

Learning To Manage Test Anxiety

There are several ways to deal with test anxiety, but the first step to all of them is know what signs of anxiety to look for.

So what does test anxiety feel like?

For some students, test anxiety might manifest in mainly physical distress symptoms, such as headaches, nausea, tenseness, faintness, feeling too hot or too cold, etc. Other people may express it more in an emotional way, like wanting to cry, laugh too much, feeling angry, helpless, and even sometimes frustrated with your work or yourself. However, the major problem regarding test anxiety is how it can affect your thinking ability; it can cause you to blank out, ruminate (to have racing thoughts that are difficult to control), distractibility, and lack of concentration.

All students feel some level of anxiety when taking tests, that is normal. Here are some examples of ways you can deal with that stress:

- Start by being well prepared for the test. Give yourself time to study without trying to cram it all the night before.
- Take time to do as much self-testing in your review as possible, knowing how your professor words questions or test style helps in getting you in the right mind set for the exam.
- Get enough sleep. Not sleeping well the night preceding an exam lowers your concentration and recall of material.
- Make sure that you maintain good nutrition, eating healthy is necessary to keep your brain working.
- Try to keep a reasonable exercise schedule, such as going out for a short walk every day.
- Take some personal "down" time, and spend it doing things that you enjoy. Have fun, that is important too.
- Whenever you think about the exam, think about it in a positive manner: "I can do this. I've studied and I know the material."
- Do some "thought stopping" if you find that you are worrying a lot: such as worrying about how everyone else is going to do, how others are going to think about you, or if you are going to do poorly in the exam.
- The night before the exam, make sure to collect together anything that you will need for the exam.
- As the exams are distributed, calm yourself down by taking some slow deep breaths.
- Take time to carefully read any instructions on the exam.
- As you work on the exam, focus only on the exam, not on what anyone else is doing.
- If you feel very nervous during the exam, take a few minutes to calm yourself down. Stretch as much as you can without disturbing others. Take a few slow deep breaths. Do some positive internal self-talk, encourage yourself.
- If the exam is more difficult than you anticipated, focus on doing the best you can at that point.
- When the exam is over, take some time to treat yourself, reward yourself for the effort you put into your schoolwork.

You can take control of test anxiety so you can do as well as you can in the course. If you are not able to deal with the stress level of taking a test, talk to a counselor for more help.