

LETTING GO OF TEST ANXIETY

Test anxiety is common in students in all stages of study. While a little anxiety is helpful -- it makes you study when you feel unmotivated -- some students can become overwhelmed and physically sick from anxiety. Here are some strategies to combat the debilitating feelings and thoughts, so you can concentrate both in and out of the exam.

BEFORE THE EXAM

1. Imagine the worst. Make a mental or physical list of "the worst" that could happen. Push your thoughts to the limit (i.e. I will fail test, fail class, lose financial aid, drop out of school, won't get a job, will run out of money, will starve, etc.) Then go back and let yourself be reasonably concerned. Remember that **NO TEST IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL PEOPLE.**
2. Take the anxiety out of the test situation. Two nights before the exam take a practice test complete with a quiet room, a classroom type of desk and a time limit. Make it as real as possible. This should cause some anxiety but help relieve your anxiety on test day. Finish the test completely and then use the results for further study.

BEFORE AND UP TO THE LAST MINUTE OF THE EXAM

3. Yell "Stop!" When your mind is racing with negative thoughts, tell yourself out loud, or in your head to stop. You then need to remove yourself from the thoughts by:
4. Daydreaming. Choose one or two places you really like to be. Or remember your favorite parts in a relaxing movie. Go there, think of each and every detail. How does it feel to be there, what are the smells, the sights the sounds? This distance will help you come back and refocus.
5. Think positively. Tell yourself over and over that you can do it, that you have studied, that you are smart. Remember positive comments from teachers and friends. At the very least think, "I am doing my best."
6. Stay out of the classroom. Before the exam, put your books and things in the room. Set up to take the test and then go out of the room. Walk around, visualize and relax. Don't try to study, and don't listen to your peers. Their anxiety will cause more anxiety in you and their quick review sessions may confuse what you already know. While waiting for the test to begin, practice relaxation techniques over and over.

DURING THE EXAM

7. Breathe. Practice breathing methods. Practice taking deep breaths and holding them, or taking deep breaths and letting the air out through pursed lips. At first your body will fight you, but continue until your heart slows down with your breathing.
8. Take Breaks. Sit up straight, tense and release back and neck muscles and then breathe deeply. Get back to the test.