

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. Here are some strategies that are extremely useful if implemented into your exam-prep regimen:

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 or alcohol.** They can interfere with your mental ability.
- **Exercise.** Movement can increase your alertness and sharpen your mind- especially if you take breaks to stretch while studying and then do the same types of stretches just before the exam.
- **Have a moderate breakfast.** Fresh fruits and vegetables help reduce stress; avoid excessive caffeine, sugar and junk foods- these may make you jittery or sluggish.
- **Allow yourself plenty of time.** Arrive at the test location early.
- **Choose a seat.** The best option would be one where you will not be easily distracted, such as the front row.
- **Use abdominal breathing.** This can significantly help you 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.
- **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:

- **Quickly review the entire test.** Read the directions carefully.
- **Work on the easiest portions of the test first.** Skip over the more challenging questions and go back to them.
- **Pace yourself.** Do not rush through the test.
- **Multiple choice questions.** Read all the options first and 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 and say your affirmation(s).
- **Stay in the present moment.** Do not let your thoughts wander.
- **Remind yourself there is no reward for being the first one done with the test.**

AFTER THE TEST, REWARD YOURSELF:

- Try not to dwell on your mistakes.
- Indulge in something relaxing and rewarding for a while.
- Remember, you made it through and if you put forth effort, you deserve a reward- regardless of the exam results.

CHECKLIST FOR AVOIDING TEST ANXIETY

The most effective way to avoid test anxiety is to be thoroughly prepared, even over-prepared. The following checklist will help you determine how well you are prepared for the test:

- 🍎 I have taken excellent notes in each class session.
- 🍎 I have improved upon these notes, added to them from my readings, and annotated them with my thoughts.
- 🍎 I have gone over my notes with a study partner.
- 🍎 I feel that my notes are a fair representation of the information presented in class.
- 🍎 I have reviewed my notes each day for at least 5 days.
- 🍎 After I have reviewed each set of notes for 5 days, I have continued to review each set of notes at least once a week.
- 🍎 I have previewed and skimmed the test material covered in the test.
- 🍎 I have read the material and prepared study cards of the details in the text which I did not know.
- 🍎 I have prepared study cards for the details of my notes which I do not recall after a minimum of 5 days review.
- 🍎 I have made extensive use of study cards.
- 🍎 I have reviewed the study cards at least 5 times with at least one hour between each review.
- 🍎 I have continued to review study cards at least once every week after I have initially learned them.
- 🍎 I have prepared a practice test that covers at least one third of the material covered in class.
- 🍎 I have discussed this material with someone and explained the important points of this material; OR I have developed an outline of the important facts; OR I have developed some type of visual organizer of the important facts of the material.
- 🍎 I feel that I know the details of the material covered by this test.
- 🍎 I know what type of questions will be on the test.
- 🍎 I know how many questions will be on the test and how many of each type.
- 🍎 I know how much each question or type of question will count toward my grade on the test.
- 🍎 I know how much time I will have on the test.
- 🍎 I know what material the test will cover.
- 🍎 I feel I have found out all I can about the test.
- 🍎 I have developed a schedule that plans my time on the test so that I spend my time according to the value of each question.
- 🍎 I have gone over in my mind doing well on the test. I am envisioning success for this test.
- 🍎 I feel I have control of all elements of this test.