

Tame Your Test Anxiety

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Who experiences test anxiety?

- 25-40% of students experience test anxiety (J.C. 2010)
- 1/4 to 2/5 students – at times students who studied the material have test anxiety

What is test anxiety?

- Formal Definition: *The test anxiety construct is considered as a situation-specific trait accounting for individual differences in the extent to which people find examinations threatening (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995).*
- It feels like:
 - > Butterflies in stomach, sweating, increased heart rate, stomach ache, head ache, etc.

What can be done?

- ◉ Developing good study habits
- ◉ Acknowledging external pressure
- ◉ Decreasing anxiety

Study Habits

- ◉ Time Management
 - > Begin preparing ahead of time. Avoid cramming!
 - > What time of day is best?
 - > Have a set amount of time to study.
- ◉ Organizing Study material
 - > What type of learner are you?
 - Audio: Hear
 - Visual: See
 - Kinesthetic: Touch
- ◉ Note taking during class
- ◉ Study groups

External Pressure

- ◉ What worries you?
 - > Success versus failure
 - > Consequences at home or at school
 - > Peer pressure
 - > Competitiveness

Decreasing Anxiety

- ◉ Get a good night's sleep
- ◉ Eat something healthy before the test if possible
- ◉ Dress comfortably
- ◉ Be prepared
- ◉ Go in with confidence!

Decreasing Anxiety

- ◉ Negative self talk & Thought stopping
- ◉ Avoid all or nothing language
- ◉ Creating a counterargument
- ◉ Relaxation techniques

Negative Self Talk & Thought Stopping

- What is negative self talk?
- STOP! Or CANCEL THAT!
- Redirect yourself when thinking self defeating negative thoughts such as “I know I can’t pass” or “This is awful”
- Instead say:
 - I can do this!
 - I am prepared!

Avoid all or nothing language

- “I ALWAYS fail” versus “I have failed”
- “ I NEVER get the grade I want” versus “ Sometimes I don’t get the grade I want”
- Avoid stating **Demands** versus **Preferences**
 - > “I HAVE to do well” “I MUST do well” versus “I’d LIKE to do well”

Creating a Counterargument

- ◉ Ask yourself these questions:
 - > Viewing the situation objectively, what are the odds of the negative outcome actually happening?
 - > If the worst did happen, is it actually true that I couldn't handle it?
- ◉ Create this list:
 - > Identify and list specific ways in which you would cope with what you fear will happen.

Relaxation Techniques

- ◉ Taking deep breaths
 - > 5 seconds in, hold for five, breathe out slowly
- ◉ Relax Muscles
 - > Start at head and move through to toes
- ◉ Positive Visualizations
 - > This can be done before and during the test

Questions?

For more information contact:

Stonebriar Counseling Associates

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Resources

- J.C. (2010). Test anxiety: Contemporary theories and implications for learning. In J.C. Cassady (Ed.), *Anxiety in schools: The causes, consequences, and solutions for academic anxieties* (pp. 7-26). New York, NY: Peter Lang,
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