

Successful Strategies for Test Anxiety

We all experience some level of anxiety before a test. A little nervousness can actually help motivate us to perform our best. Too much anxiety can become a problem if it interferes with your performance on tests. Some strategies for dealing with test anxiety:

Before the test, take good care of yourself:

- **Be prepared.** Study the material in advance; do not leave cramming for the day before your test. Do not do a last minute review.
- **Get plenty of sleep,** it is hard to function at your best when overtired.
- **Avoid any use of drugs and alcohol,** they can interfere with your mental ability.
- **Exercise** may increase your alertness and sharpen your mind.
- **Have a moderate breakfast,** fresh fruits and vegetables help reduce stress; avoid caffeine, sugar and junk foods.
- **Allow yourself plenty of time;** arrive at the test location early.
- **Choose a seat** where you will not be easily distracted.
- **Use abdominal breathing** to help reduce anxiety. Place one hand on your abdomen, right beneath your rib cage. Inhale through your nose and feel your abdomen fill like a balloon ...count to three on your inhalation and then slowly exhale counting to four, feeling your abdomen contracting with the exhalation.
- **Do a reality check,** how important is this exam in the grand scheme of things? Put it in perspective.
- **Use positive affirmations,** say a phrase to help keep things in perspective, "I've done this before, I can do it again." or "I have all the knowledge I need to get this done."

During the test take a few minutes to:

- Review the entire test. Read the directions carefully.
- Work on the easiest portions of the test first.
- Pace yourself. Do not rush through the test.
- If you go blank, skip the question and go on.
- Multiple choice questions, read all the options first, eliminate the most obvious.
- Essay questions, make a short outline. Begin and end with a summary sentence.
- Take short breaks, tense and relax your muscles throughout your body.
- Pause, do a few abdominal breaths, say your affirmation.
- Stay in the present moment.
- There is no reward for being the first done.

After the test, reward yourself:

- Try not to dwell on your mistakes.
- Indulge in something relaxing for awhile.

IF TEST TAKING ANXIETY PERSISTS & BECOMES PROBLEMATIC, CONSIDER VISITING YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR OR OTHER HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL.