

Dealing with Test Anxiety

THE SIGNS OF TEST ANXIETY

In your head:

Mental blank-out
Racing thoughts
Difficulty concentrating
Negative thoughts about:

- Past performance
- Consequences of failure
- How everyone else is doing

Knowing answers before and after test,
but not during the test

In your body:

Nausea
Cramps
Faintness
Sweating
Headache
Dry Mouth
Increased breathing rate
Fast heartbeat
Tense muscles

CAUSES AND CURES OF TEST ANXIETY

CAUSE: You are not adequately prepared for the test.

CURE: Organize yourself and study.

- ✓ Being well prepared for the test is the best way to reduce test taking anxiety.
- ✓ Space out your studying over a few days or weeks, and continually review class material, don't wait until the night before or even a few days before and try to learn everything.
- ✓ Organize material to be studied and learned. Take a step by step approach to build a strategy and not get overwhelmed.
- ✓ Review your past performance on tests to improve and learn from experience.
- ✓ Avoid thinking you need to cram just before the test.

CAUSE: You are having physical signs of anxiety

CURE: Take care of your body.

- ✓ Eat well and exercise. Make sure not to disrupt your regular routine while preparing for a test.
- ✓ Get plenty of sleep, especially the night before your test. Lack of sleep can seriously affect your ability to retain and recall information.
- ✓ Take breaks to be social. Emotional health is as important as physical health for minimizing anxiety. Surround yourself with positive people who support your studying.

CAUSE: Tension builds up in your body.

CURE: Use tension-release exercises.

- ✓ Take a couple of deep breaths and exhale slowly.
- ✓ Close your eyes and picture a peaceful setting.

- ✓ Focus on particular groups of muscles (like your shoulders). Tense the muscles for 10 seconds; then let them relax. Take note of the difference. Repeat this exercise, relaxing the muscles more each time.

CAUSE: You have negative thoughts.

CURE: Counteract them with positive thoughts.

- ✓ Negative thoughts can distract you or make you freeze up during a test. Deal with these BEFORE the test.
- ✓ For each negative thought, write a positive thought that argues against it.

NEGATIVE THOUGHT	POSTIVE THOUGHT
"I always do poorly on tests"	"I have a better study plan then I have in the past."
"If I don't pass this test, I'm a failure"	"I can pass this test, but if I don't I can still bounce back"
"This test is going to have trick questions"	"The test is designed to let me show what I have learned"
"It's impossible to know everything that we went over in class"	"I may not know the answer to EVERY question, but I know enough to get a good grade."
"I'm so dumb"	"I was accepted to college, and I am capable of doing well in my classes"

CAUSE: The test environment is a distraction.

CURE: Attempt to tune out the distractions.

- ✓ Dress comfortably and in layers, so you are prepared for warm or cool environments
- ✓ Try to avoid arriving late. Select a seat that will best minimize things that distract you. (EX: Sitting away from a window or away from other students)
- ✓ Have a strategy ready to deal with distractions. For example, repeating a phrase like "Remain calm" or using visualization. Whatever you choose, use this same strategy when you are studying for your test, so it is familiar to you.

CAUSE: Your mind goes blank or it wanders.

CURE: Attempt to stay focused.

- ✓ When you start the test, take a few moments to design a strategy. Look through the test first and plan what you need to do. (EX. Leave enough time to complete essay questions.)
- ✓ If you go blank, remember, "ACTION FIGHTS ANXIETY". Jot down any relevant information that will help you. As you begin to write things down, you may remember other information. This will allow your ideas to flow again.
- ✓ Don't spend time puzzling over questions you do not know. Mark them to return to later if time permits.