

Test Anxiety

Presented by the Counseling Center

Topics Covered:

- Myths about test anxiety
- What is test anxiety and what does it look like
- Who gets test anxiety and what causes it
- Strategies to manage test anxiety
- Tips for midterms and finals week

MYTHS About Test Anxiety



Test anxiety cannot be reduced

Any level of test anxiety is bad

All students who are not prepared for a test or final have test anxiety

Students who are well prepared will not have test anxiety

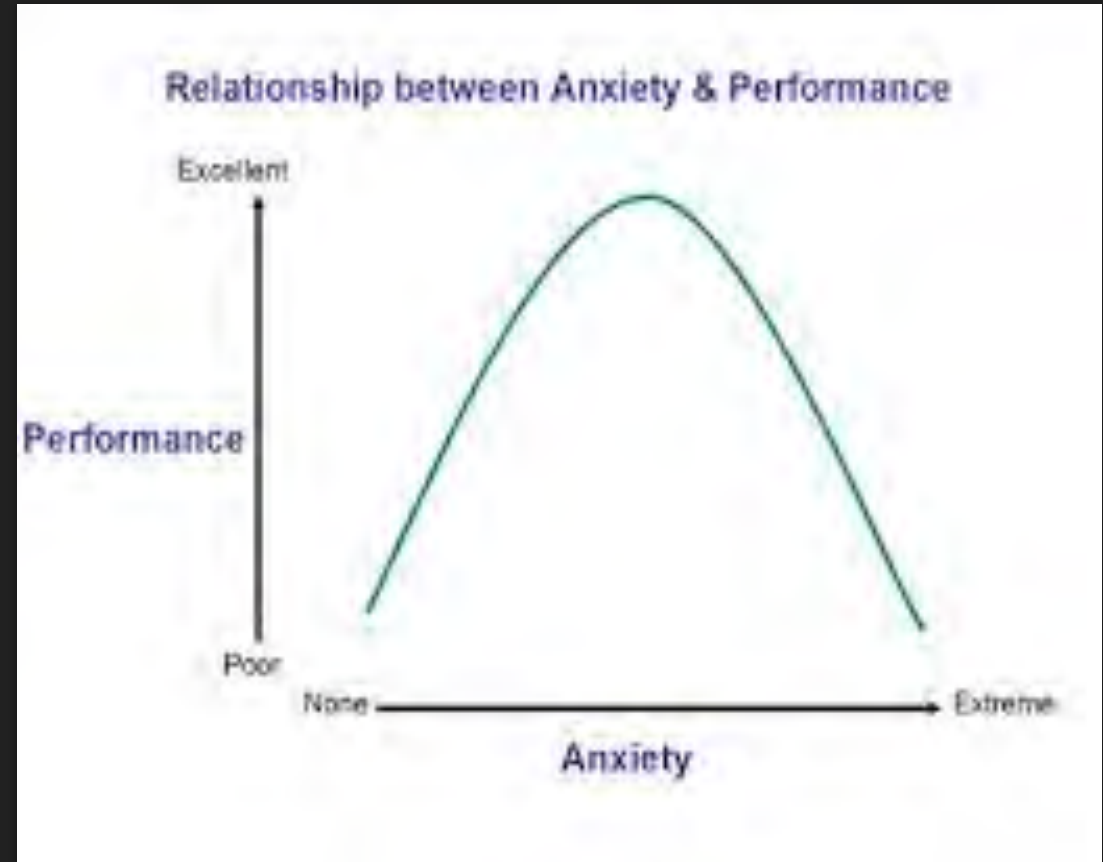
Doing nothing about test anxiety will make it go away

Anxiety About Tests is NOT All Bad!

Even if you get anxious before a test, you're not destined to always get bad grades or perform poorly!

Anxiety is a part of our everyday life....and can even help us perform at our best!

Too little anxiety will not give us the motivation to study or prepare well. On the other hand, too much anxiety can negatively impact our performance. Therefore, a moderate amount of anxiety can actually help us to perform at our best!



Test Anxiety: What is it and What Does it Look Like?

So What is Test Anxiety?

<http://www.everydayhealth.com/college-health/overcoming-college-test-anxiety.aspx>



Even if you didn't know the name for it, you probably recognize that *creeping sense of dread*



And the *knot in the pit of your stomach* when it's test time.

Symptoms and Triggers of Test Anxiety

Experiencing test anxiety can include both internal symptoms and external triggers

What Does Test Anxiety Look Like For YOU?



Internal Symptoms

Physical Symptoms of Test Anxiety



Headache



Upset stomach



Shortness of breath



Sweating

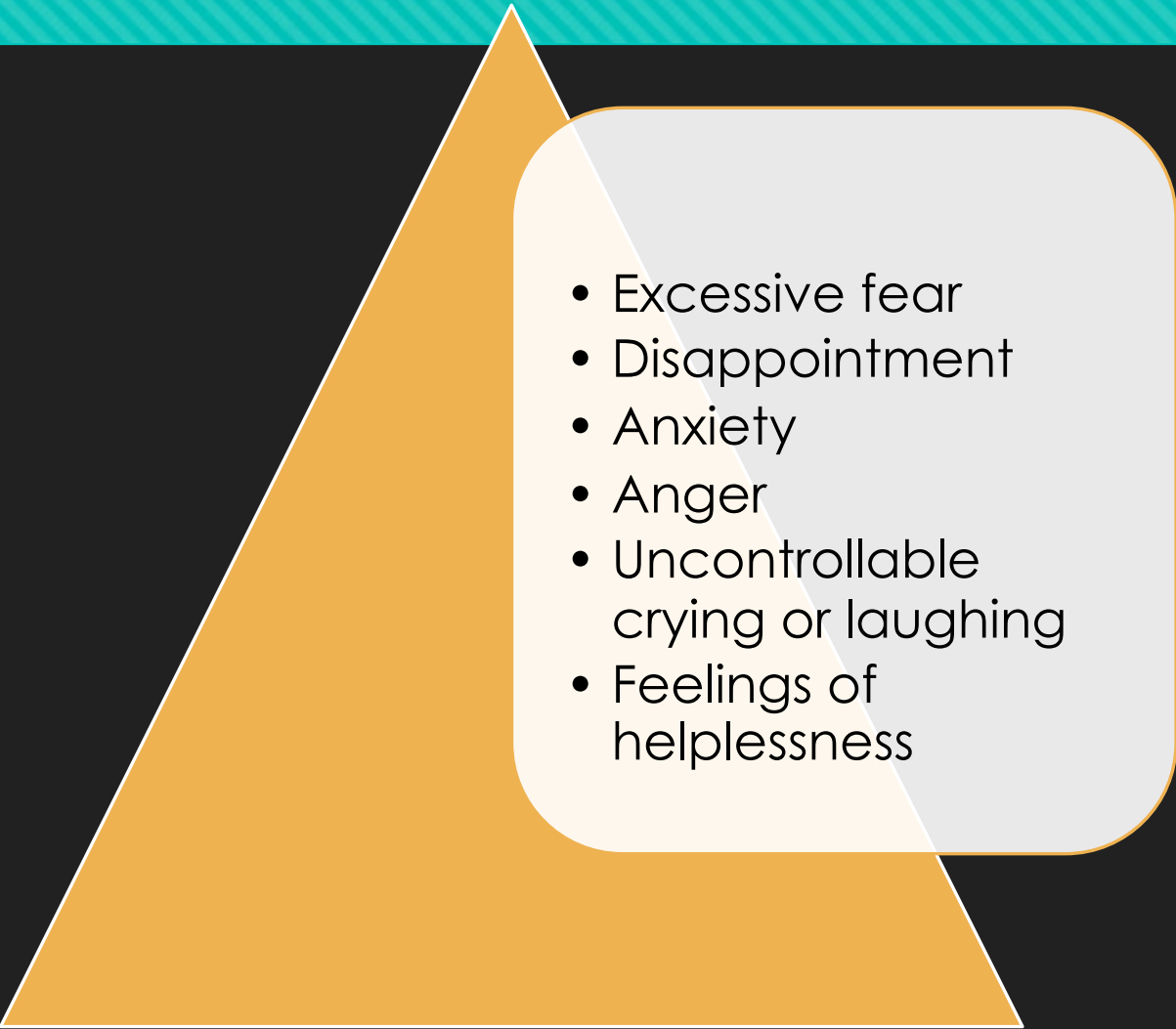


Pacing or fidgeting

Emotional Symptoms

[counseling/medical-school-challenges/test-anxiety.aspx](https://www.einstein.yu.edu/education/student-affairs/academic-support-counseling/medical-school-challenges/test-anxiety.aspx)

<https://www.einstein.yu.edu/education/student-affairs/academic-support->

- 
- Excessive fear
 - Disappointment
 - Anxiety
 - Anger
 - Uncontrollable crying or laughing
 - Feelings of helplessness

Cognitive Symptoms

- Racing thoughts
- Going blank
- Difficulty concentrating
- Negative self-talk
- Comparing yourself to others
- Difficulty organizing your thoughts
- Avoidance

External Triggers

Visual Triggers

Students getting up and turning in their tests before you are done

A room becoming more and more empty

People turning the pages of their exam

The clock ticking away

Auditory Triggers

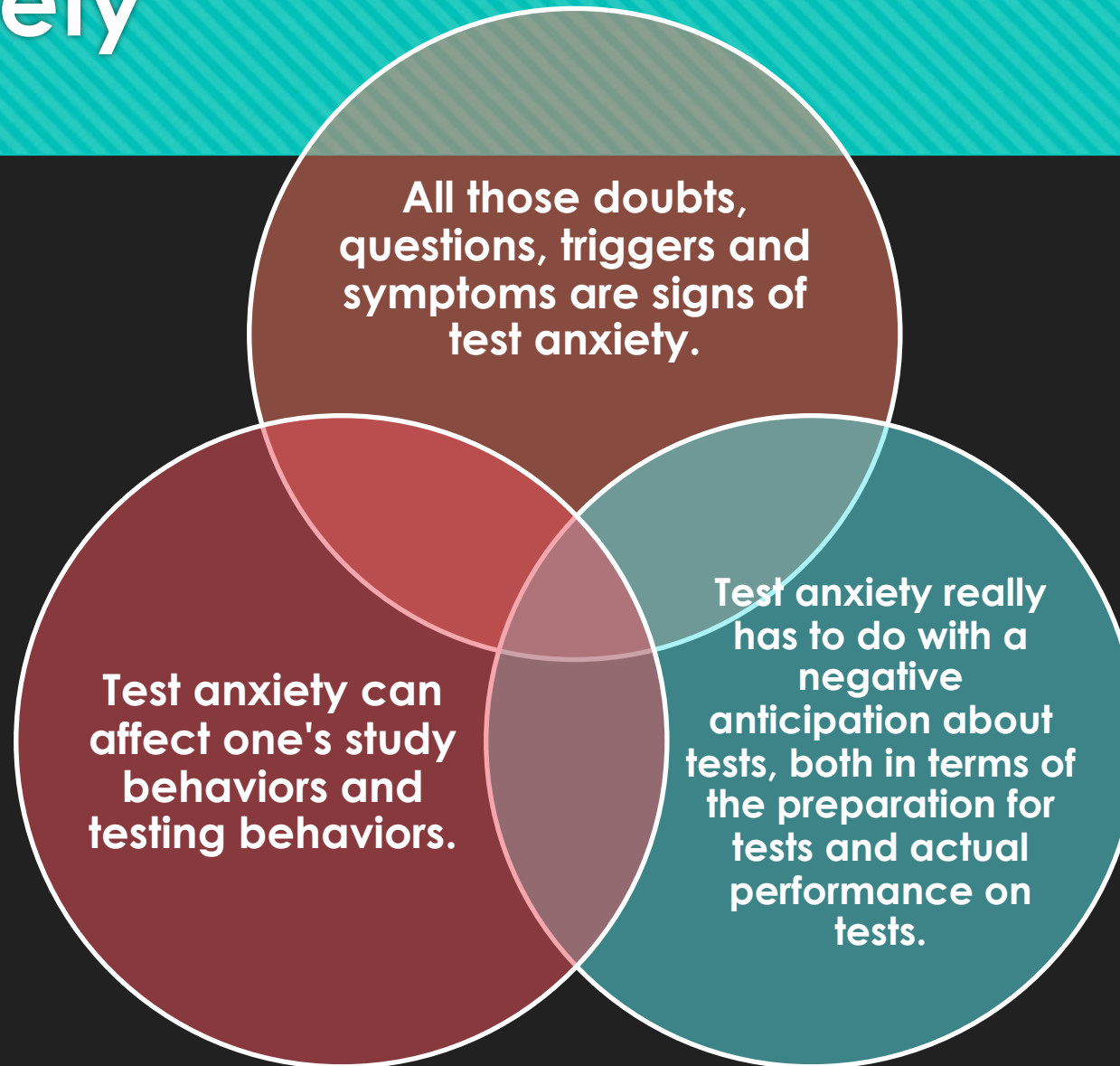
Pencils dropping
on the table

Backpacks being
zipped

Desks moving
around

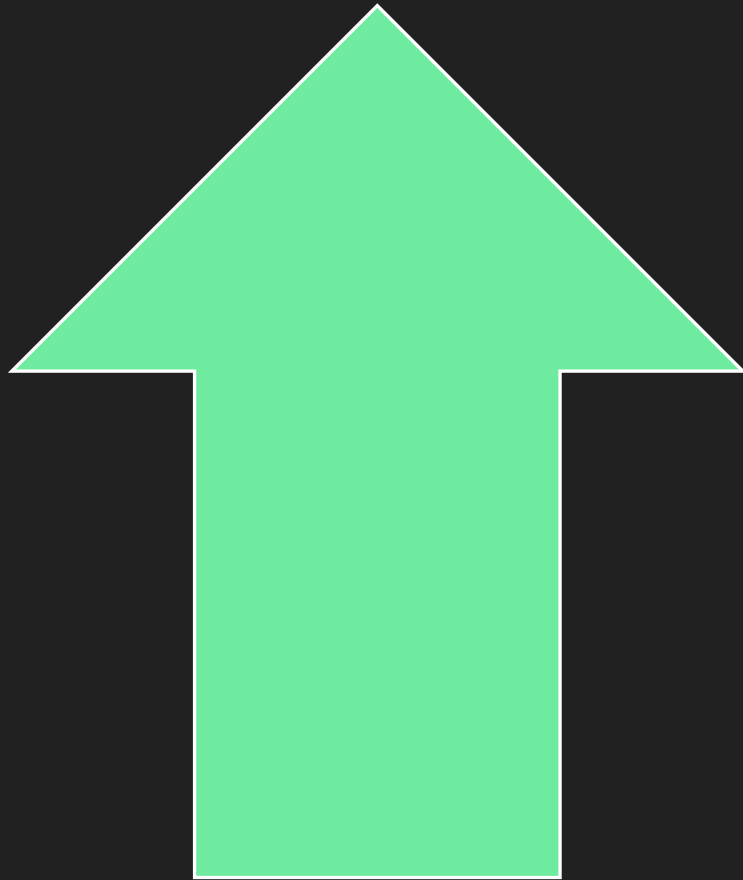
The door opening
and closing as
people leave

Test Anxiety



Who Gets Test Anxiety and What Causes It??

Who Might Get Test Anxiety?



- People who have anxiety in their family or who already have other forms of anxiety are more likely to have test anxiety.
- Anyone who has had a bad testing experience may also suffer from test anxiety. Our brains can remember bad testing experiences very well. People can develop a belief that “I’m just a bad test taker” — once you have that belief in place, it can impact the way you approach a test.

What Causes Test Anxiety?



Test anxiety is actually very common.

- Why exactly does it happen?
 - Previous bad testing experience, like going blank or doing badly on a test
 - Inability to study because of anxiety
 - Lack of self-confidence
 - Being afraid of failing
 - Perfectionism
 - Not being prepared for testing

**So What Are Some Strategies That
You Can Use To Manage Your Test
Anxiety?**

**19. PROCRASTINATI...
I'LL FINISH IT LATER.**

10000teenagetruths.tumblr.com

Nip It In the Bud!

• <https://www.mnsu.edu/counseling/students/tanxiety.html>



Anxiety is like a snowball going down a hill -- it starts small and slowly and gradually builds up size and speed.

If you want to stop a snowball going down a hill, the best place to do it is as close to the top of the hill as possible.

Nip It In The Bud!

It is critical to nip it in the bud, and stop it before it builds up steam.

To do this you need to develop an "early warning system" -- you need to be able to recognize the early telltale signs and symptoms that your anxiety is starting to snowball.

These signs will be different for different people, but examples are sweaty palms, feeling nauseous, headaches, starting to think negative thoughts, etc. When you detect that your anxiety is starting to build, try some techniques we cover today.

Avoid Avoidance!

The best thing you can do for yourself is to be completely prepared, though that *doesn't mean an all-night cramming session* (which could backfire if you don't get enough sleep).

So start studying, and don't avoid it because of fear. If you're prepared, that's going to have a lot to do with lessening your test anxiety. It's also important to look at a test as what it is — it's just one test, a piece of paper — it doesn't define the rest of your life.

It's also important to face your fears head-on. If you move toward the thing that makes you anxious, your confidence goes up and your anxiety goes down. Conversely, *the more you avoid it, the more your anxiety kicks into gear.*

Tips For Relaxation

Relaxation Strategies



You can use behavioral relaxation strategies to relax your body

Behavioral techniques such as **deep breathing**, **progressive muscle relaxation** and **visualization** can help you achieve a physiological state of relaxation, when you do, your mind will follow suit. Like any skill, relaxation techniques have to be regularly practiced for you to get in the habit of using them to relax.

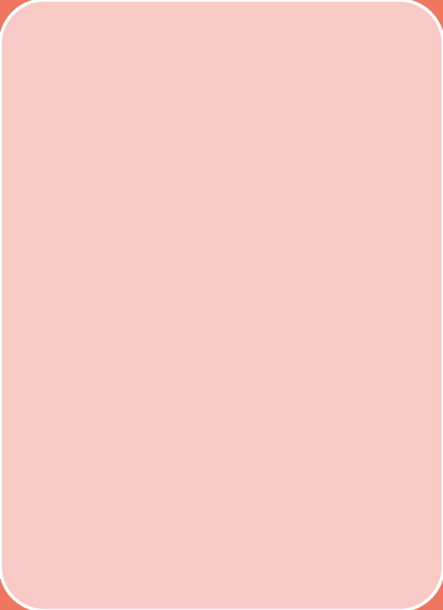
Deep Breathing

Deep breathing: This is a simple technique that you can do without anyone knowing while you are in a classroom.

Take a deep breath and feel your stomach expand, not your chest. Hold that breath for several seconds. Then, slowly exhale and feel your stomach go back down and experience the tension leaving your body.

Repeat several times. If you silently say the word "calm" or "relax" to yourself as you exhale, over time thinking of this word alone will be able to evoke a sense of relaxation.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Start with one group of muscles (usually your feet), hold it tight for a few seconds and then release. Then move to the next group of muscles (ex. lower legs) and do the same thing. Work your way up through your legs, abdomen, chest, hands, arms, shoulders, neck and face muscles. You should feel the tension leave your body, leaving you feeling relaxed.

Visualization

Imagery:
Imagery means using your imagination to help you relax. You can do this in two ways.

- Coping imagery (mental rehearsal): Imagine yourself staying relaxed and performing well on the test.
- Visualization: Place yourself in a relaxing scene, imagine yourself at the lake, or in your favorite spot to go to. Use all five of your senses to make the scene come alive (what do you see, smell, taste, hear, and what can you touch).

Cognitive Strategies

I am not anxious.
I am just extremely well
educated about all
the things that
can go
catastrophically
wrong.



somee cards
user card

What Runs Through My Mind Is.....

“Did I study enough?”

“What if I forget everything?”

“What if I don't pass?”

Talk Yourself Down



Use a cognitive approach to relax your mind

It is essential to talk to yourself in ways that lower rather than raise anxiety.

You need to talk to yourself in ways that change your self-talk from negative to positive, from discouraging to *realistically hopeful*.

Remember, test anxiety is when your worries get in the way of showing your professor what you know -- so, by definition, **YOU DO KNOW THE MATERIAL**, at least sufficiently to pass the test if not necessarily to ace it, and you need to remind yourself of this.

Talk Yourself Down

Control the fear

The underlying source of test or performance anxiety is the fear of failure

Pay attention to what you are thinking and saying to yourself in anxious situations

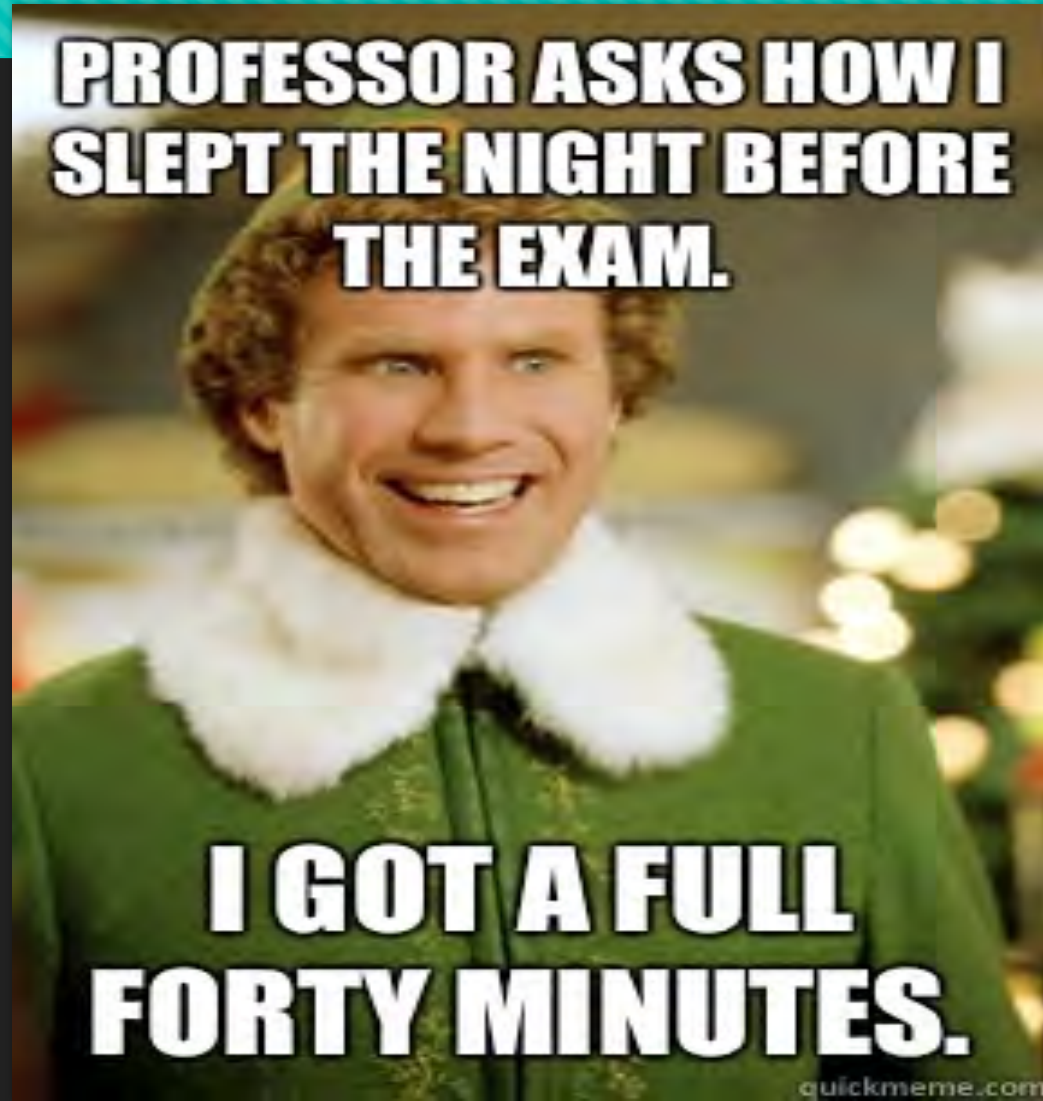
Self-talk will likely reflect an expectation including fear of failure

Change your self-talk

- Change: I can't do it → I can do it
- Change: I 'm stupid → I'm smart
- Change: I don't know → I do know

Tips To Prepare Yourself For Midterms and Finals

Take Care of Your Body

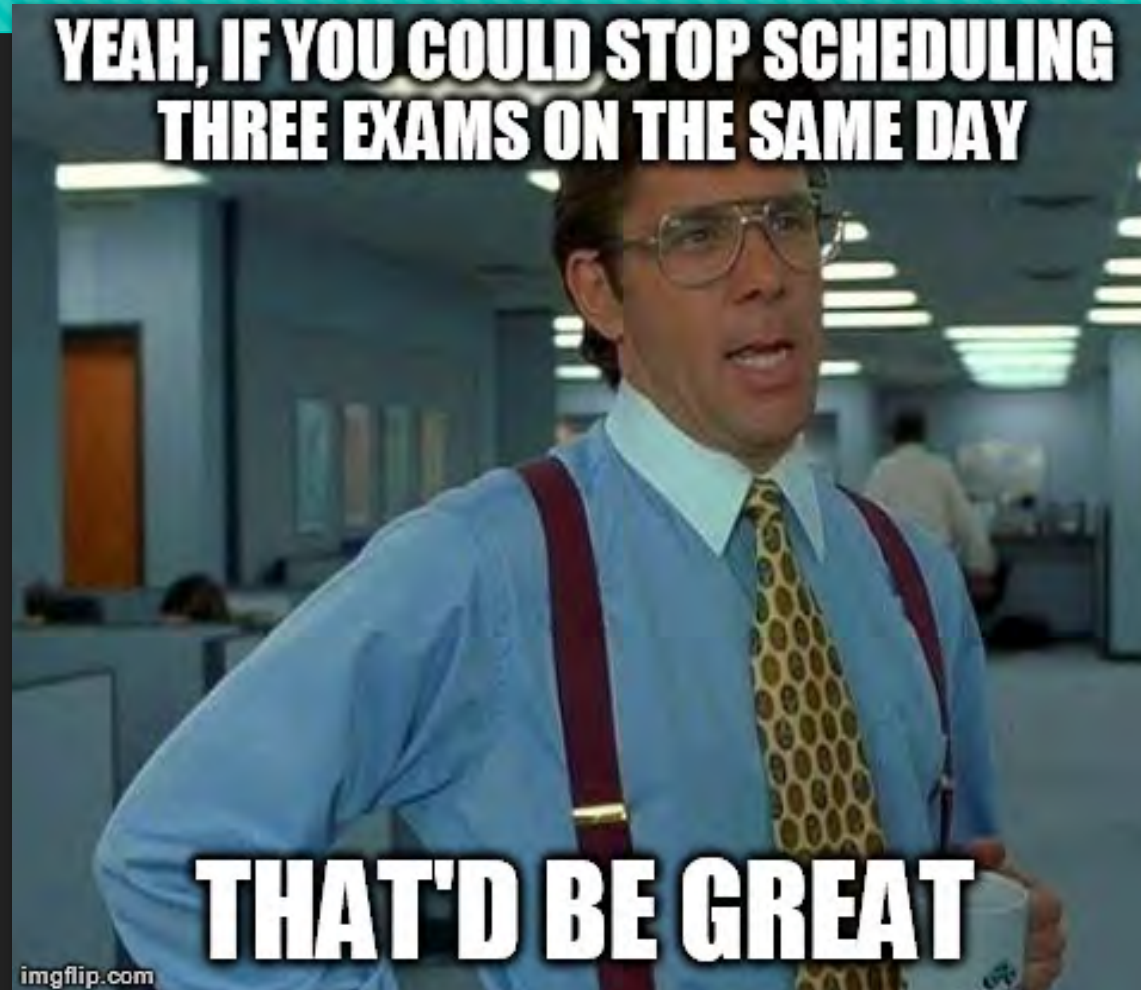


Take Care of Your Body

- Be healthy
- Get some exercise or physical activity. Exercise is a great stress reliever and can help re-charge your mental batteries
 - When you are physically and emotionally exhausted your body and mind are less able to tolerate stress and anxiety
- Get adequate rest
- **Eat well**

Tips for Studying

Midterms and Finals Can be Like.....



TIPS For Studying For Midterms and Finals

1. Don't study with classmates if doing so raises your anxiety. Do study with classmates if doing so lowers your anxiety.

2. If you remember one thing and one thing only remember this: avoid cramming. If you are prone to test anxiety, frantic, last minute studying is virtually guaranteed to crank your anxiety up. Start studying for a test far enough in advance to avoid this.

3. When you are studying for a test, know when to call it a night, stop studying and get some sleep instead of trying to cram a few extra test points into your brain at the expense of enough rest.

TIPS For Studying For Midterms and Finals

4. Read for mastery rather than memory: think about and try to understand what you read and relate it to the rest of the course material, rather than just try to memorize facts and spit them back on the test.

5. On multiple choice tests, first answer all the questions you know and skip over the ones you are unsure of. Then go back through the test a second time and answer the questions about which you really have to think. This way you will be sure to get all the points coming to you.

6. Dress comfortably and in layers for tests. Why is this important? If you are prone to test anxiety, you may misinterpret the physical discomfort that results from being dressed too warmly as symptoms of anxiety.

Prepping for the Day Before, The Day of, and During the Test

Before Test Day

[://well.wvu.edu/articles/reducing_your_test_anxiety_is_as_easy_as_1_2_3](http://well.wvu.edu/articles/reducing_your_test_anxiety_is_as_easy_as_1_2_3)



Study. It may seem obvious, but insufficient study time is the **biggest underlying problem** for students who suffer from test anxiety. Learn your material so well that you can easily recall it even under difficult conditions.

Breathe! Relaxation helps you to control your breathing, your heart rate and your thought processes. Calm yourself—by dismissing unwanted thoughts, refocusing your mind and controlling your breathing.

Practice positive thinking. To prime yourself for success, you must learn to get rid of negative thoughts. Think “I will do well on this test because I have studied as much as I can and because I know what I need to do to be successful.”

Sleep well and eat well. Few regular activities have as much of a bearing on stress and anxiety levels than resting your brain and eating well. Take care of yourself always, but pay extra close attention in the days leading up to the test.

On Test Day



If you've studied well beforehand, you shouldn't need to study on test day. A nice review would be helpful to jog your memory, but you're probably not going to learn a lot of new stuff on the day of an exam.



Prime your brain. Be very thoughtful about what you eat and drink. Eat something healthy one to two hours before your test.



Visualize success. Fill your mind with affirmation. Remind yourself that you have done everything within your power to be ready, and that you will be successful as a result. Picture yourself answering the test questions with ease. Accept that you will do well, and that you have nothing to worry about.

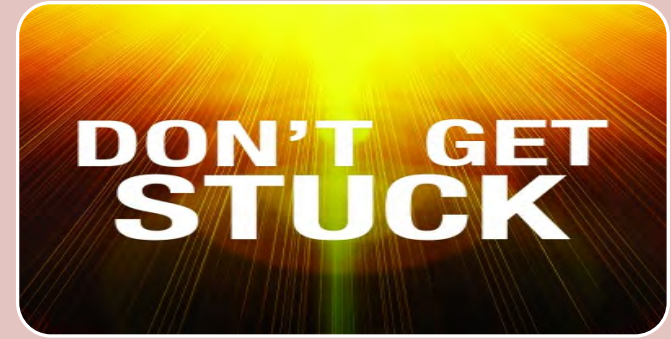
During the Test



Remember, tests don't cause anxiety. The anxiety is your creation, and you can control it.



Begin with a kind word to yourself and a few relaxing breaths. Remind yourself one last time that you have done everything you could to get ready, and now you'll do all you can to succeed.



Don't let yourself struggle with a question. Give yourself enough time on it to try to jog your memory, but then move on to the next one. Answering other questions while waiting may just help jog that memory.

Bottom Line.....

Don't overstress!

70%+ of students experience stress



47% felt that it negatively impacted their academic standing

Follow these tips to stay healthy and manage your stress during exam season

Maintain a healthy lifestyle and relax during busy times:



Sleep 7+ hours



Eat balanced meals



Stretch or walk



Meditate



Stay hydrated



Take breaks
(5—10 minutes every hour)



Laugh

Plan ahead:



Schedule study times

Exam time:



Positive self-talk

Remember,
some anxiety is
beneficial!