

## Letting Go of Test Anxiety

Test anxiety is common in students. While a little anxiety can be helpful when feeling unmotivated, some students can become overwhelmed and physically ill when facing a difficult situation. Here are some strategies to combat the negative feelings and thoughts.

### Before the Exam

- Making a list of "the worst" things that could happen helps students see that this test is not the end of the world. This idea will help calm a nervous tester.
- Students can take the anxiety out of the situation by giving themselves a practice test in a quiet room with a desk and a time limit. If the test situation is as real as possible, they will have an idea of their mastery of the material. Students can ask the instructor for practice tests or make up test questions from notes. The Tutoring Center is able to help with this. This should help relieve anxiety on test day. By finishing the practice test in a set time and grading it using the text and notes, students have a better idea what to study for the actual test.
- Students can use constructive study methods. Some students cannot read whole chapters at a time and stay focused, so they can try reading one section of the text and summarizing it before moving on. Margin notes will remind them to ask questions in class. Studying with a group also broadens understanding by getting others' ideas on what will be on the test. Students can quiz each other from flashcards or suggested test questions.

### Test Day

- Test day is when the negative thoughts can take over, so students need to fight the urge to panic and simply practice relaxation techniques that are designed to calm and focus. Thinking of a peaceful place, a favorite part of a movie, or a loved one's face can be calming. By relaxing for just a brief time, the student can usually stop the negative thoughts that prevent productive thinking.
- A student who thinks positively will release some of the tension on test day. Positive thoughts include reminding oneself of all the studying and hard work that went into the preparation for this day and thinking of positive comments from family and friends. A well-prepared student will not allow his or her mind to feel failure.
- Students should not sit in the classroom waiting for the test to start. After setting up all the supplies for the test, students should leave the stress-filled atmosphere and go down the hall or to a quiet place and practice a relaxation technique such as deep breathing or stretching. Listening to others who are nervous about the test will only increase a student's own anxiety.

### During the Exam

- Once the test begins, students should remember to breathe deeply and regularly to increase blood flow to the brain and slow down a pounding heart rate.
- When possible, students should take breaks by sitting up straight, tensing and relaxing the back and shoulders, and rotating the neck muscles. Discreetly suck on a mint to relieve dry mouth and stop a growling stomach. A thirty second break can stop the knots in the stomach, clear the mind, and produce a more positive attitude.
- Students can review the test and begin to answer questions they know to build confidence; then they can return to the harder ones. A blank page or no questions answered will only build stress, so starting the test will help. As the test progresses, a student can look for answers to questions in other sections of the test. Allowing time to review will eliminate missed questions. After the test is finished and ready to be turned in, a student should breathe a sigh of relief and glance back over any troublesome questions for one last look, but should not second-guess and change an answer without a good reason.

Good Luck on Test Day!