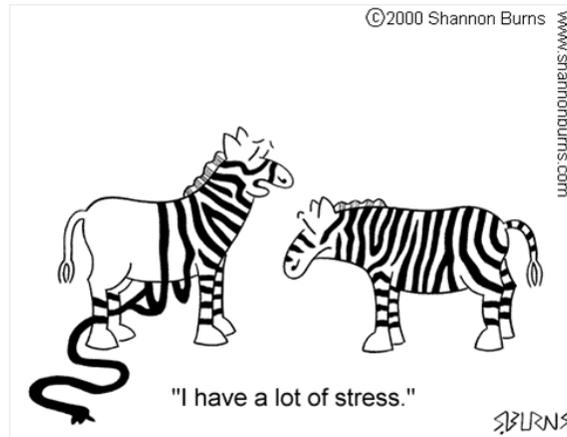


PASS Test Anxiety Management



Test anxiety is worry or fear caused by having to take tests. Most students feel some level of anxiety in testing situations and this helps motivate them to do their best. However, for some students, test anxiety is so intense that it negatively affects their academic success.

Taking control of test anxiety and minimizing its negative effects is possible through **P**reparation, **A**ssessment, **S**trategies, and **S**tress management.

Preparation (P)

Develop strategies and techniques to improve your test preparation. Keep in mind the following: test anxiety is *primarily* caused by insufficient preparation. Effective test preparation includes: a) studying the “right” material, b) reading assigned text chapters or supplemental readings, c) attending and participating in all classes, d) taking effective notes, e) completing all assignments, and f) studying in an optimal environment utilizing study strategies based on your most effective learning style.

Assessment (A)

Determine the sources of your anxiety and select appropriate strategies to decrease your anxiety. Possible sources of anxiety include: a) insufficient preparation (see section above), b) expectations/pressure from yourself or others, c) poor past experiences with tests, and d) fear of failure. All of these can cause negative patterns of thinking and can increase anxiety.

Strategies (S)

Learn effective test taking strategies for exams. Practice applying these strategies before taking an exam. A good approach to taking most exams is to first take a few moments to relax (see below), coach yourself by providing positive self-statements while you take the exam (see below), and attack the exam in the following manner: 1) first answer the questions you know, then 2) answer the questions you are not sure about, and finally 3) answer the questions you don't know. Be sure to always check your answers before turning in your test.

Stress Management (S)

Practice these techniques to help you relax and cope before, during, and after an exam.

Quick Relaxation Strategies:

1. **Deep breathing:** breathe in through your nose slowly and first fill the bottom of your lungs, then add to the top. You can briefly hold it in and then slowly let it out through your nose.
2. **Tense & relax:** quickly scan every muscle from your head down to your toes. For any muscle that is tense, tighten it, breathe in deeply, let out your breath and notice your muscle relaxing until your whole body is limp like a rag doll.
3. **Imagine a peaceful scene:** while taking in slow, deep breaths, imagine a scene in your head that is particularly peaceful. Imagine distracting or negative thoughts floating in your brain on a cloud and watch them float away, as you continue to relax.
4. **Mind quieting:** first, focus on your breathing. As you breathe in slowly tell yourself, “I am.” Then, as you breathe out slowly, say to yourself, “calm.”

Use Positive Coping Strategies:

1. Eliminate negative self-talk (e.g., “I can’t do this.” “No one will be able to help me.”).
2. Use “cheerleader” statements that will help you feel confident (e.g. “I studied hard and can do this.” “I can ask for help from the teacher.”).
3. Reward yourself after staying calm as possible during an exam (e.g., do something relaxing for yourself later that day; tell yourself you did a great job).