

Reducing Test Anxiety

Do You Have Test Anxiety?

Test anxiety can strike in 2 places: your head and your body. Here are some signs that you have it:

...in your head

- Your mind goes blank on some or all of the questions
- You can't focus or you're feeling distracted
- You're having negative thoughts about how you're doing on the test or what your score might be
- You know the answers after the test, but not while taking it

in your body...

- Sick to your stomach
- Cramps
- Faintness
- Sweating
- Headache
- Dry mouth
- Heavy or fast
- Fast heartbeat
- Tense muscles

If you are showing 4 or more of these symptoms, your stress level might be too high.

You might also have test anxiety if you notice that you often score lower on tests than on the unit work.

How Can You Cope With Test Anxiety?

Finding the cause of your anxiety will help. Find the causes that describe you below, then look at the cures and explanations beside them.

Before the Test:

Cause	Cure	Explanation				
You don't know what to expect	Learn about the test	Take control of your fear of the "unknown" by finding out what will be on the test - like how long it will be, the types of questions you can expect, what will be on the test.				
You don't feel like you know the information you'll be tested on	Make an organized study schedule and stick to it!	<u>Think of a test as your chance to show what you've learned rather than a time when you have to be perfect!</u> Remember to review before the test and stay organized by creating a study plan that shows what you're going to work on when. When you have finished each study task, cross it off the list so you can feel a sense of accomplishment!				
You have negative thoughts	Answer them with positive thoughts and actions	The time to deal with negative thoughts is before the test day. Take out a piece of paper and write your negative thoughts in a column. Then, for each one, write a positive and true thought that argues against it. (Keep this list and add to it as you need) For example: <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Negative Thought</th> <th>Positive & True Thought</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>I always do poorly on tests.</td> <td>I've got a better study plan for this test than I've ever had before!</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Negative Thought	Positive & True Thought	I always do poorly on tests.	I've got a better study plan for this test than I've ever had before!
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I always do poorly on tests.	I've got a better study plan for this test than I've ever had before!					
Your body shows signs of anxiety	Take care of your body and your mind will benefit.	Remember to: Eat well and exercise, get lots of sleep (especially the night before the test), and continue to socialize and take study breaks because your emotional health is important too! On the day of the test, arrive early so that you can get settled and comfortable before you start.				

During the Test:

Cause	Cure	Explanation
A tight feeling in your muscles is building up	Practice relaxation exercises	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. When you start to feel anxious, take a few deep breaths and breathe out slowly. Imagine a peaceful place while you do this.2. Another way is to focus on the muscles in your shoulders by contracting them for 10 seconds and then letting them relax. Concentrate on the difference in the feelings and repeat the exercise trying to get the muscles to relax more each time.
You allow the test environment to annoy or irritate you	Tune out distractions	Remember to dress in comfortable clothing layers so that the temperature of the room doesn't bother you. If you have a choice, try to choose a chair away from doors. Also, before the test, choose a saying like "remain calm" that you can mentally repeat to calm and focus your mind.
Your mind goes blank or it wanders	Stay focused	Many people get so nervous when they first open their test booklets that their minds go blank. To avoid this, arrive at the test with a plan. Will you read and answer each question one-by-one, or read them all before you begin? What will you do when you come across a question that you don't have an answer for? If you go blank on a writing question, remember that <i>action fights anxiety</i> . Start writing anything about the question on a scrap piece of paper and soon ideas will start to take shape in your head. Then you can start to organize your actual answer. Try to answer every question, even if it's just a guess.

What do you need to succeed?

Test anxiety feeds on the unknown! The more you know about the test, and the more you know about your own anxieties and how to overcome them, the less that test anxiety can control you!

You have to know the material to do well on a test. You have to control test anxiety to show what you know. Practice, organization and preparation are really the keys to success!

If you feel like these strategies are not helpful, please consider making an appointment with someone in the Student Services office. We will do our best to help you find success!