



Shasta College

Health & Wellness Services (530) 242-7580 Room 2020

TEST ANXIETY – Recognition & Management

Do you study before an exam, think that you know the material, and then walk into the classroom and panic? Do you worry excessively about your performance in school? Do you spend time worrying before, during and after a test and what the consequences of failure will be? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you have experienced test anxiety.

Some causes of test anxiety are pressure, past experiences and fear of failure. Every student feels some anxiety. But for some students the feeling is so intense that it affects their performance with serious results.

Test anxiety manifests itself in two ways:

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- Rapid breathing
- Tense Muscles
- Sweaty palms
- "Butterflies in stomach"
- Dizziness
- Increased heart rate
- Nausea

EMOTIONAL WORRY

A. Worry can lead to negative thinking:

- Comparing self with other students
- Worrying about the consequences of failing an exam or class
- Worrying that failure means lacking the smarts to be in school

B. Worry can distract your thinking during the test.

C. Worry can cause you to misread the instructions or questions.

D. Worry causes you to have less time focused on the exam.

E. Worry can cause you to "blank out", forgetting the material you have studied.

Not only can worry reinforce negative thoughts, but it also can be the cause of poor performance.

SOLUTIONS

1. Developing effective study skills will give you confidence.

- Develop a schedule
- Create learning cards
- Attend all the classes
- Ask questions
- Get tutoring when needed
- Use the various study resources on campus – math lab, writing lab, LRC etc.

2. Learn good test taking skills.

- Budget your time
- Do the easy questions first
- Don't rush; use the full time allowed
- Don't leave blanks; make an educated guess
- Read choices carefully
- Mark a question you don't know and return later

3. Learn to say, "Stop!"

As soon as you begin to distract yourself from what you're doing, i.e. you're studying for an exam, and you begin to worry, say "stop!" to yourself either silently or aloud. This process will help keep you focused and will help you become aware of what you are concentrating on - your academic task or worry.

4. Don't let emotions interfere with logic.

Think about why you become anxious and afraid:

- Begin to recognize self-defeating thoughts i.e. "I could never study enough for this test."
- Come up with a list of counter thoughts i.e. "I have a lot to study but, if I stick to my schedule and concentrate, I can do it!"

5. Don't put your whole future on the line with a single test.

It is unlikely that one test will make or break your chances. greatly reduce test anxiety will enhance your college experience. A simple anxiety reduction activity can be a walk along the beach or even a walk around campus. Another anxiety reduction exercise is deep breathing. Choose a quiet place, sitting down, feet on floor, eyes closed, hands in lap. Breathe in through nose to the count of three, blow out through mouth to the count of six. Do this three times.

Remember: once you are aware of experiencing test anxiety, the finding the solution for it will be relatively simple.

6. Talk to a counselor for stress reduction techniques.

You can learn skills to eliminate or reduce test anxiety. For an appointment on campus call 242-7580. This FREE service is offered through the Health & Wellness Services office (room 2020) and is available to Shasta College students currently registered in credit-bearing classes who have paid the health fee (done at registration).