



Tips on Managing Test Anxiety

You have a test coming up, and the closer it gets, the more anxiety you feel. Does this sound like you? If your anxiety is the direct result of a lack of being ready then all the strategies in the world will not help. Pls. see my paper on tips on taking multiple choice tests and study habits. But if you've attended classes regularly and are prepared thoroughly but still feel anxious, these tips may help. It's important to know that there is not a single "right" solution to manage test anxiety. In fact, you may find that you will have to mix up some of those listed below.

1. Prepare thoroughly
2. Avoid getting flustered. Gather materials (eraser, notebook, flash cards, pens) the night before. Know where they are and arrive 15 minutes early.
3. As soon as the test begins, write down any facts, formulae acronyms Laws or other memory aids or ideas you may forget.
4. Use the full time allowed for the test. IT is always too soon to give up early.

Challenge yourself with some new beliefs about Anxiety

Our beliefs have an enormous influence on our feelings. Think about adopting some or all of the following beliefs for a different outcome:

1. Emotions, both negative and positive, are a natural part of living and cannot be avoided or controlled, nor do they need to be.
2. The fear of failure and the desire to succeed are two sides of the same coin. We feel anxious because we want to perform well. This is a normal part of being human
3. Anxiety is uncomfortable and inconvenient, but not unbearable. It's when we start judging ourselves about the natural anxiety we feel that we begin to create problems for ourselves.
4. A certain amount of anxiety is beneficial to one's performance. It motivates us and helps us to focus our energy and attention.

Positive Thinking and Visualization

Some students also find that positive thinking techniques help them. Try any of these ideas:

1. Put the test in perspective. Remind yourself that no matter how important it may seem, it's only a small part of your educational journey, and even a smaller part of your life. Your test mark does not reflect the kind of person you are or your ability to succeed in life.
2. Imagine the positive mental images such as getting a good mark and finishing the test confidently with time to spare.
3. Say positive things in your head such as "I have studied hard and know this material. Now is my chance to show them what I know". Or "I am competent and hard working. I can write this test as well as anyone else."
4. Remind yourself of past good results and your positive qualities as a person.

Destructive beliefs about anxiety

Have you ever found yourself thinking thoughts like these?

- “I should be able to control my feelings and get rid of my anxiety before the test.”
- Good students don’t feel nervous like this, so I must not be a very good student.”
- There is no way I can write this test until I feel more confident”.

What happens if you think like this? It can be a vicious cycle. By trying to resist the feeling of anxiety, you prolong your focus on it. That leads you to reject your feelings of emotional self. Your attention gets stuck on the anxiety and on yourself and your ability to write the test is reduced. Your belief that you can’t handle these kinds of situations is reinforced. So, the next time you have to write a test, you have a higher level of anticipated anxiety and thus you create unnecessary anxiety

Constructive Beliefs about Anxiety

If you find yourself thinking these kinds of things, consider these more helpful and healthy alternatives to your beliefs. Identify the ones that are most important to you and repeat them to yourself whenever you start getting anxious, both before and during your test.

- “Emotions ebb and flow. I cannot and do not need to control my anxiety.”
- It is normal to feel anxious before and during an exam. It is a result of my desire to succeed.”
- A successful test-writer does not have to be completely calm and confident.”
- I do not have to wait until I feel confident before I write an exam. I can take action and write my test even though I feel nervous and scared.”
- Feeling nervous and anxious is unpleasant and inconvenient but it is not unbearable. I can deal with my unpleasant feelings and write my exam despite them.”

What happens if you can begin to think like this? It’s a break in the vicious cycle that can create some positive energy and break the cycle of destructive thoughts and thus minimize the anxiety. You temporarily acknowledge and focus on the anxiety. That leads you to accept the emotion and your emotional self. Your attention can then shift to the task at hand. Afterward, you can appreciate and feel proud of yourself because you achieved your goal. You start to believe you’re competent in handling emotional incidents. The next time you’re in the same situation, you have a reduced level of pre-anxiety because of your previous success even if it is minimal. Baby steps remember.

Methods of Relaxation

Relaxation exercises can help in coping with exam anxiety. However, you must practise relaxation daily before the body will respond and thus the response becomes habitual

1. Sit quietly in a room in a comfortable position. Close your eyes.
2. Concentrate deeply on relaxing your muscles starting at the feet and ending at the tip of your head.
3. Breathe through your nose deeply. Become aware of your breathing. Each time you breathe out; say a single positive word to yourself. Continue for 10 to 15 minutes.
4. Maintain a quiet attitude and allow your body to relax at its’ own pace. When distracting thoughts occur, acknowledge them and return to repeating your work.

Try using a short form of this exercise when anxiety reaches distracting levels during a test.

If you try these strategies but still find yourself overwhelmed by panic or anxiety reactions while writing exams we encourage you to speak to one of the counselors in the school.