Overcoming Test Anxiety

Questions to ask yourself are:

1. **What am I saying to myself that exasperates my anxiety?**
2. **What are my core beliefs regarding my ability to perform?**
3. **How do I relate to a test? Do I view it as an intimidating authority figure?**

Once you have identified the self-statements and core beliefs underlying your anxiety, it's now time to respond to them.

1. First, **write down the negative self-statements** and core beliefs.

2. Second**, close your eyes, and begin to breathe slowly and easily.** Be sure to use deep diaphragmatic breathing. This type of breathing helps to calm the nervous system and reduce anxiety. Let every breath you take increase your confidence and intention to do well on tests.

3. Third, open your eyes, and **write down a positive response to each negative self-statement and belief you have written down.** If you have trouble doing this, return to step two. In your breathing visualization you may want to imagine how someone you admire and respect would respond to your negative and false beliefs.

4. **Fourth, take your positive responses and repeat them to yourself.** Do this until they feel true to you. This can take time, but keep repeating them as you go about your day Over time, these statements will feel more comfortable.

5. Fifth, do your own **test-taking visualization.** Close your eyes and deep breathe for a few minutes. Let your nervous system calm down and your body relax. Repeat your positive self-statement several times. Emphasize the ones that are particularly powerful and helpful to you.

6. Now imagine yourself walking into a testing room and sitting down at your desk. Begin to breathe, and prepare yourself for the test by repeating your most powerful self-statements. Then choose one of them that you can use during the test to calm any anxiety that may come up. Repeat this statement several times, and when you are ready, begin taking the test.

7. Imagine yourself feeling calm and confident as you read and answer the questions. Remember that you are equal to the test and that you have the tools to manage your anxiety. Your mind is clear and focused, remembering the material and giving you the information that you need. And always remember to breathe!

Test Anxiety: During The Test

- Tell yourself "I can be anxious later, now is the time to take the exam."
- Focus on answering the question, not on your grade or others' performances.
- Counter negative thoughts with other, more valid thoughts like, "I don't have to be perfect."
- Tense and relax muscles throughout your body; take a couple of slow deep breaths and try to maintain a positive attitude.
- Think for a moment about the post-exam reward you promised yourself.

HOW TO REDUCE TEST ANXIETY DURING A TEST

- Breath
- Do what you can do first to gain confidence
- Replace negative thoughts with positive
- Brain dump
- Read directions carefully
- Write down what you know
  - Information may come to you
  - Partial credit
- Use same pen/pencil/eraser
- Stop when you are done
- Don't leave anything blank