

Managing Test Anxiety: Advice for Students

by Greg Henderson, MSSW, Psychotherapist

For better or worse, our educational system uses tests to measure a student's knowledge and skills. Yet often the results of a test are not an accurate measure of a student's knowledge because of test anxiety. Test anxiety is an uneasiness or apprehension experienced before, during or after an examination due to concern, worry or fear.

There are several common reasons for test anxiety including poor preparation, negative test taking experience, a negative attitude about school or low self confidence.

What does test anxiety feel like?

- Some students will experience physical symptoms such as headaches, nausea, dizziness or feeling too hot or too cold.
- Others may experience more emotional symptoms such as crying easily, irritability or becoming easily distracted.
- The biggest problem usually is impaired thinking ability; it can cause one to black out or have uncontrollable, racing thoughts.

Fortunately, there are many helpful interventions to reduce this type of anxiety, and keep it from interfering with your performance. It is important to know that you don't have to eliminate it entirely. You just want to reduce it to a manageable level.

What can you do to control test anxiety?

- Be well prepared for the exam. Keep up with the work so you can avoid cramming for the test.
- Have a study schedule that begins several nights before the test.
- Study in a location where you can concentrate and not be distracted.
- Make flashcards and use them often.
- Take good notes and review them periodically.
- Make outlines and summary sheets
- Form a study group with motivated peers
- Include self-testing in your exam review. Chapter summary exams and teacher review exams are very helpful.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle including getting enough sleep, good nutrition, exercise, personal relaxation and some social interaction.
- Think positively. Use positive self talk such as "I'm prepared. I will do well." "I've worked hard for this and I will do the best I can."
- Do not compare yourself to others
- Reward yourself after studying so it becomes a positive experience.
- Engage "thought stopping" Use cue words to set up a roadblock to negative obsessive thinking, such as: **Stop. Move On. Think Again. Don't Go There.**
- The night before the test, make sure to collect everything you will need for the test such as pens, pencils, erasers, and calculator.
- Especially the night before the exam, get a good night's sleep.
- Don't talk to other students regarding exam material just prior to the test
- While the exam is being distributed, take slow deep breaths to calm yourself down.
- Be sure to read the test questions carefully.

- During the exam, focus on the test questions. Don't be distracted by your surroundings including classmates.
- If you don't know an answer, mark the question. Move on and return to it later to.
- Be sure to review your answers to questions at the end if you have time left.
- If you feel anxious during the exam, take a few moments to calm yourself down. Stretch your arms and legs and relax physically. Take a few deep breaths. Use positive self talk. Visualize a pleasant thought in your mind.
- If the exam is more difficult than you thought, try to focus and do the best you can.

If test anxiety persists, talk to your teacher, school counselor or mental health professional for more specialized help.

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