

Test Anxiety

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So you have a test today. You have studied hard and made an effort in this course and should do well. You have nothing to be worried about. But when you get into the test room, you start to perspire; you feel nervous; you go blank. "What's wrong with me?" You knew the answers this morning and now you feel muddled and can't seem to pull yourself together to organize your time on the test and just do it. You know this stuff, right!

What is test anxiety?

Test anxiety is not the same as doing badly on tests, because you are distracted with something else on your mind that is affecting your general concentration, such as your hamster died this week or you are in trouble with your parents for not doing your chores or smashing a lamp on your way out the door this morning. Test anxiety is when you feel pressure to perform and has physiological responses, such as a stomachache, or a headache, sweating and can't think straight: you feel different, because you are in a test situation.

Why do I get test anxiety?

You are reacting to the stress and expectations put on by a situation. You have expectations you think you can't reach. If you don't do well, you may not pass or get that A you need on your transcript. When you are under stress you release adrenaline and feel like you have a fight or flight response. Do it or run! That's what is causing your symptoms. For some students this can be quite overwhelming.

Why me? Who gets test anxiety?

Most of us are nervous about a test and worry somewhat. If you tend to be a perfectionist, worry about things it can be hard for you to accept mistakes and the fear of not passing or meeting your expectations, that of your parents or teachers can only add to your angst. You are likely putting a lot of pressure on yourself.

So what can I do?

First you need to be prepared and that starts from the beginning to the end of a course. Let that stress during your course remind you to keep up with your studies and not fall behind, to make notes and try to understand what you are learning. That way, you won't need to worry as much about falling behind. Being stressed is not all bad. It can be your motivator. Your mind and body is telling you that you need to do something.

Ask for help?

It is not unusual for a student that really could do with some help to hold back and not ask for fear of looking stupid. Everyone needs help with their studies from time to time and depending on the subject. That is what your teachers and parents are there for. They can help you understand what is expected and help you break down what is coming up on the test.

What are you thinking?

Avoid negative self talk: "I will never pass this test". "I am just not good at math." Instead tell yourself you are going to study, try your best and pass with the best mark you can. "I've studied for this test, and I may get a little nervous like everyone else, but I can do it."

Stay healthy and fit.

Make sure you get enough sleep, eat healthy and practice breathing exercises that you can quietly use at the time you feel anxious.

Try not to be so hard on yourself. Acceptance is part of managing our stress and anxiety.

Happy Test Day 😊