

TEST ANXIETY

Test Anxiety is an issue that many students face at one time or another. It is important to learn to recognize test anxiety and learn how to deal with the anxiety more effectively. Anxiety is a normal human feeling that is part of life and often serves as a form of adrenaline (e.g., butterflies before making a speech or performing on stage). The anxiety can help by providing alertness and readiness; however, excessive anxiety can result in stress and hinder one's performance by affecting one's thinking ability (e.g. Test Anxiety!!!).

Symptoms of Test Anxiety

- *Fear of failing* before arriving to take the exam
- *Feeling emotional tension* as exam is passed out; wanting to cry or laugh too much, or feeling angry or helpless.
- *Physical symptoms* such as: increased heart rate, shortness of breath, perspiring, sweaty palms, upset stomach, tense muscles, etc.
- *Negative thinking* such as: "I am going to fail", "I am dumb", "I shouldn't even bother taking the exam".
- *Blanking out* on information that you studied
- *Recalling information*, upon leaving the classroom or a short period later, that you "blanked out on" during the exam.
- *Frustrated with your grade* on the exam because you know you were well prepared.

Tips for Reducing Test Anxiety

- Prepare for the exam ahead of time. Build confidence by studying throughout the semester and avoid cramming the night before the exam.
- Learn to study the material by generating questions from your textbooks and lecture notes as you study; focusing on key words, concepts and examples in your textbooks and notes; making charts and outlines which organize the information.
- Get plenty of rest and sleep the night before the exam.
- Don't forget to eat something the day of the exam, preferably something nutritious (fresh fruit and vegetables are often recommended to reduce stress.)
- Avoid arriving too early or too late to the exam; calm yourself by taking some slow deep breaths.
- Avoid last minute studying, remembering you are already prepared.
- Avoid listening to others or discussing the exam with others while you are waiting for the exam. The anxiety of others can transfer to you.
- Remember to breathe! Take deep breaths to help you relax (nobody will notice) or use other relaxation techniques.
- While you are taking deep breaths, replace any negative thoughts with positive thoughts. For example, you may find it useful to repeat positive statements to yourself such as "I am relaxed", "I will be OK, I can do this", or "I am prepared". Make up your own!
- Do some serious "thought stopping" if you find that you are mentally comparing yourself to others, or thinking what others may say about your performance on the exam.
- Read the instructions carefully. Highlight them to increase your focus.

- Budget your test taking time.
- Don't get bogged down by questions you can't answer; skip the question and go on. Later the answer may come to you or you may get clues from other exam questions.
- Don't panic when students start handing in their papers; stick to your budgeted timeline.
- Reward yourself when you are finished with the exam