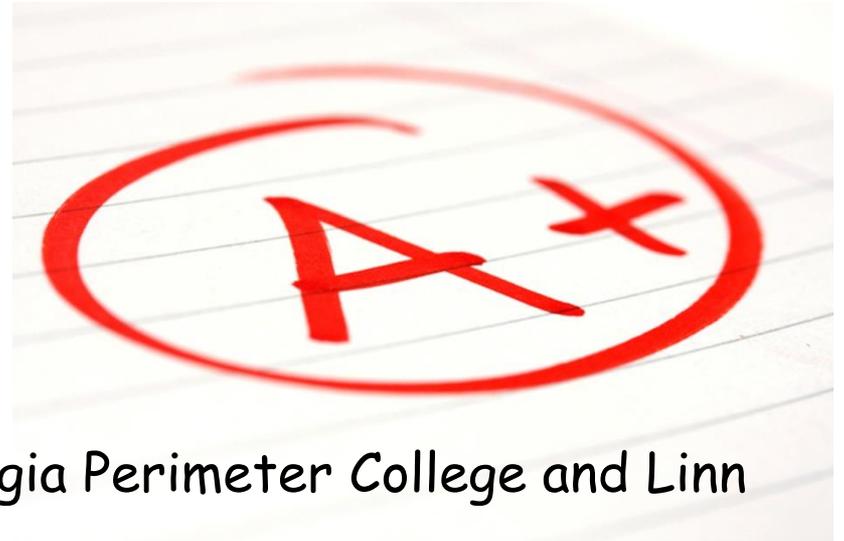


YOU CAN DO IT!

Managing test anxiety is a *skill*
that you can learn.



*used, courtesy Palomar College, Georgia Perimeter College and Linn Benton Community College

What Is Anxiety?



Anxiety is a very complex human reaction

Physical elements:

sweaty palms

accelerated heartbeat

a queasy stomach

Mental elements:

self-doubts and worry

Physical Elements:

⌘ "Fight, Flight or Freeze" warning system.



The Amygdala

- ⌘ Send impulses to the autonomic nervous system that elicit the:
- ⌘ Fight alarm response (anger-like feelings)
- ⌘ Flight alarm response (fear-like feelings)
- ⌘ Freeze alarm response (inability to take action)



Chemicals



- ⌘ Such as adrenaline, noradrenalin and cortisol are released into the bloodstream, causing the heart rate, blood pressure and other bodily processes to undergo a series of dramatic changes.
- ⌘ At the same time, primitive areas of the brain, designed to respond to threat, shape perception and thought.
- ⌘ The rational mind has little involvement in this sequence.

Going Blank

- Scientific research has proven that there is a **physiological reason** why our minds go blank under stress.

The **flight, fight or freeze response** causes our blood to flow away from the information processing part of our brain to our large muscle groups (legs and arms) and to our brain stem.



Our Nervous System



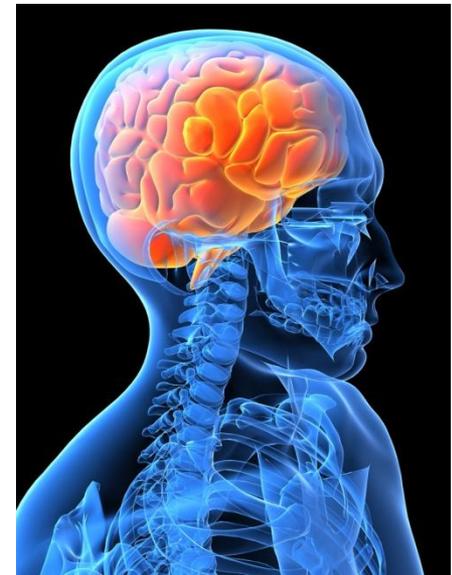
has two divisions:

⌘ Sympathetic - arouses us to respond to a perceived threat.

⌘ Parasympathetic - helps us calm down.

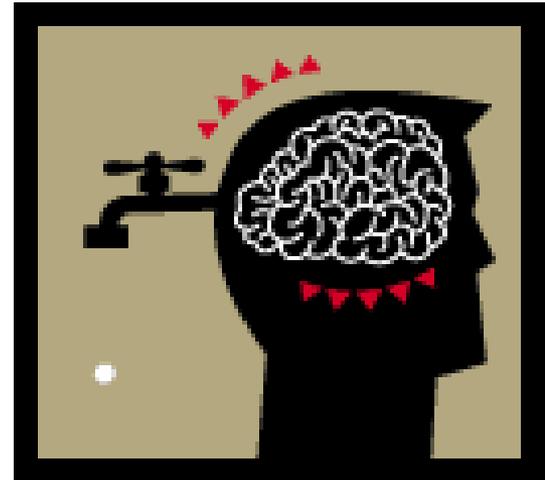
This is your brain. . .

⌘ Ordinarily your brain is fully engaged, able to control breathing, your heart, listen to music, read a book and process the information, all at the same time.



This is your BRAIN . . . On stress hormones

⌘ But, when danger is perceived and the “fight, flight or freeze” system activates, your brain functioning changes. Only the primitive brain is working (vital functions, heart beat, body temp and digestion).



Sympathetic



-  Heart beats rapidly
-  Blood pressure goes up
-  Blood flows to our muscles
-  Digestion slows down
-  Breathing rate increases
-  Glucose is released to give us energy
-  Perspiration increases
-  Adrenaline is released

Parasympathetic



- 🖱 Breathing is slowed down
- 🖱 Digestive processes increase
- 🖱 Heart rate slows down
- 🖱 Blood pressure decreases
- 🖱 Perspiration returns to normal

Mental Elements:



- ◆ Important but harder to measure.
- ◆ Our attitudes and beliefs help determine how we react.
- ◆ One way we look at these attitudes and beliefs is through our self-talk.
- ◆ Learn EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique) to change these unwanted attitudes and behaviors.

Consider the difference in saying:



"This test will be a challenge. I'll study well
and give it my best shot."

OR

"This test is going to be awful! I just know I
won't be able to remember everything. I'm
going to bomb this test!" "Then I won't be
able to remain in college."

II. TEST ANXIETY--WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

- 👉 Like most human behaviors, you learned it.
- 👉 When you were younger, someone may have put a lot of importance on an upcoming test, and you felt pressured to succeed.
- 👉 You may have failed a test in the past and received a lot of negative feedback from teachers or parents.

Test anxiety is a *learned behavior* that involves...

⌘ Physical responses

- ☑ Tension, headache
- ☑ Upset stomach, nausea
- ☑ Perspiration,
- ☑ Rapid heartbeat

⌘ Emotional responses

- ☑ Nervousness
- ☑ Mental blocking
- ☑ Worry
- ☑ Overwhelm, paralysis



High levels of test anxiety

interfere with your ability to

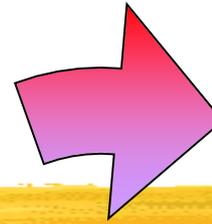
prepare for,

think about

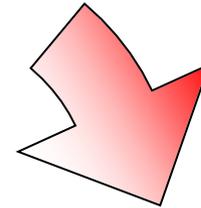
or

take an exam.

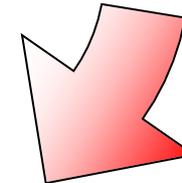
1. Test failure



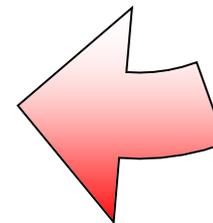
2. Test anxiety



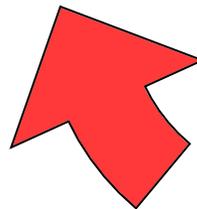
3. Can't study effectively



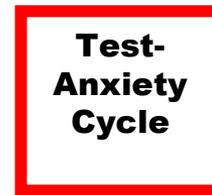
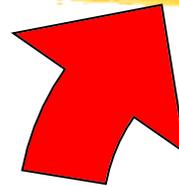
4. Under- or un-prepared for exam



5. More test anxiety



6. Interference with test performance



Other possible sources of test anxiety experienced by college students:

- Unfamiliarity
- Preparation*
- *(*If you haven't studied enough you probably will be nervous.)*
- General lifestyle
- Conditioned anxiety
- Irrational thinking

III. FIVE COPING STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING ANXIETY

- ★ Improve your study skills/be better prepared
- 🕒 Improve your general lifestyle
- 🕒 Learn physical relaxation techniques and practice them
- 🕒 Use positive self-talk
- 🕒 Manage the testing situation

Coping Strategy #1

Prepare Well: Overlearn the Material

- ◆ Review, review, review! Nothing replaces consistent, constructive study time. Use active study techniques.
- ◆ Space out your studying. Study over time. Do NOT cram.
- ◆ Learn test-taking strategies.
- ◆ Manage your time effectively.
- ◆ Overcome procrastination.

Tips for overcoming the urge to procrastinate:



- 😊 Set realistic goals.
- 😊 Dwell on your successes, NOT your failures.
- 😊 Study in small blocks of time.
- 😊 Modify your environment.
- 😊 Learn to say NO once your priorities are set.
- 😊 Stay away from the cellphone, texts and emails when you're trying to get work done.

Coping Strategy #2

Improve Your General Lifestyle

- ← Examine your priorities.
 - ← Stop or postpone most nonessential activities.
 - ← Remember: changing priorities may take some re-negotiating of responsibilities with our family members and friends.
- ← Eat nutritious food.
 - ← Avoid sugar.
- ← Exercise regularly.

Coping Strategy #3

Learn/Practice Relaxation Techniques

REMEMBER: It is physiologically impossible to be both relaxed and anxious at the same time.

Specialized ways of relaxing that may help you in school:

⌚ Deep muscle relaxation

⌚ Deep breathing relaxation

⌚ Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)

To be most effective, practice your relaxation techniques when you are not anxious.



After you've practiced, you should begin using your relaxation method:

- ☑ When you are studying and start to tense up.
- ☑ Just prior to the test because the calming effect will last for a while.
- ☑ During the test if you feel yourself start to get anxious.

The key to success is PRACTICE!

Coping Strategy #4

Using Positive Self-Talk

It's as simple as A-B-C:

⌘ A=Activating Event

☑ While taking a difficult test a student begins to feel physically tense.

⌘ B=Belief

☑ "When I feel like this I always mess up. I can't stop it!"

⌘ C=Consequences

☑ The student gets a full-blown anxiety attack and goes completely blank.

Challenging Those Irrational Beliefs

- ⌘ One method is to dispute the belief and substitute an alternative belief.
- ⌘ Use positive self-statements:
 - ☑ Plan in advance what you will do when the activating event occurs.
 - ☑ Develop a set of positive or rational self-statements which you can practice.

Examples of Positive Self-statements:

- ⌘ "I have prepared well, I can pass this test."
- ⌘ "There probably will be some questions I can't answer, but that doesn't mean I can't get a good grade."
- ⌘ "I don't have to get an A, I just have to pass it."
- ⌘ "People who get done early and leave don't necessarily know more than I do, they just work faster or they don't know their material and can't answer many questions."

Emotional Control



⌘ Adopt creator position rather than a victim position:

☑ you always have choices!!

⌘ Accept yourself, and your learning needs

☑ Visit our tutor, come to Lunch Bunch, go to our lecture TA's sessions

Coping Strategy #5



Manage the Testing Situation

- ☒ Plan to use the entire time
- ☒ Skip questions you aren't sure of
- ☒ Stop, pause and relax

How to Calm Down in Under a Minute

⌘ Here's how:

⌘ Breathe in through your nose and on a slow count of three

⌘ Push your stomach out as you breathe in

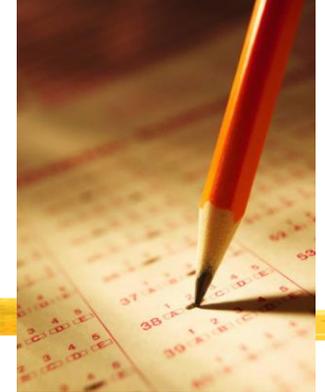
⌘ Breathe out through your mouth on a slow count of six

⌘ Repeat two more times

- Tips:
- If you feel light-headed, breathe more slowly.
- Practice three times a day and you will remember the steps when you are stressed out.



During the Exam



- ⌘ Do an information dump! Before you begin answering, jot down hard to remember formulas and terms on the margins or back of exam.
- ⌘ Survey the exam. Before you begin answering, take a quick look at the whole exam. This may help you decide where to begin and how much time to spend on each question.
- ⌘ Read directions carefully and underline key phrases.
- ⌘ Do easy questions first. They may give you clues for the more challenging questions.
- ⌘ Use positive self-talk.
- ⌘ Relax! Use your strategies to calm yourself.

During the Exam

- For multiple choice questions, read *all* the options first, then eliminate the most obvious. Unsure of the correct response? Rely on your first impression, then move on quickly. Beware of tricky qualifying words such as "only," "always" or "most."
- Do not rush through the test. Wear a watch and check it frequently as you pace yourself. If it appears you will be unable to finish the entire test, concentrate on those portions which you can answer well. Recheck your answers only if you have extra time — and only if you are not anxious.

In summary:

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. During tests



- S** – Stay focused on the test
- U** – Use breathing exercises to self-calm
- C** – Come to the test on time
- C** – Create a plan for answering questions
- E** – Execute your plan
- S** – Stay active — if you go blank, move on!
- S** – Stop negative self-talk with positive affirmations!

Adapted from: University of Texas Learning Center, University of Texas, Austin, 2005

Reducing Test Anxiety

1. Make an appointment with your instructor two weeks before an exam to clarify material.
2. Reduce study materials to outlines, note cards or a few key study pages. Overlearn the material.
3. Learn relaxation techniques to use while studying and taking the test (e.g., deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, visualization, positive self-talk).
4. Get to the classroom early so you can sit where you want. Avoid people who will add to your stress.

Reducing Test Anxiety -con't

5. Look over the questions to familiarize yourself with the test. Underline key words or phrases in the test directions.
6. Budget your time in order to finish the test. Show as much work as possible to get partial credit.
7. If you get stuck or start feeling anxious, take a mini-break to refresh yourself (e.g., get a drink of water, stretch, get some fresh air).
8. Don't panic when you don't know an answer: Eliminate options you know are incorrect and then make an educated guess.

Reducing Test Anxiety -con't

9. If you have time, review your answers. Don't change an answer unless you are sure your second answer is correct.
10. Use positive self-talk and have a positive attitude toward the test. Reward yourself after the test for completing it and don't dwell on potential mistakes.

Set Goals for Change

- ⌘ In order to improve my test taking skills, I will work on _____
- ⌘ List two test taking or study skills you will incorporate this week:
 - ⌘ 1. _____ How? _____
 - ⌘ 2. _____ How? _____
- ⌘ List two test taking or study skills you will incorporate this semester:
 - ⌘ 1. _____ How? _____
 - ⌘ 2. _____ How? _____

