



# Test Anxiety is in the Past


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# Why do a workshop on test anxiety?


- ▶ It is a common problem.
  - ▶ Tests are here to stay.
  - ▶ It is possible to reduce and deal with test anxiety so that your true knowledge, skills, and ability show through.
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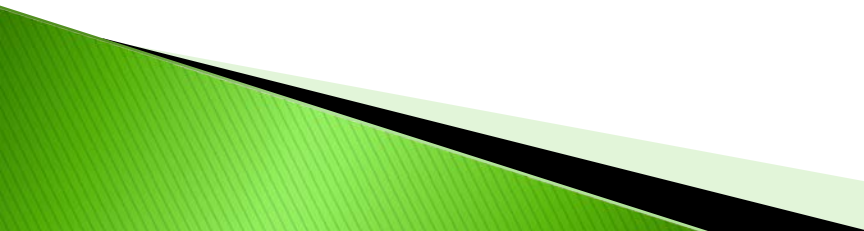
# Objectives

- ▶ Understand the four components of test anxiety.
  - ▶ Improve your mindset about tests.
  - ▶ Be prepared.
  - ▶ Relax.
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- ▶ What is test anxiety?
  - ▶ Test anxiety is an uneasiness or apprehension experienced about tests due to concern, worry, or fear.
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# Understanding the Four Components of Test Anxiety

- ▶ The four components of test anxiety:
    - Emotional: feelings about test (afraid, nervous)
    - Behavioral: what you do in a testing situation (tap your pencil on your desk, look at clock excessively)
    - Cognitive: thoughts about tests and what they mean (usually negative and distracting)
    - Physiological: the body's chemical changes, upset stomach, sweaty palms, headache
  
  - ▶ What's your test anxiety type and level?
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- ▶ You may have component specific test anxiety. In what category did you score most of your points?
    - Emotional: questions 1 – 4
    - Behavioral: questions 5 – 9
    - Cognitive: questions 10 – 13
    - Physiological: questions 14 – 18
  - ▶ If your grand total score is:
    - 0–5 = low test anxiety
    - 6–12 = medium test anxiety
    - 13–18 = high test anxiety
  - ▶ You may have a high subtotal in one area, or high scores in multiple areas. Keep in mind what area(s) you scored highest in. We're going to come back to this.
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# What's Your Mindset About Tests?

- ▶ Tests are “gatekeepers.”
  - ▶ The problem isn't that we have tests, it's the meaning that we attach to tests, our mindset, that may be causing us anxiety.
  - ▶ Ask yourself some tough questions to learn more about your test taking mindset.
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## ▶ Improve Your Mindset

- Events don't cause us to feel any particular way. It's what we **think** about an event that causes us to feel a particular way.

Event => Feelings



WRONG

Event => Thoughts => Feelings      RIGHT!

# How the process works:



Fail test =>

I suck. I can't do school. I'm never going to pass this class. I always do badly on tests. I shouldn't even try. Those questions weren't even fair.

disappointment  
frustration  
confusion  
hopelessness  
worthlessness  
anxiety

# Here's a process that will lead to less anxiety

Fail test =>



I didn't do well on this test, that sucks. There are four more tests to take, and we get to drop our lowest score. Maybe I can do some extra credit. I need to make sure I'm well prepared for the next test.

disappointment  
hopeful  
curious  
maybe some  
anxiety

## Get rid of negative self-talk

- ▶ Become aware of what you say to yourself.
  - I always mess up on tests.
  - I hate algebra.
  - I'm going to be the last person to finish the test and everyone will know how dumb I am.

# Write down your negative thoughts and dispute them with a positive or neutral statement.

## Negative Thought

- ▶ I always mess up on tests.
- ▶ I hate algebra.
- ▶ I'm going to be the last person to finish the test and everyone will know how dumb I am.

## Positive or Neutral Statement

- ▶ I haven't actually messed up on *every* single test I've ever taken.
- ▶ What I really hate is feeling confused and stupid. If I had a good understanding of the concepts, I might actually like math.
- ▶ Just because I finish last doesn't mean I'm dumb. I want to take as long as I can to be sure I'm being thorough. It's always good to do a final once-over anyway.


- ▶ Gradually start to replace the negative self-talk with positive statements.
  - I can do this.
  - I'm determined to learn algebra.
  - One bad test grade doesn't mean I won't pass the class.
  - I've done well in other classes. I can do well in this one too.
  - I've made it this far, I must be doing something right.

Write positive statements on cards and put them in places you'll look: bathroom mirror, front of a notebook/folder, inside of your front door, night stand, computer/phone screensaver.

Avoid comparing yourself with other students!

# Be Prepared

## Top Five Study Tips

5. Always attend class, and use your instructor's office hours.
  4. Take smart notes (of lectures and readings).
  3. Read and do your assignments constantly.
  2. Get and stay organized (including managing your time well).
  1. Know what's going to be on the test.
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## Questions to Ask About the Test

- Which lectures and reading assignments (or problem sets) are fair game?
- What type of questions will be on the test and how many of each (or what percentage of test)? For example: definitions, dates, broad syntheses of the text, multiple choice, essay.
- Is the exam open note or open book?
- For a technical class, will formulas be provided or do they need to be memorized?
- How much time will be available? Does the instructor expect the exam to be easy to complete during the test period, or a challenge?

Never be afraid to ask these questions!

# Relaxation Techniques

## ▶ Deep Breathing

- Find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted and get in a comfortable position.
  - Head, neck, arms, and legs should be supported so there's no tension in these areas.
  - It's normal to get distracted. That's ok, just come back to your breathing.
  - This is a great time to say positive statements to yourself. It helps you focus.
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# Smart Things to do Before, During, and After a Test

## ▶ Before

- Take a practice test the day before
- Get enough sleep, avoid caffeine
- Stop negative thoughts, replace with positive statements

## ▶ During

- Read the directions and review the test, plan your approach, and schedule your time
- Easiest questions first
- Don't know an answer, mark it & come back to it

## ▶ After

- Learn from your performance. Make sure you understand the answers to questions you got wrong (a great reason to use office hours or discuss in a study group)

# Review

- ▶ You should aim for reducing test anxiety, not eliminating it.
- ▶ There are four components of test anxiety: cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physiological.
- ▶ It is possible to reduce test anxiety by:
  - Challenging negative self-talk and replacing it with positive statements
  - Being prepared for the test
  - Learning and using deep breathing
  - Maximizing your performance before, during, and after a test

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