Test anxiety is a common condition characterized by excessive nervousness, fear, or apprehension before or during an examination or assessment.1

### Common Symptoms of Test Anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Symptoms</th>
<th>Rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, upset stomach, muscle tension, sweating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Symptoms</td>
<td>Racing thoughts, inability to concentrate, negative self-talk, blanking out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Symptoms</td>
<td>Procrastination, skipping class or tests, difficulty sleeping, not eating (no appetite)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What can you do to manage test anxiety?

#### Before the Test:

1. **Study Effectively**
   - **Create a Study Schedule**: Start early! You need to spend enough time studying. Plan for more time than you think you need.
   - **Use Active Learning Techniques**: Passive reading and reviewing notes is less effective than active learning methods. Try techniques like summarizing the material in your own words, self-testing with practice questions, and teaching the content to someone else. Active engagement with the material enhances understanding and retention.

2. **Learn Relaxation Techniques**
   - **Deep Breathing Exercises**: Incorporate deep breathing exercises into your daily routine or you can comfortably use on test day. Deep, slow breaths can calm your nervous system and reduce anxiety.
   - **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**: This technique involves tensing and relaxing different muscle groups to release physical tension. Practice it regularly to become more adept at identifying and releasing tension.

3. **Engage in Positive Self-Talk**
   Talk to yourself as if you were talking to your good friend. Talk to yourself in the third person—that is, use your name. Challenge negative thoughts with evidence of your past successes and strengths.

4. **Cultivate a Healthy Lifestyle**
   - **Prioritize Sleep**: Adequate sleep is essential for cognitive function and emotional well-being. Aim for consistent sleep schedule and create a relaxing bedtime routine. Avoid caffeine and screens close to bedtime.
   - **Eat Healthy Food**: Consume a well-balanced diet. Nutrient-rich foods provide the energy and mental clarity needed for effective learning and for test-taking.
   - **Move Your Body**: Physical activity can help reduce stress and anxiety. Even short daily walks can be beneficial.
During the Test:

**BODY -** Racing heart, muscle tension, nausea, sweating, shallow breathing.

Massage shoulders, eat peppermints/ginger, wear layers you can take off, try deep breathing exercises.

**EMOTIONS -** The predominant feeling is usually fear, secondary is anger, frustration, and/or sadness.

- Pretend you are talking to a friend. What would you say to a friend in a similar situation?
- Reframe your fear: being afraid shows you care about this test.
- Visualize yourself in a safe, happy place.

**THOUGHTS -** The “if -then” snowball: “If I don’t do well on this test then... And then... and then...”

- Create a mental image to alert you of the test anxiety spiral, such as a STOP sign to interrupt the pattern.
- Imagine positive outcomes.
- Reframe the situation: you are a high-achiever, you like to challenge yourself, you are persistent and that is why you are taking this challenging course.

After the Test:
To really learn, you need to review your test results. What questions did you answer correctly? What mistakes did you make? Were your mistakes a result of carelessness or did you not know the answers or only partially know the answers?

Summary:
Test anxiety is common, but it can be managed with the right strategies and in many cases with support. By implementing effective study habits, practicing relaxation techniques, and maintaining a positive mindset, you can overcome test anxiety and perform your best on exams.

**Remember that seeking help and support is a sign of strength, not weakness.** Make an appointment with an Academic Success Coach today! We will support you on your academic journey.

---

