

Dealing with Test Anxiety

This presentation will answer the following questions.

- What is test anxiety?
- What causes test anxiety?
- What are the symptoms of test anxiety?
- How can you reduce test anxiety?

What is test anxiety?

- Test anxiety is too much stress in test-taking situations.
- The stress gets in the way of your ability to prepare for and take a test.
- No one is born with anxiety about taking tests. Because we learn to be anxious, we can unlearn it .

What causes test anxiety?

Test anxiety is learned over a period of time. It is often caused by the following:

- pressure from others to perform
- past negative test experiences
- fear of failure and
- believing your test performance determines your self-worth.



Test anxiety is caused by feeling pressured to perform well.

I'll never get into the nursing program. It is so competitive, and I'm having a hard time understanding A & P.

I know my parents are going to be disappointed if I don't do well on this test.

Why did I ever think I could do this? Maybe I'm just not smart enough.



These negative thoughts lead to the Test Anxiety Cycle

Test Anxiety Cycle

This negative thinking

increases your
test anxiety

which causes

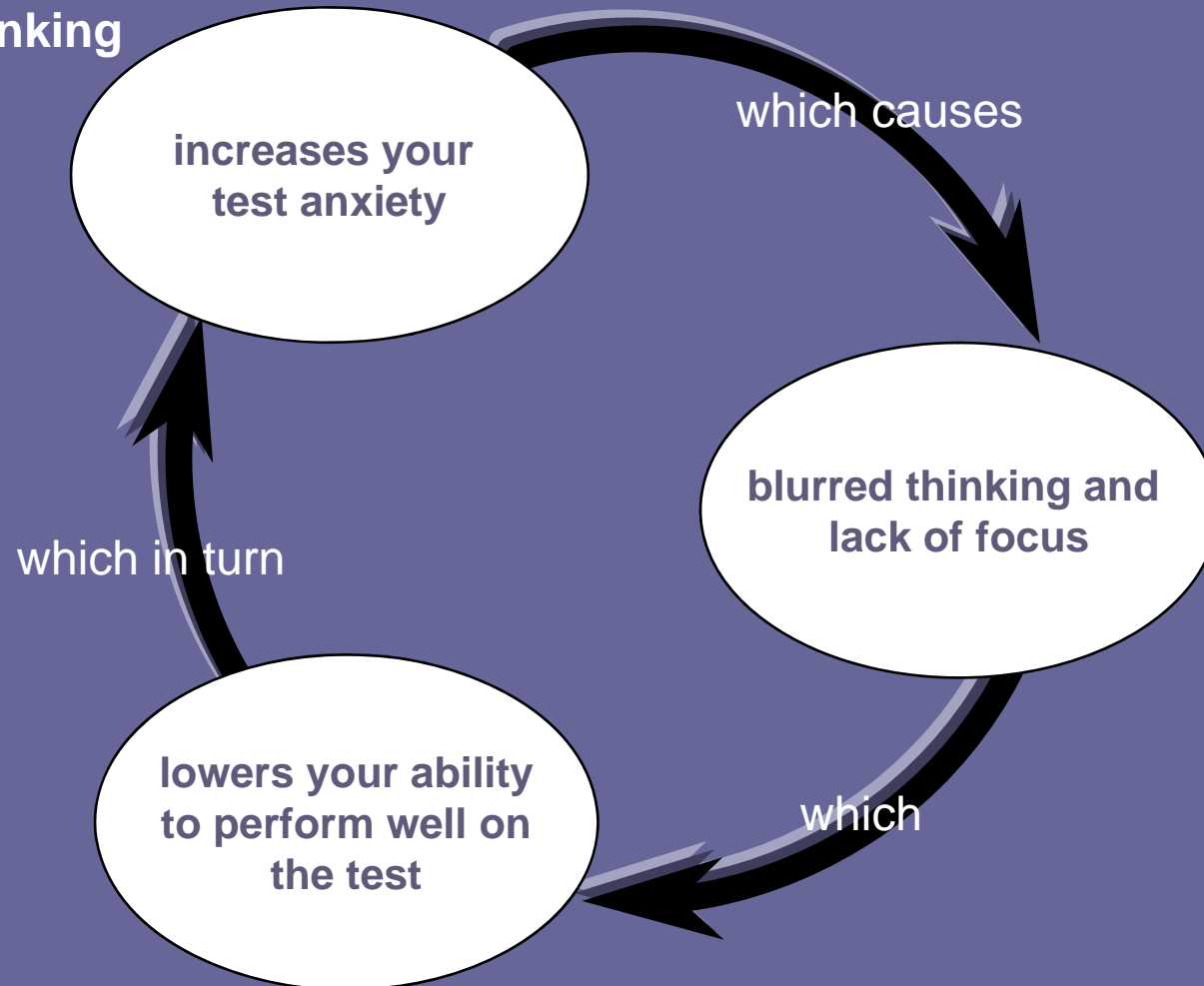
blurred thinking and
lack of focus

which in turn

lowers your ability
to perform well on
the test

which

How can you stop this vicious cycle?



First, get to know the symptoms of test anxiety.

My head aches and my heart feels like it is pounding out of my chest. When it's really bad, I get sweaty palms.

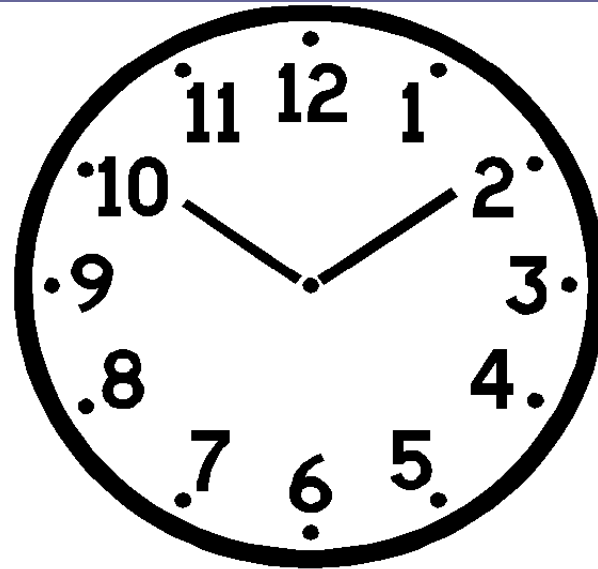


I feel completely out of control.



Me too. My thinking shuts down and I get very confused. Eventually I'm exhausted. I might as well hang a closed sign on my head.





I keep looking at the clock and thinking about how much there is to do. I feel so much pressure. I can't think about answering the questions.

Let's review the symptoms of test anxiety...

Physical symptoms may include:

- **headaches**
- **tension in the neck and shoulders**
- **stomach aches**
- **rapid heartbeat**
- **quick, shallow breathing**
- **sweaty palms**

Others you experience?

These may be accompanied by...

Thought disruptions such as:

- inability to think
- confusion
- loss of concentration
- negative self-talk
- feeling out of control
- Others?

If you have several of these symptoms,
chances are you have test anxiety.

Here's what you can do...

First I changed my thinking from negative to positive.

And I learned simple but effective relaxation techniques.

Then I found opportunities to practice taking tests.

I used a three step approach to reducing my test anxiety.



Now I can show what I know.

Reducing Test Anxiety

Test anxiety is learned and can be unlearned.

You can replace anxiety with relaxation and concentration so that you can show what you know.

Learn three steps to reduce test anxiety.

Let's start now!

Step 1: Practice Positive Thinking



I changed my thinking to focus on what I will do.

By Changing negative thoughts like these:

There is too much material to cover...

I really don't understand this section.



There are 100 terms.
How will I ever remember them all?

To...

Positive Thoughts

I have two weeks.
I will make a study
plan.

I'll write down my
questions and talk
with my instructor
after class.



I know some of
these terms. I'll
make flash cards
and study with
Paul tomorrow.

Here's what you can do for positive thinking.

- Notice your own limiting thoughts and write them down.
- Then write down a positive thought to replace it. Remember to make it something you will do.
- Tear up the negative thoughts you wrote down.
- Now when you notice limiting thoughts, replace them with your positive, proactive thoughts.

Step 2: Learn to Relax



Relaxation training made a

**Now I can show
what I know!**

Here's how you can learn to relax.

- Listen to a relaxation exercise that helps you relax.
- Practice learning to relax until it comes easily to you.
- Then, imagine taking a test. When you begin to feel anxious, practice your relaxation techniques until you are calm.



Relaxation exercises available at the Information Counter in the Learning Center and on-line at www.lessons4living.com/relaxation_exercise_download.htm

Step 3: Practice Taking Tests

Ask your instructor if she or he could provide practice tests.

If practice tests are not available, make your own or use the questions at the end of the chapters. Work together in a study group to come up with test questions.



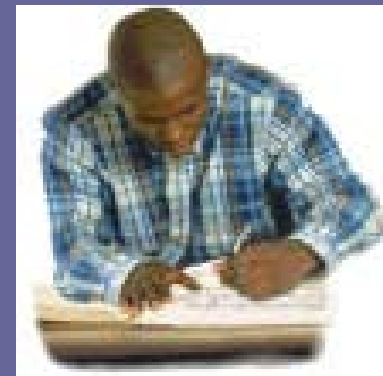
- If possible, practice the test in the classroom or in a place similar to the one where you will be taking your actual test.



- Practice working with time limits. Set an alarm clock and work only until it rings.

If you begin to feel anxiety, practice using positive self-talk and relaxation to calm down and refocus on the test.

Take tests whenever you have the opportunity even if you feel uncomfortable.



During the test, keep your attention focused on the test.

If you are thinking about something else, then you are not using your brain to answer the questions on the test.

Change from this
To this...



Four strategies to stay focused

1. Recognize when you are tense or thinking about something besides the test questions.
2. Relax by using the muscle relaxation strategies you have learned.
3. Redirect your attention to the test, calmly and effectively.
4. Focus on reading the question and understanding exactly what the question asks.

Find additional support in the Learning Center

- Reading and Study Skills Help
- Writing Lab for grammar support
- Writing Desk
- Math Help
- Science Help
- Tutoring Center
- Computer Lab

**Service,
Support...Smiles**



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