

*Understanding Your*

# Exam Readiness Profile at Sticky Brain Studio™

*A Guide for Professionals, Students, and Families*

Why this is different · What to expect · Your questions answered

*Especially supportive for those preparing for a retake*

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*Psychology Services Through a Neurodiversity-Affirming Lens*

# About This Guide

At Sticky Brain Studio, we believe that informed individuals and families are empowered ones. This guide was created to help you understand *why* exam preparation is not one-size-fits-all, and what a clinical approach can offer that tutoring and prep courses alone cannot.

High-stakes exams are not only tests of content knowledge. They are tests of attention, working memory, stress tolerance, sleep, and the thousand small decisions a person makes about how to spend each hour of study time. For many capable, accomplished people, the content is not the real obstacle. The obstacle is figuring out how to prepare in a way that actually works for how their brain is wired.

## Our Approach at Every Stage

Every Exam Readiness Profile, regardless of the client or exam, is grounded in the same core values:

- **Evidence-based.** We follow established cognitive and clinical science, including spaced practice, retrieval learning, and the role of sleep in consolidation.
- **Neurodiversity-affirming.** We design plans that work with a person's brain, not ones that demand they work like someone else's.
- **Individualized.** We build from a clinical interview and validated screeners, not a generic intake form.
- **Thoughtful.** We take time to consider what else may be contributing, from anxiety to sleep to life demands, before drawing conclusions.

## Why a Clinical Approach

Tutors teach content. Coaches offer accountability. Commercial prep programs deliver curriculum. All of these can be useful. None of them are built to answer the question that sits underneath many exam struggles: **given how your brain actually works, what plan gives you the best chance of passing?**

That question sits at the intersection of cognitive psychology, executive functioning, and individual life context. It is a question a licensed clinical psychologist is trained to answer, and it is one that rarely gets asked directly anywhere else in the exam preparation landscape.

## How to Use This Guide

The next sections walk through who the Exam Readiness Profile is for, what to expect in the process, and how the pathways work. Find the situation that matches yours, or your child's or client's, and read on.

## Who the Profile Is For

*High-stakes exams happen at every life stage. A fifteen-year-old navigating the SAT and a thirty-five-year-old preparing for a bar retake may look very different on paper, but the clinical work under the surface is the same. Each stage below describes who we most often support, and what makes that window distinct.*

### ■ Retakers · Preparing for a Second Attempt

*All Ages*

The most common reason clients reach out. If you have sat your exam and it did not go the way you hoped, you are not looking for another review course. You are looking for clarity about what happened and a different approach for your next attempt. The Readiness Profile was built around this question, and includes a structured debrief of your previous score report and preparation.

### ■ High School Students

*SAT · ACT · AP Exams · State Testing*

For many teens, high-stakes testing is the first time a strong student encounters an exam that doesn't respond to effort alone. When a capable teen is grinding through prep and not seeing score improvement, the issue is often cognitive or emotional rather than academic. We work with students and parents to understand what is actually happening and build a plan that fits the student's brain and schedule.

### ■ College Students & Early Graduate School

*MCAT · LSAT · GRE · Nursing Boards*

This stage brings a major step up in independent time management, and many students find their old study strategies no longer match the demands in front of them. Undiagnosed ADHD and anxiety often become visible during this period, and the exam that launches a career is often where that shows up most clearly. A clinical approach at this stage can save months of ineffective prep.

### ■ Working Professionals

*Bar · Boards · CPA · EPPP · Licensure*

Preparing for a licensing exam while holding a full-time job and caring for family is a different challenge from preparing full-time. The math of available hours is genuinely unforgiving, and the plan has to reflect that rather than ignore it. We build study plans designed for the calendar you actually have, not an idealized one.

### ■ Recently Diagnosed or Newly in Treatment

*All Ages*

You have recently been diagnosed with ADHD, anxiety, or another condition, or you are adjusting medication. You want a preparation plan that reflects where you actually are now, not where you were in earlier stages of school. A Readiness Profile integrates your current clinical picture into a study plan that makes sense given your present brain, not your past one.

# If You Are Preparing for a Retake

*A different question requires a different approach. Failing a high-stakes exam is rarely about intelligence or effort. The clients we see most often are the opposite. They are smart, they worked hard, they followed a commercial prep program faithfully, and the score still was not there. That gap between effort and outcome is the clinical question worth answering.*

## *For Retakers*

### **The Failed Score Review**

If you have already sat the exam and are preparing for another attempt, your Exam Readiness Profile begins with a careful debrief of your previous experience. Together we look at:

**What the score report actually tells us.** Most clients never receive a clinical read of their diagnostic breakdown. There is often more information in the data than a first glance suggests.

**What happened during preparation.** How you studied, what you avoided, where motivation faltered, and how closely your plan matched your cognitive profile.

**What happened during the exam.** Sleep, anxiety, test-day functioning, working memory under pressure, and how all of that interacted with the specific demands of your exam.

**What to do differently.** A revised, clinically informed plan for your next attempt, built on what the first attempt actually revealed.

## **What Retakers Often Discover**

In the course of a Readiness Profile, retakers often identify one or more of the following patterns. None are moral failings. They are clinical patterns with clinical solutions.

### **Common Findings for Retakers**

- **Undiagnosed or undermanaged ADHD or anxiety** that made standard study advice nearly impossible to follow.
- **A study plan misaligned with how their brain encodes information**, resulting in hundreds of hours of low-retention study.
- **Sleep debt and test-day physiology** that compromised performance regardless of how much content was learned.
- **Avoidance of weak subjects** that felt productive in the moment but shaped the score outcome in predictable ways.
- **A mismatch between the prep program format and their learning profile**, easily addressed with different tools.

# What the Process Looks Like

From clinical interview to personalized study plan. Four steps, designed to produce a plan you can actually use.

## ■ Step 1 · Clinical Interview

75 minutes

A focused, structured interview with Dr. O. This is not a questionnaire. It is a clinical conversation covering five domains.

### Exam Context & History

The exam, your timeline, prep program, prior attempts, and what is or isn't working.

### Learning & Cognitive Profile

Attention, working memory, processing style, reading under pressure, test anxiety history.

### Executive Functioning

Planning, initiation, self-monitoring, and emotional regulation in the context of study demands.

### Emotional & Behavioral

Anxiety, mood, sleep, perfectionism, and the relationship between self-worth and performance.

### Life Context

Work, caregiving, community and board commitments, financial pressure, and social support. The plan has to work inside your actual life, not an imagined one.

## ■ Step 2 · Targeted Screeners

Validated measures

Brief, validated clinical screeners selected based on what emerges in the interview. Typical instruments include the BRIEF-A (executive functioning), GAD-7 (anxiety), PHQ-9 (mood), and a learning and study strategies inventory. ADHD screening is added when clinically indicated.

## ■ Step 3 · Written Readiness Profile

Delivered in writing

A clinician-prepared document organized into three sections: **Your Profile**, a plain-language summary of strengths and vulnerabilities; **Implications for How You Study**, the clinical translation into concrete recommendations; and **Your Personalized Study Plan**, a week-by-week plan keyed to your exam date and available hours.

## ■ Step 4 · Feedback Session

60 minutes

A walkthrough of your Profile with Dr. O. Here the document becomes actionable. We discuss findings, adjust the plan based on your reactions, and troubleshoot anticipated obstacles before you begin.

# Frequently Asked Questions

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## *Is this a tutor, a coach, or a clinician?*

A clinician. Dr. O is a licensed clinical psychologist, and the Exam Readiness Profile is a clinical service. The focus is not on teaching exam content, which your prep program already does, but on understanding how your brain works and building a plan that reflects that.

## *How is this different from a neuropsych or ADHD evaluation?*

A full evaluation is diagnostic and produces formal documentation for accommodations. The Exam Readiness Profile is a consultation service focused specifically on exam preparation. It is briefer, more targeted, and designed to produce an actionable study plan, not a diagnostic report. If accommodations are part of your goal, Dr. O may recommend pairing the Profile with one of our evaluation pathways.

## *I already failed once. Is this worth it?*

Retakers are the group we see most often, and the ones for whom this service tends to produce the clearest value. Sitting with a clinician to review what happened, why, and what to do differently addresses the exact question commercial prep programs are not set up to answer.

## *Do you work with high school and college students?*

Yes. We work with teens preparing for the SAT, ACT, and AP exams, and with college and graduate students preparing for exams like the MCAT, LSAT, and GRE. For students under 18, parents are part of the intake process, and the student is a full participant.

## *Do I need to have an ADHD diagnosis already?*

No. The Readiness Profile is designed for anyone preparing for a high-stakes exam, whether or not a diagnosis is part of the picture. If something meaningful emerges during the interview, Dr. O will discuss whether additional evaluation may be worth considering.

## *Which exams do you work with?*

Any high-stakes academic, professional, or licensing exam. Common examples include SAT, ACT, AP exams, MCAT, LSAT, GRE, the bar exam, USMLE Steps, medical specialty boards, CPA, EPPP, nursing and dental boards, and state licensure exams. The clinical process is the same. The study plan is tailored to the specific exam.

## *How soon before my exam should I start?*

Ideally, ten to sixteen weeks out. We regularly work with clients closer to their exam date as well, and a Readiness Profile can still be meaningful in a shorter window. For retakers, we often recommend starting within four to six weeks after receiving a score report.

## *Will insurance cover this?*

No. This is a clinical consultation service offered on a private-pay basis. Payment plans are available for the Exam Readiness Plan pathway.

## Ready to Take the Next Step?

We know that deciding to pursue clinical support around an exam is a meaningful step. Whether you are seeking answers for yourself, your student, or after a previous attempt, Sticky Brain Studio is here to guide you through the process with clarity, care, and expertise.

Pathway	Best For	Investment
<b>Exam Readiness Profile</b>	First-time takers, students, and working professionals who want a clinical plan they can run with independently.	<b>\$750</b>
<b>Failed Score Review</b>	Clients preparing for a second or third attempt who want a clinical debrief and a revised plan.	<b>\$750</b>
<b>Exam Readiness Plan</b>	Everything in the Profile, plus three check-in sessions and a post-exam debrief across the full preparation window.	<b>\$1,250</b> payment plans available

### Schedule a Consultation

Not sure which pathway is the right fit? That is completely okay. During a brief complimentary consultation, Dr. O will review your concerns and help you determine the best next step.

### Contact Sticky Brain Studio

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*From clarity to confident next steps, Sticky Brain Studio is here to support the full journey.*