

TEST ANXIETY – Ideas for students, teachers and parents

Students may experience anxiety about tests and may experience heightened anxiety before a testing situation. A certain degree of test anxiety is normal and may help students prepare more effectively, work more efficiently, and remain focused during testing. Too much anxiety, however, can negatively affect performance. The following strategies may assist students, parents, and teachers in reducing test anxiety.

Student Strategies for Reducing Test Anxiety

- Practice *slow* deep breathing techniques (not hyperventilation!). This triggers a natural physiological relaxation response.
- Catch yourself perseverating on thoughts of failure or other negative thoughts, and practice stopping these thoughts.
- Share your feelings of anxiety with parents and teachers.
- Get good rest and eat right.
- Think of the test as an opportunity to show what you know.
- Review homework and materials which pertain to the test topics.
- Remember the test is only one way your academic performance is measured.
- Practice strategy in approaching multiple-choice answers. If you are not confident about the question, eliminating just one choice you know is erroneous (out of five) increases your chance of a correct answer by 20%.

Parent Strategies for Reducing Test Anxiety

- Discuss the test openly and in a positive way.
- Have realistic expectations of your child's performance while encouraging his/her best efforts.
- Emphasize that the test is only one measure of academic performance.
- Emphasize that test scores do not determine a person's worth.
- Encourage your child to get adequate rest and eat enough.

Teacher Strategies for Reducing Test Anxiety

- Provide a good foundation the entire school year by teaching study skills: i.e., effective note-taking, how to review material effectively, listening for the most important information in a lecture, time management. Don't assume that students know how to do these things effectively.
- Throughout the year, do your best to develop and maintain a positive working relationship with students. Offer one-on-one time periodically to check in and offer support/guidance.
- Encourage and reassure students when it comes to test concerns.
- “Coach” relaxation skills to very anxious students (see your school psychologist for tips on this: breathing techniques, thought-stopping, etc.)
- Help students put the test in proper perspective.
- Remind students that they know more than they may think they know.
- Do your best to motivate students to prepare for tests.
- Have realistic expectations of students' performance while encouraging students to do their best.
- Allow students to express their anxiety verbally or in writing.
- Be careful not to over emphasize the importance of the test.