

CONTROLLING TEST ANXIETY

Most of us feel some anxiety when we are being evaluated. In fact, up to a certain point, it can improve your performance. However, too much anxiety can also hinder your performance. If you are anxious about tests, exams or presentations you may experience symptoms such as: butterflies in the stomach, perspiring, shortness of breath and a quickened heart rate.

What you can do:

1. **Study!** Being prepared for a test/exam is one of the best ways to avoid anxiety. Avoid cramming for a test. Begin to study further in advance so that you can effectively remember the material.
2. **Keep things in perspective.** One test won't make or break you. There will be other opportunities to show your ability. Don't believe that your grade on the test reflects your future success. It doesn't. Your performance on a test/exam depends on how well you studied for it and the test-taking strategies you use.
3. **Visualize completing the test successfully despite your anxiety.** Play the entire "tape" in your mind from the moment you arise on the day of the test to the moment you complete it. Think positive.
4. **Practice controlling your anxiety.** Thoughts which have nothing to do with the test may creep into your mind. Negative thoughts i.e "I'm going to fail" etc. may also intrude. When they do, don't get upset. Bring your attention back to the test.
5. **Get enough sleep the night before.** With adequate sleep, your ability to deal with anxiety and your ability to remember the material you studied will improve.
6. **Eat a good breakfast.** Avoid drinking coffee or energy drinks that contain caffeine. The effects of caffeine will increase your anxiety. Take some deep breaths during the test. This will help you to relax.
7. **Do not listen to your classmates talk about the test immediately prior to writing it.** It may confuse you or cause you unnecessary or increased stress. Their anxieties may rub off on you. Instead, arrive early, take a walk, meditate to relax, say a prayer or give yourself positive self talk.
8. **Reward yourself after the test. You deserve it.**