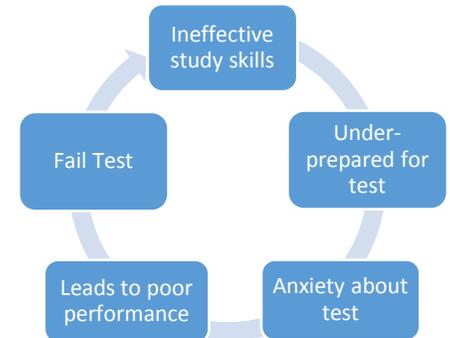


It's reasonable to feel some stress when taking exams in college since one exam may account for a large percentage of the final grade. In fact, some degree of nervousness can keep one alert from the extra adrenaline.

In most cases, test related stress can be reduced or eliminated by adopting a positive mindset and managing your time to include daily, weekly, and major reviews with flash cards or study questions to practice retrieving information.

There are many reasons to feel nervous about a test.

1. If your anxiety is a direct result of lack of preparation, cramming, inadequate time management, procrastination, or poor study skills, you can consider this a normal or reasonable reaction and something you can remedy.
2. If you're adequately prepared and have good study skills, some signs of test-stress or performance anxiety can include:
 - Freezing up and missing questions you know the answers to
 - Poor sleep or appetite
 - Fear, dread, and irritability
 - Headaches; inability to concentrate
 - After a test, symptoms may include mock indifference, guilt, anger, or blaming others.



There are many behaviors you can adopt that can reduce the effects of test stress. Learning Specialists at the Success Center can provide more detail and specific strategies.

To address thoughts:

1. Stop negative thoughts and fears before they spin out of control. Yell "Stop" aloud if it's appropriate.
2. Visualize success by mentally rehearsing feeling at ease while taking the exam.
3. Practice positive self-talk such as "You really prepared for this test," or "I am going to do well."

To address physical reactions:

1. Prior to the test, walk or move about for 15-20 minutes.
2. Breathe slowly through your nose so that you feel your abdomen gently expand. Hold your breath for a moment then exhale even more slowly. Repeat while focusing only on your breathing.
3. Tense and relax your muscle groups and major joints. For example, turn your head side-to-side to relax neck.
4. Visualize or use guided imagery to see yourself free of tension. Imagine yourself in a peaceful setting.

Examples of Positive Self-Talk

- When learning something new, I ask questions and proceed with confidence.
- Mistakes provide valuable feedback.
- I keep trying even when it's hard or unpleasant.
- I can't be perfect, but I do my best.
- Just do one thing at a time.

Habits to prevent stress from getting out of control:

1. **Avoid procrastination and cramming. Maintain a daily routine of memorizing and retrieval practice**
2. **Exercise regularly. Adopt a regular sleep schedule and eat a balanced diet.**
3. **Practice mindful breathing daily. Spend time in nature.**
4. **Seek help before nervousness explodes into uncontrollable anxiety or panic.**
5. **Come to the Success Center for study-strategies that are effective, including Brain Drain, Method of Loci, and Free Recall, to name a few. Also, learn some tips for taking different kinds of tests.**
6. **Work with Success Center tutors who can help you prepare for tests and/or complete practice tests.**

What is the difference between slight nervousness and intense anxiety? If in addition to the symptoms above, you also experience any of the following:

- Stress related air loss
- Worsening asthma or high blood pressure
- Confusion, panic, mental blocks
- Fainting, sweaty palms, and nausea
- Guilt or anger sometimes may result in depression that can lead to reckless behavior or even suicide.

Anxiety can be managed by changing your thoughts and learning to address the physical reactions. **For medical assessment and information, seek help from a Wellness Advocate or medical professional.**

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