

Overcoming Test Anxiety

It is normal to feel some level of anxiety or stress regarding an exam. Anxiety can be a motivator. However, at very high levels, anxiety can interfere with your learning and test performance. For test anxious students, the goal is merely to bring your anxiety down to a middle range and not eliminate it entirely.

What causes test anxiety?

- Prior negative test taking experiences
- For many students, they had never failed an exam prior to coming to college. Failing an exam at the post-secondary level can be a humbling experience which can cause anxiety.
- Fear of Failure
- Lack of preparation can raise anxiety levels
- Poor time management
- Poor study habits
- Lack of organization
- Cramming versus following a structures plan
- Inability to anticipate what the test will cover
- Lack of confidence
- Negative thought processes
- Pressure to perform well
- Perfectionism standards that lead to unattainable goals
- Focusing on negative consequences of failure rather than preparing to succeed.

Symptoms of test anxiety

Physical

- Headaches
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Extreme body temperature changes
- Excessive sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Light-headedness/
Fainting
- Rapid heart rate

Emotional

- Excessive fear
- Disappointment
- Depression
- Anger
- Feelings of Helplessness
- Uncontrollable crying

Cognitive

- Racing thoughts
- Going blank
- Difficulty concentrating
- Negative self-talk
- Feeling of dread
- Comparing yourself to others
- Difficulty organizing your thoughts

Behavioral

- Dry Mouth
- Fidgeting
- Pacing
- Substance Abuse
- Avoidance