

MANAGING TEST ANXIETY

What is test anxiety?

Test anxiety is the feeling of distress or worry. Test anxiety can be a physical or mental response you experience, for example; an instant headache, nausea, or sweaty palms before or during a test. It is normal to experience some anxiety before a test. If you have too much anxiety, it can be harmful to your academic performance.

How do you know if you have test anxiety?

This exercise is to raise awareness, not to formally diagnose test anxiety. Please check below which statements you identify with most, these are examples of symptoms and is not a full list.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> I do not sleep well the night before a test. | <input type="checkbox"/> I am always afraid that I will run out of time. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I get sick if I eat anything before a test. | <input type="checkbox"/> I check the time constantly; noises bother me. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I get easily frustrated during the test. | <input type="checkbox"/> I see the test as a measure of my worth as a student. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have a negative attitude about testing. | <input type="checkbox"/> I am irritable and hard to be around before a test. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I think about not taking the test. | <input type="checkbox"/> My body sweats, heart pounds; I feel nauseous. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I always average my grades before the test. | <input type="checkbox"/> I worry when others are still testing and I am finished. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I blank during the test & can't recall information. | |

If you experience more than five symptoms you may experience test anxiety. Most people experience some of these symptoms and they may not be harmful. However, consulting with University Counseling Service is always an excellent option if you feel you could do better if you managed these symptoms.

If you experience ten or more you may be suffering from test anxiety. This is not abnormal or strange. There are ways to control and manage anxiety. Consult with University Counseling Service on how to best manage and control anxiety.

Tips: Before the Test

- * Use positive self-talk. Instead of saying, "I can't do this" or "I don't know this" say "I can do this," "I'm prepared" or "I'm going to think this through and I'm going to figure it out."
- * Give yourself enough time to review the material— don't start one or two days before. Review material as you learn it throughout the semester and at the beginning of each new unit.
- * Get a good night's sleep. Gather all materials you need for the test before bed.
- * Avoid cramming. The material you learn while cramming does not last and may be a reason you "blank" on a test.
- * Avoid caffeine. The "edge" you get from caffeine does not help you focus.

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Tips: Day of the Test

- * Eat a healthy breakfast. Fruits and vegetables are foods that help reduce stress. Proteins will help sustain you while carbohydrates will not.
 - * Read the directions carefully. If you blank on a question, skip it and move on. Sometimes reading other test questions will help you remember answers to those questions you skipped.
 - * Take your time. There's no reward for finishing first, so use the entire test time; use the extra time to verify your answers. Check the clock periodically.
 - * If you feel anxious, use stress reducing techniques:
 - * Close your eyes. Put down your pencil or take your hands away from the keyboard. Breathe in slowly to the count of 7, and then slowly exhale to the count of 7.
 - * Pull your shoulders back, tilt your head back and forth between each shoulder, or shake your hands out at the wrist to relieve muscle tension.
 - * Use positive imagery. Picture yourself succeeding. Use positive self-talk. Remind yourself that you do know the material.
 - * Relax and breathe. Put your best foot forward and do your personal best.
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Tips: After the Test

- * Relax. You gave it your best. No matter how the test went, you still have the opportunity to learn from the returned exam.
- * Identify techniques you used that were effective in helping you manage your anxiety. Write them down and use them on future exams.

RESOURCES

University Counseling Service 3223 Westlawn South 319-335-7294 ucs@uiowa.edu http://counseling.studentlife.uiowa.edu/	Academic Support & Retention 310 Calvin Hall 319-353-2747 tutoriowa@uiowa.edu http://tutor.iowa.edu
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Works Cited:

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