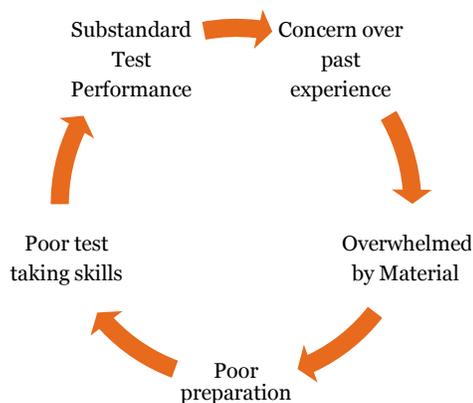


WHAT TO DO ABOUT...TEST ANXIETY

STRATEGIES FOR COLLEGE SUCCESS SERIES (graphic free version available upon request)

WHAT IS TEST ANXIETY?

Test Anxiety is a learned behavior that may cause real physical/emotional distress which can interfere with academic performance, including memory recall, attention to details and time management during exams.



TEST ANXIETY CYCLE

“Worrying is like a rocking chair...it gives you something to do, but it doesn’t get you anywhere.” - Anonymous

MYTHS ABOUT TEST ANXIETY

- Test Anxiety is a mental illness
- Test anxiety cannot be reduced
- ANY LEVEL of test anxiety is bad
- Students with test anxiety cannot learn math
- Doing nothing about test anxiety will make it go away
- Very intelligent students do not have test anxiety.

Anxiety Types and Negative Self-Talk

The Worrier increases anxiety by negative self-talk. The Worrier’s favorite question is “What if...” (What if I fail this test, What if I get to the test and forget everything I studied...)

The Victim increases depression by negative self-talk. Favorite statement is, “I can’t. I will never be able to, no matter how hard I try...”

The Critic increases anxiety by reducing self-esteem. Favorite statements are, “You are too stupid to...” If they pass a test then; “You should have done better.”

The Perfectionist uses stress to push self toward success. Favorite statement is, “Nothing less than an A+ will do!”

Practice Positivity

The Worrier who asks “What if I fail the test?” Can counter with “If I fail this test. I will use what I learned to do better on the next one.”

The Victim who feels destined to a life of hopelessness will say “NO way I will ever pass math,” can counter with “I’ve been working on different ways to study and test, so that I can pass it this time!”

The Critic who hammers away at self-esteem saying, “I have test anxiety and that means I will fail again,” can think instead, “I know I have test anxiety but I’m learning and practicing ways to control it.”

The Perfectionist who says “I *have to* get an A or I’m a failure,” can say instead, “I don’t need an A to be successful. What’s important is building a foundation of knowledge to build on for the next course.”

***** TEST ANXIETY IS NOT ANXIETY DISORDER!
DO YOU SUSPECT YOU HAVE AN ANXIETY DISORDER?
ANXIETY DISORDER CAN ONLY BE DIAGNOSED BY PSYCHIATRIST
OR OTHER LICENSED PROFESSIONAL**



THE PROBLEM WITH NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

“What we say to ourselves in response to an event determines our mood or feeling about that event. Sometimes we say these internal thoughts so quickly that we don’t even notice. We come to believe that the situation is causing the feeling, when it’s really our thoughts about the event that are causing our emotions.” Paul Nolting Ph.D

You have a choice! Choosing positive self-talk over negative while doing homework, testing, brain-storming...can go a long way toward helping you manage your test anxiety. Remember! Negative self-talk may *seem* logical and rational when you are anxious, but usually it is not based on factual information about you nor your complete experience.

THE BEST TOOL AGAINST TEST ANXIETY IS PREPARATION

- **Overlearn the material**...sitting with a book on your lap while watching TV is not an efficient way to learn!
- **Develop a study strategy** that ensures you know *what* you know before test day
- **Learn and *practice* Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques** before you need them
- **Discover ways to help you STOP** negative self-talk in its tracks; At home, interrupt the thought by making a loud sound like slapping the desk, or firmly saying “STOP THAT”...in public repeat silently to yourself, AND THEN – redirect the thought to the positive one you’ve practiced.

PROVEN RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

The Tensing and Differential Relaxation Method.

1. Feet flat on the floor while seated in chair, grab underneath the seat of chair with your hands.
2. Push down with your feet while pulling up on chair with your hands at the same time.
3. Hold this position for about 5 seconds.
4. Relax your body for 5-10 seconds while silently reciting positive self talk. Repeat the procedure 2-3 times.

The Palming Method

1. Close and cover your eyes using the very center of the palms of your hands.
2. Form a pocket over your eyes with your palms. Do not let your hands touch your eyes in any way.
3. Think of some real or imaginary scenes that are relaxing to you and mentally visualize the scene.
4. See yourself there.
5. Visualize this relaxing scene for one to two minutes.
6. Take 2 deep cleansing breaths when you are finished.

Deep Breathing Method

1. Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose, filling up the bottom of your lungs first.
2. When you have a full breath, stop for a few seconds and hold your breath.
3. Exhale slowly through your mouth, as if you were whistling out the air. Exhale fully and let your whole body relax.
4. Wait a few seconds and then start to inhale, starting over at number 1.