



The Law & Ethics Exam and Clinical Exam are just two of the hurdles in the licensing process. Here are ten tips to help you with the studying process.

### **1. Remember why you're taking this exam.**

Take a step back and recall your over-arching goal. Why do you want to be a licensed therapist? Who do you want to help? Place this study process and the upcoming exam in the context of your goal. For example, "Studying for two hours today makes me more prepared to pass the exam. This moves me closer to becoming a licensed therapist so that I can start my private practice and work with couples wanting to re-connect."

### **2. Take ownership of the study process.**

Remind yourself that YOU will be the person taking the exam. No one else is going to study for you. No one else is going to take the exam for you. Therefore, it's your job to prepare because YOU are going to be the one taking (and passing!) the exam.

### **3. Studying is a job.**

So treat it like one. Figure out how many hours you can realistically dedicate to studying. Take into account your work hours, family commitments, chores, errands, classes, and self-care. Come up with a number that sounds manageable. For some, this will be ten hours per week. For others, it might be five. That's fine. Schedule your exam date accordingly.

### **4. Make your exam date non-negotiable.**

After you've decided on how many hours and weeks you'll spend studying, register for the exam. The date is set and it's final. Do not allow any excuses for pushing out the date further. (Yes, there is an exception to this, and it's for personal or family emergencies.) Don't give yourself the option of "I'll take the test if I feel ready." Prepare yourself so that you will be ready.

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## **5. Action absorbs anxiety.**

Decide now to study and get it over with (think about this in terms of daily studying, and also the entire studying process). Procrastination drains your energy because you start thinking so much about the fact that you're *not* studying. The way to not feel bad about not studying is simple: just study! Study so that you don't feel bad about not studying.

## **6. Figure out what kind of a learner you are.**

How do you best learn? Are you a visual learner? Do you study most effectively by reviewing your notes over and over? Or are you an auditory learner and you absorb information best by listening to it? It doesn't matter how your fellow associate is studying. Tailor your study habits to fit how you learn best.

## **7. Break tasks down into chunks.**

Seeing "Study for three hours" written down in your calendar can seem daunting and overwhelming. Break it down. "Review notes for 25 minutes" sounds do-able, doesn't it? "Listen to lecture #7 again" sounds okay. Little tasks like these can add up to hours of studying. Assign yourself tasks that aren't overwhelming.

## **8. Don't underestimate the question/answer rationales.**

Learning the content is a large portion of studying for the exam. However, understanding strategies about how to think about the test, the questions, and the possible answers is just as important. Don't wait until the last few days before your exam to take the practice tests and to read or listen to the answer rationales. Give yourself time to understand WHY each answer is the right answer. Be able to explain why other answers might be tempting, but aren't what the BBS test writers consider the right answer.

## **9. Change how you talk about studying for the exam.**

Our words matter, and what we tell ourselves matter. Instead of saying, "I *have* to go study now," try out "I *get* to go study now." Maybe this sounds cheesy, but in the grand scheme of life, we are incredibly privileged to be working toward a professional goal that we set for ourselves. There is probably a person somewhere out in the world who would jump at the chance to spend the next two hours studying material that would move them closer to achieving a dream. For whatever reason, they don't have that opportunity right now. But you do! Try tweaking "have to study" to "get to study" and see if it helps at all.

## **10. Be gentle with yourself (and your brain).**

Studying is work! Give yourself a break! When you reach a point of information over-saturation (when you keep reading or listening to the same thing over and over again but it still doesn't really sink in), take a break! Take a walk. Read a fun book for 20 minutes. Cuddle with your pet. This may not feel "productive," but it's productive because you're giving your brain a rest so that you can jump back into studying.

Good luck!

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