of courses, priorities, time allocated for each task, etc.)



Strategy

ENSURE THAT YOUR CHOICES ARE CONSISTENT WITH YOUR VALUES

- You can perform well without sacrificing everything (e.g., reduce your course load per semester)
- Establish a good study climate in order to minimize the sources of stress that could negatively impact your academic project
- Focus on the essentials day after day. Ask yourself: "Is this really important?"

Engaging in a project that you can relate to and over which you have some control will enable you to find meaning in what you do and in your life.