

Test Anxiety Tip Sheet

Some stress and feelings of nervousness before a test can serve to help you focus and think clearly. However, with test anxiety, feelings of mind blankness, pounding heart, nausea, running thoughts, and panic can severely impact your test-taking performance. Combatting test anxiety starts well before the actual test date. This tip sheet will aim to give you some strategies that can help you avoid test anxiety.

From the start of the course:

Meet your body's basic needs.

Food, water, and sleep are important for basic body functions and for your brain. If you can keep your brain in good working order, you are more likely to retain information and be able to focus and recall information during a test.

Study smart.

Use good reading, studying, and note-taking techniques. A strong understanding of course content will help you be able to apply it on the test. Knowing that you studied well and did everything you could to learn the information will help you have confidence in yourself and to trust that you are familiar with this information.

****Check out the Tip Sheets for strategies related to reading, memorization, and study techniques****

Attend class.

Going to class regularly ensures you don't miss anything. If you must miss a day, meet with the instructor or with your classmates to go over any information. Consider asking a classmate to take notes for you while you're away.

Know the format of the test.

Will the test be multiple choice? Essay? True and false? A combination? Will you be able to choose the questions you wish to answer on the test? Knowing this ahead of time lets you know what to expect, which can help decrease anxiety.

The night before:

Get organized.

Pack your bag with anything you need for the test. Review what you are allowed to bring to the test (i.e., calculator, ruler, memory aid, extra pencils, etc.) Make sure you have your transit/driving route planned out. Set multiple alarms to make sure you don't miss one.

Focus on your wellbeing.

Consider taking a break from your phone so you don't overload your brain. Plan to practice some relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, relaxing your muscles one at a time, or closing your eyes and visualizing a positive outcome. Practice challenging your unhelpful or negative thoughts. Consider doing some exercise to help release nervous or anxious energy.

Sleep.

Getting a good night's sleep will help your brain be ready to work for you. Being well rested will benefit you more than staying up all night cramming.

The morning of:

Eat a good breakfast.

Eat a nutritious breakfast that contain foods that offer a steady stream of nutrients to help you feel full longer. Avoid high sugar or junk foods - fueling your body appropriately fuels your brain, too.

Find your routine.

Do what makes you feel calm, comfortable, and confident for taking a test. Consider the following:

- Dress for comfort. Wear layers so you can control your temperature during the test.
- Have coffee from your favorite mug.
- Meditate.
- Schedule in an exercise session before your test.
- Listen to music that wakes you up and makes you feel positive and strong.
- Give yourself a pep talk. Remind yourself of past successes. Put the test into perspective and remember that it doesn't define you.
- Get a hug from someone you love.
- Read some inspirational quotes.
- Find an opportunity to laugh - Laughing helps decrease stress and tension.

Get to school early.

Give yourself time to get used to the space. Have a look at the testing room. If possible, choose a seat with few distractions.

During the test:

Stay positive.

If you begin to have negative thoughts, allow yourself to take a mental break, centre yourself, and refocus. Again, consider giving yourself a pep talk and reminding yourself of past successes. Know that you have done this before, and you can do it again.

Practice deep breathing exercises.

Deep breathing slows down your heart rate which calms your body's "fight or flight" response to stress. Close your eyes, breathe in for a count of 4 and out for a count of four. Repeat as needed.

Focus on your own work.

Try not to let others distract you. Focus on your own pace and plan – it doesn't matter if other people finish before you. If it is permitted, consider using ear plugs.

Stick to your plan.

When you sit down, review the entire test. Make sure you read the directions carefully. Go through and answer the questions you know first. Pace yourself - do not rush through the test. If your mind goes blank, skip the question and continue forward. Take short body breaks in your seat - tense and relax your muscles throughout your body, roll your shoulders, and stretch your legs to keep your blood flowing.

Reward yourself.

Reward yourself after the test. Try not to dwell on your answers. Take time to relax and do something that makes you happy - go for a nice walk by yourself or with a friend, treat yourself to a coffee or lunch.

Have questions? Contact the Senior Manager of Student Learning Support & Disability Resources.

Phone: 604-528-5884 email: studentresources@jibc.ca

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