TEST ANXIETY

Presentation compiled by Lisa Bierre, MS. Ed., DCC Student Services 2007
WHAT IS TEST ANXIETY?

- Nervousness, tension or increased stress before or during a test
- “Fight or Flight”
- Some test anxiety is normal
- Can be a problem if it interferes with the ability to prepare for or perform on tests
PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS of TEST ANXIETY

- Headache
- Nausea
- Rapid heart rate
- Sweating
- Dizziness
- Tense muscles
- Dry mouth
- Shortness of breath
EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS of TEST ANXIETY

Excessive feelings of:

• Fear/Panic
• Anger
• Irritability
• Fidgeting/pacing
• Depression
• Avoidance/need to escape
COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS of TEST ANXIETY

- Difficulty concentrating
- Racing thoughts
- Negative self-talk
- “Blank out” during test
- Remembering forgotten material after test is over
- Overreacting or placing excessive importance on one test (worry about future)
Tips for Reducing Test Anxiety

• Preparation, Preparation, Preparation
• Replace WORRY with ACTION
• Replace negative self-talk with positive statements
• Practice taking tests
• Relaxation or deep breathing
TEST PREPARATION

- Study a little every day
- Avoid procrastination
- Don’t cram the night before
- Review past tests
- Practice taking tests using testing conditions (time limits, etc.)
- Work in a study group. Make up test questions for yourself or classmates.
- Overlearn material. Continue to review it, even if you think you know it.
TO REDUCE PRE-TEST ANXIETY:

• Combat negative self-talk

• Mental visualization: Picture yourself successfully and calmly taking the test

• Take care of yourself:
  - Get plenty of rest
  - eat well
  - exercise
NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

• I know I’m going to fail.
• I always blank out during tests.
• There is too much information I need to know; I will never learn it all.
• If I don’t pass this test, I’m a failure.
• Everybody else is smarter than me.
• I shouldn’t even bother taking the test.
• I’ll never make it in college.
When you catch yourself using negative self-talk:

• Yell “STOP!”
• Replace negative thoughts with positive statements.
• Replace Worry with Action: Do something positive.
POSITIVE SELF-TALK

• I have studied the material.
• I can pass this test.
• I don’t have to be perfect.
• I can worry later. Right now, I will concentrate on this test.
• I will focus on what I know, rather than worry about what I don’t know.
• I will use this test to show what I know.
The DAY of the TEST:

• Eat a good breakfast
• Arrive on time
• Avoid last-minute cramming
• Avoid talking with classmates before the test. Their anxiety can be contagious!
• Before the test, distract yourself with something relaxing or take a walk
• Control negative thoughts
• Sit away from distractions
• Do relaxation or breathing exercises
DURING the TEST

Preview Test:
• *Read all directions* carefully
• “Memory Dump”
• Pace your time

Take Test:
• Do easy questions first
• Skip hard questions; come back to them later
• Do muscle relaxation or deep breathing
• Don’t worry about what others are doing
• Use all of the test time. If you finish early, check over your answers.
WAYS to RELAX

• Physical Exercise
• Yoga or Meditation
• Progressive Muscle Relaxation
• Deep Breathing Exercises
PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

- Tense the muscles in your arms.
- Hold for 5 seconds, then relax.
- Repeat 3 times.
- Tense the muscles in your legs.
- Hold for 5 seconds, then relax.
- Repeat 3 times.

- You should feel your body physically relaxing as you break the cycle of tension.
DEEP BREATHING

Through your nose, inhale slowly, counting to 3. Hold your breath to the count of 3. Through your mouth, exhale slowly, counting to 3. Count to 3, then repeat the cycle.

Repeat several times, keeping the rhythm.
AFTER the TEST

• Reward yourself, no matter how you did on the test. You got through it!
• Don’t dwell on the test. Worrying now won’t change anything.
• When you get the test back, review it to note the types of mistakes you made.
• Use each test to help you better prepare for the next test.
REMEMBER

- This is only one test.
- Focus and do your best.
- You don’t have to be perfect.
- Use each test as a learning experience as to how to improve on the next test.
- Preparation is the best prevention for Test Anxiety.
References


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