

Tips for Academic Success

How Can I Reduce My Test Anxiety?

We all need some stress to motivate us to accomplish our work, especially when the work is not appealing. Stress makes us get out of bed and get to work. Just the right amount of stress helps us succeed but too much stress can paralyze us. It's all about finding the balance.

Test Anxiety Defined

Test anxiety is a mixture of perceived physiological over-arousal, feelings of apprehension and dread, self-deprecating thoughts, tension, and somatic symptoms that occur during test or test preparation situations.

Causes of Stress

Anxiety and stress can be a result of a myriad of things. Your home life, personal relationships, financial situation, work, and academics can all take a toll on you, creating feelings of unease and anxiousness.

You may also experience stress because you may not be prepared for the classes you are currently taking. It is important to assess if you are anxious because you are underprepared for your exams. If you freeze up during an exam, even when well prepared, then you may be experiencing test anxiety.

Whatever the problem, it's important to remember that you have a network of peer, faculty, and staff support to help you find ways to reduce your stress. Start by talking with your campus mentor - an RA, your favorite professor, your advisor, or someone in Academic Resources, Disability Resources or University Health & Counseling Services.

What You Can Do

While Studying

- Use soothing relaxation tapes, aromatherapy, your favorite foods, deep breathing techniques—create a stress-free environment for studying.
- Use positive imagery to create a mental picture of yourself doing well on the exam. Think about this image every time you tell yourself that you will “bomb” the exam.
- Choose someplace well lit with lots of workspace to study to achieve your goals.

Before the Exam

- Arrive early to the exam so that you have some time to relax.
- Don't sit with other students before the exam and flip through your books and notebooks. This activity will just raise your anxiety level.
- Select a seat that keeps you from seeing others leave the exam early. You don't want to be distracted by other students.

During the Exam

- Start with a question that you know so that you can raise your confidence level.
- If you find that you are telling yourself that “I'll never finish this exam,” or “I'm going to fail,” stop! Take the negative self-talk, and replace it with “I am going to do the best that I can!”

After the Exam: Review the exam! It will help you prepare for future exams in that and other courses.