

## Tips to reduce test anxiety

- Be well prepared for the test
- Space out studying over a few days or weeks and continually review class material. **Avoid cramming.** If you are prone to test anxiety, frantic, last minute studying is guaranteed to crank up your anxiety.
- Try to maintain a positive attitude while preparing for the test and during the test. Encourage yourself!
- Develop reasonable expectations.
- Do not allow your grades to become dependent on one exam.
- Exercising for a few days before the test.
- Get a good night's sleep before the test.
- Show up to class early so you won't have to worry about being late.
- Chew gum(if allowed) during the test.
- Stay relaxed, if you begin to feel nervous, take a few deep breaths slowly to relax yourself and then get back to work.
- Read the directions slowly and carefully and if you don't understand them ask the teacher.
- Skim through the test so that you have a good idea how to pace yourself.
- Write down important formulas, facts definitions, and/or keywords in the margin first so you don't worry about forgetting them
- Do the simplest questions first to help build up your confidence for the harder questions.
- Don't worry how fast other students finish their tests; just concentrate on your own test.
- If you don't know an answer to a question skip it and come back to it later.
- Focus on the question at hand. Don't let your mind wander to other things.
- Dress comfortably and in layers for tests. If you are prone to test anxiety, you may misinterpret the physical discomfort that results from being dressed too warmly as symptoms of anxiety and start a self-fulfilling prophecy.

## Tips to overcome test anxiety

- Behavioral relaxation techniques:
  - Deep Breathing-Take a deep breath from your diaphragm and hold it for several seconds and then slowly exhale. Repeat several times. If you silently say the word "calm" or "relax" to yourself as you exhale, over time thinking of this word alone will be able to evoke a sense of relaxation.
  - Progressive Muscle Relaxation-This technique involves first tensing then relaxing different muscle groups in your body, one by one. If you experience tension in certain parts of your body when you are anxious (e.g., your neck, back, shoulders, forehead, arms), relax those muscle groups one by one: tense the muscle group and hold for a slow count of ten and then relax to a slow count of ten.
  - Imagery: Imagery means using your imagination to help you relax. You can do this in two ways.
    - Coping imagery (mental rehearsal): Sports psychologists often have athletes picture themselves performing on the court or field as they would like. Imagine yourself staying relaxed and performing well on the test.
    - Visualization: Place yourself in a relaxing scene; imagine yourself at the lake, or in front of a cozy fire. Use all five of your senses to make the scene come alive.

- Use a cognitive approach to relax your mind:

- Ask yourself how real is the threat?

Anxiety is a normal, natural biological and psychological reaction to a real or perceived threat. For example, a test might be perceived as a threat to your self-esteem, parental approval, financial aid, or career plans. Most test-anxious students exaggerate the "threat" posed by a test. Ask yourself: Am I really a worthless person if I don't get a good grade on this test? Will my parents really disown me? Will this one test, in one course, in one semester really derail my whole future?

- Identify and challenge core negative beliefs and self-defeating thoughts.

The test anxious student essentially believes "I can't do this" I'm stupid and so I'm going to do horribly on this test and when I do, that will be absolutely terrible and I won't be able to handle it." It is this core belief and the self-defeating thoughts that flow from it (and not the test itself) that raises anxiety, which in turns lowers performance -- which only strengthens the core belief for the next time round, thereby setting up a self-fulfilling prophecy. Challenge the negative belief by reminding yourself that you do understand the material, are not stupid, can do it, have done well on similar tests in the past, have coped with disappointments in the past just fine, etc. Another core belief is "I must achieve competence or perfection in all that I do". Perfectionism is, of course, impossible to obtain, and so to demand it of yourself or to equate "success" with "perfect performance" is to guarantee "failure."