



### Test Anxiety

By KSU Counseling Services Staff

#### HOW CAN YOU REDUCE TEST ANXIETY?

##### While Studying:

- Set up your study goals and take one step at a time to not overwhelm yourself.
- Allow yourself plenty of time to accomplish all the things you have to do before the test.
- Build up confidence by reviewing the material frequently, in small blocks of time each day for several days before a test.
- If you are feeling anxiety building, try one of the following stress buster exercises.

##### Stress Busters:

- Engage in deep breathing for 2-5 minutes. Close your eyes and concentrate on the air going in and out of your lungs. Take long, deep breaths, fill your lungs and abdomen, hold your breath, and then exhale.
- Tense and relax different muscle groups. For example, if your shoulders are tense pull them back and hold them for a few seconds, then relax. This will help you to be aware of the relaxation of muscles and help you to relax more.
- Engage in guided imagery for a few minutes. Pick a scene that you find

peaceful, beautiful, and natural. Think about what you see, what you hear, what you feel and what you smell while in this scene.

- Try to describe the anxiety. Focus your attention on your anxiety and think about the feelings it causes: how large is it? Where is it located in your body? What is its color, its shape, and its texture? If you can completely experience a physical sensation it will often disappear.
- Aerobic exercise will help you to release anxiety and excess energy and, as a result, reduce body tension.
- Engage in positive self-talk. This involves:
  - Thinking about rational responses to counter negative thoughts (e.g., instead of saying "I'm going to fail this test" say "I have the ability to do this, I just need to get some help.")
  - Thoughts that help you to cope with stress (e.g., "a little, anxiety is helpful will just try my best:")
  - Thoughts that keep you on task (e.g., "I can write this paper if I break it into smaller steps.")

##### PRIOR TO THE TEST:

- Arrive early so you can sit where you are most comfortable, and avoid people who are anxious and might cause you to doubt your knowledge.
- When you receive the test look it over, read the directions twice, and then organize your time efficiently.
- Don't rush through the test, but work at a comfortable, pace and don't worry about how far along your classmates are on the test.

### **DURING THE TEST:**

Try some of these options:

- Use some of the Stress Buster exercises during the test, such as deep breathing and muscle relaxation. You may want to take a break for a few minutes during the test and try them.
- Get a drink of water and try to clear your mind.
- Move onto easier questions if you feel stumped by one; you can go back to it if you have time.
- Eat something or chew gum as an anxiety distraction.
- Ask the instructor a question if you are not clear about the wording of a question.
- Think about post-exam rewards for a minute as a way to motivate yourself.
- Utilize positive self-talk. Come up with positive statements which help to keep you calm, such as “this is only one test,” “I am familiar with this material,” “This test doesn’t reflect on my intelligence,” etc.



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