

Say Goodbye to Test Anxiety

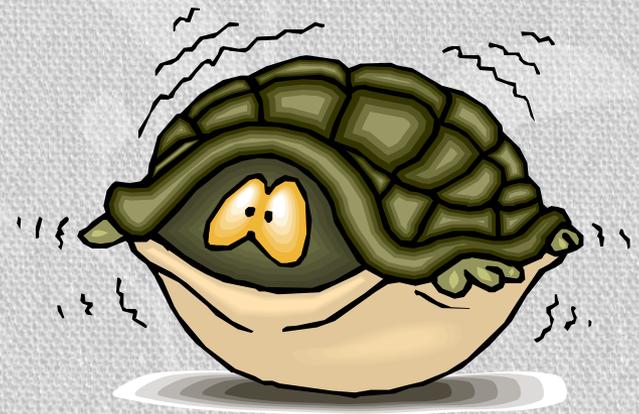


**Kortschak Center for Learning and Creativity
University of Southern California
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Learning Objective

By the end of this workshop, students will be able to:

- Recognize what is test anxiety.
- Identify the common signs of test anxiety.
- Know the causes of test anxiety.
- Apply test anxiety reducing tips to overcome it.
- Know when to seek for help/support.



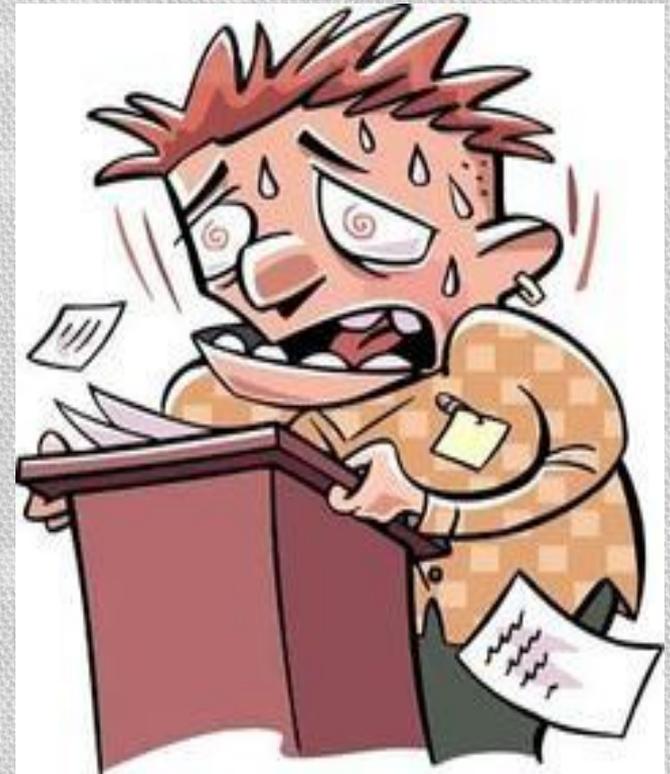
What is Anxiety?

- **Anxiety** is a state of uneasiness—focused on the possibility of failure, danger, or misfortune—that causes you distress (McKay & DuFrene, 2011).
- It interferes with test performance.
- If consistent, seek help to better understand its origin and how to cope with it.



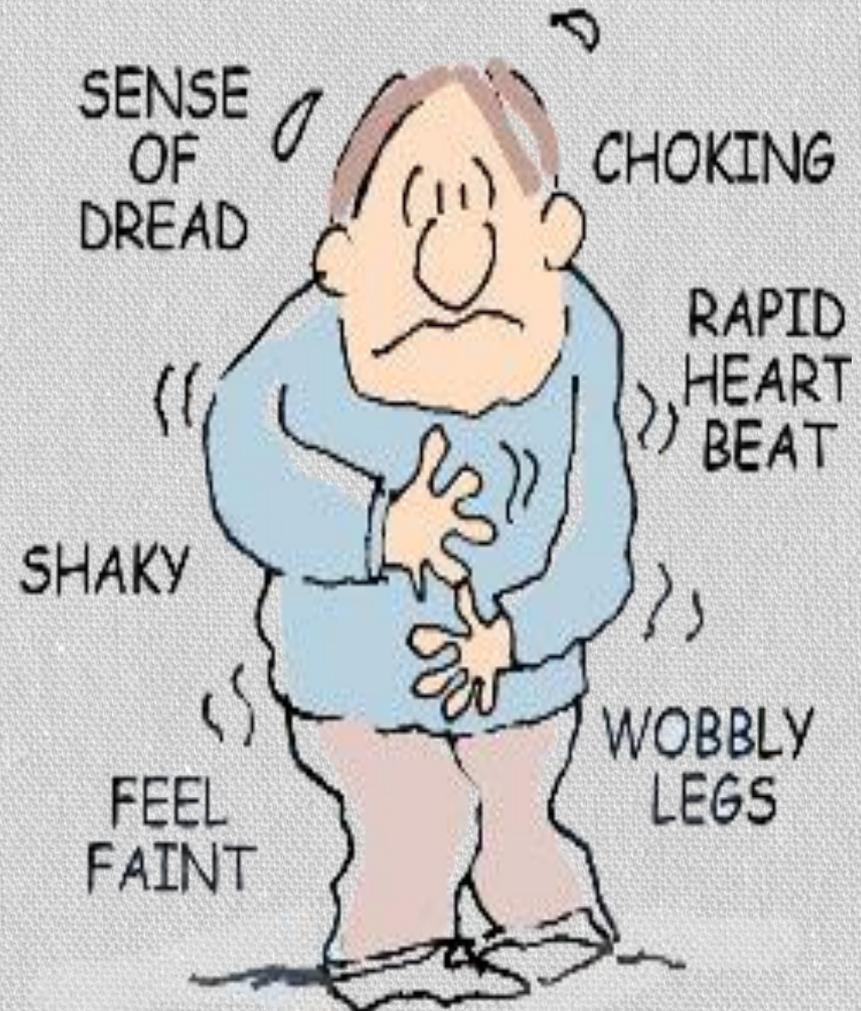
TEST anxiety is...

- The worry caused by having to take a test
- You may experience:
 - Butterflies in your stomach
 - Nervousness
 - Sweating
 - Nausea
 - Loss of concentration or “blinking out”
 - Lower grades on tests than daily work



Common Signs

- **Physical:** you fidget, pace, sweat excessively, feel your heart race or abuse substances before a test.
- **Health:** you experience headaches, nausea, dry mouth, or frequent urination before a test.
- **Mental:** you think “I don’t know any of this” or “I can’t do this”, go blank, feel overwhelmed, suddenly know the answers after turning the test in, or score much lower than you do on homework or papers.



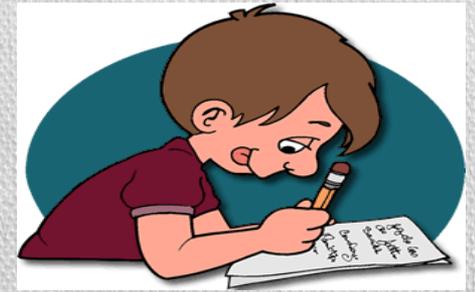
TIPS FOR REDUCING TEST ANXIETY



Preparation

- Create a study outline and stick to it
 - If you are well prepared, this will decrease your anxiety
- Make sure to stay organized, ask your Professor about difficult concepts, and study with a group
 - Familiarity with test taking formats and the development of good test taking strategies are essential to your academic success!
- Visualize yourself going through the testing experience
 - See yourself walking into the classroom confidently, taking the test with ease, and earning the grade you want.
- Walk into the test with your head up and shoulders back
 - The more confident you act, the more confident you feel





Day of Exam

- Arrive early
 - Give yourself time to feel ready
- Take a couple of minutes to close your eyes and take a couple of deep breaths
- Do not discuss the material with other students who may sway you to think you don't know the material
- Control your emotional state
 - Your emotional state affects your ability to test well
 - It takes a calm and controlled emotional state for your memory and judgment to work most effectively

During Exam

- Look through exam
- Stretching breaks
- If you don't immediately recognize the question then go to the next
- Stay positive and remind yourself that you studied appropriately and that you know the material
- Remind yourself that some anxiety is normal and that you know the material
- Don't pay attention to others movements or if they turn in their exams before you

Breathe

- Try it when you are feeling anxious about an upcoming exam, getting distracted in class, or when you are feeling really impatient
- Take breaths that come deep from your abdomen and not just your chest (let's practice)
- Take deep and slow breaths; make sure you mindfully pay attention to your breathing
- Replace negative thoughts, with positive thoughts while taking deep breaths and doing relaxation exercises—we will practice this!
- This will help calm your mind, improve your focus and concentration and you can do it just about anywhere



Meditate

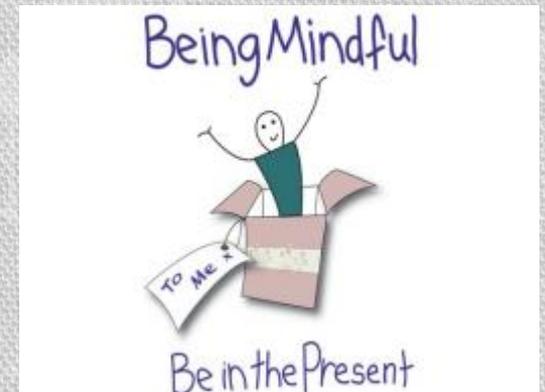
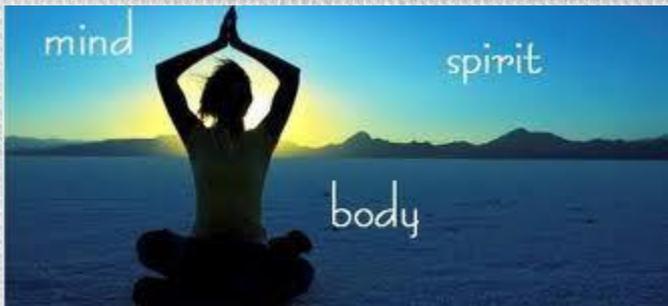
- Deep breathing meditation
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Body scan meditation
- Mindfulness* meditation
 - Quiet environment
 - Comfortable position
 - Point of focus
 - Observant, noncritical attitude
- Visualization or Guided imagery

*The ability to remain aware of how you're feeling right now, your "moment-to-moment" or "here-and-now" experience; both internal and external.



Mindfulness

- Relaxing Sounds
- calm.com App
- Fitting these activities into your life can help reduce everyday anxiety and boost your energy and mood
- You can practice relaxation techniques while doing other things, such as commuting to work or home, waiting on something or others, while doing housework, and of course before taking a test...



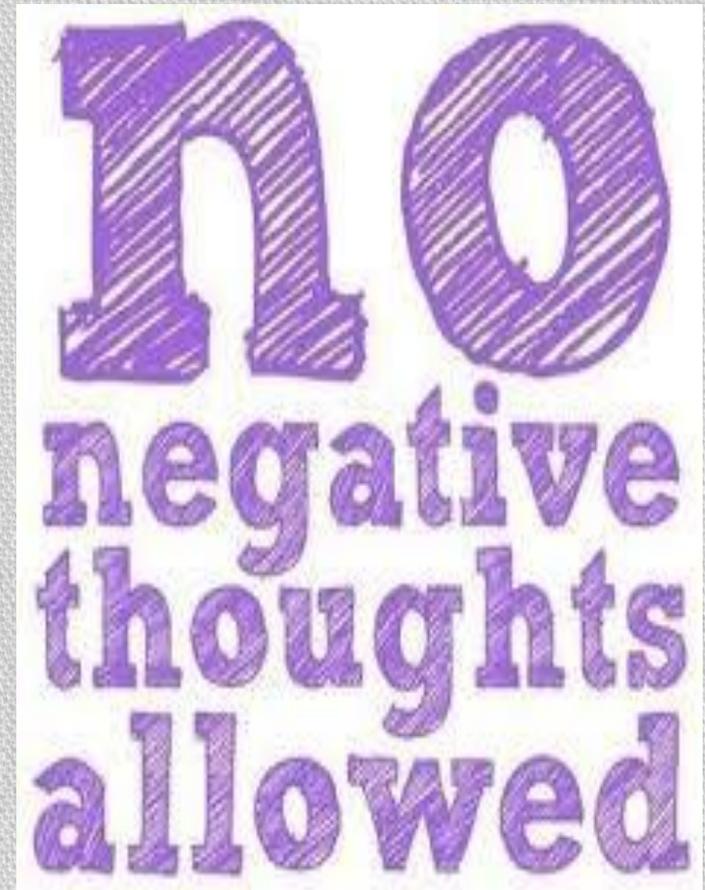
Exercise

- Just a 15-30-minute walk while listening to music can be good way to relief some anxiety the day/night before the exam
- Exercise releases endorphins, “feel-good” brain chemicals, that protect you against depression, decreases stress hormones, relaxes your muscles, and helps you sleep better



Control Negative Thinking

- You CAN control what you think!!
- Negative thinking: self-defeating statements can become
- self-fulfilling prophecies
- **Awareness**: Identify your own pattern of negative statements
- **Negative statement**:
 - “If I blow this test, it’s my whole career, my whole life.”
- **Change to**:
 - “If I continue to think about my life right now, I won’t have time to concentrate on this test.”



Positive Thinking

- Reverse negative thinking → positive thinking
- Your statement should begin with words such as "I want to".
- Your challenge statement should describe an action you desire to achieve your objective/goal.
- Begin to develop positive self-statements:
 - "I can do well on this test"
 - "I studied hard and know this material, I am prepared"
 - "I'm smart and will succeed no matter what!"



Get Support

- If your anxiety becomes too much to bear and it interferes with your academic performance, don't be afraid to seek for support
- Know when you need help and get it
- Talk to others about what and how you're feeling
 - Talking to others helps clear your mind and makes you feel better



Review

- Be prepared
 - Do NOT cram!
- Exercise
- Remain calmed!
- Meditate

