



The Betty East Tutoring Center at Victoria College

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Letting Go of Test Anxiety

Test anxiety is common in students of any age or major. While a little anxiety is helpful because it makes you study when you feel unmotivated, some students can become overwhelmed and physically sick from anxiety. Here are some strategies to combat the negative feelings and thoughts, so you can better focus on preparing for and taking the exam.

Before the Exam

- Imagine the worst. Make a list of "the worst" things that could happen. Push your thoughts to the limit (i.e. I will fail this test, fail the class, lose financial aid, drop out of school, won't get a job, run out of money, never get to go to Disney World, and starve) the more drastic you make it, the sooner you will see that the test is not the end of the world. No single test is the difference between success and failure!
- Take the anxiety out of the situation. Right before the exam take a practice test in a quiet room with a desk and time limit. Make it as real as possible. Ask the instructor for practice tests or try and make one. The Tutoring Center is able to help you with this. This should cause some anxiety, but will help relieve your anxiety on test day. Finish the test, grade it using your text and notes, and use the results to study.
- Use constructive study methods. Most students can't read chapters at a time and stay focused. Try reading one section of the text and summarize it for yourself. Find a classmate and quiz each other. You can also create flashcards to quiz yourself. Writing the information and quizzing yourself are great tools.

Before and Up to the Last Minute of the Exam

- When your mind races with negative thoughts, tell yourself to stop. You need to remove yourself from the negative thoughts. Think of a place you like to be or your favorite part of a movie. Think of each and every detail. Relax for a minute. Then come back to the test with a different mindset.
- Think positively. Tell yourself that you can do it, you have studied, and you are smart. Remember positive comments from teachers and friends. Remember, if you have prepared properly, you are doing your best. Do not let your mind tell you that you can't do it or you are going to fail.
- Stay out of the classroom. Before the exam, put your things in the room. Set up to take the test and go out of the room. Don't try to study and don't listen to your peers. Their anxiety will cause more anxiety for you, and their review sessions may confuse what you know. While you are waiting for the test to begin, practice relaxation techniques such as breathing and stretching.

During the Exam

- Practice breathing methods. Take deep breaths and hold them or let the air out slowly. At first your body will fight you, but continue until your heart rate slows down.
- Take breaks. Sit up straight, then tense and relax your back and neck muscles. If possible, slip in a mint to relieve dry mouth and stop a growling stomach. Close your eyes and think your happiest thoughts before you get back to the test. A thirty second break can stop the knots in your stomach and clear your mind. If you are thinking only of the stressful symptoms, you will not be able to concentrate on the test questions. You are in control, and you are prepared.
- Feel good about your efforts. Answer some questions that you are sure of to build confidence and then return to the harder ones. Don't stare at a blank page, but focus on the aspects of the test that you confidently remember. You have the full support of the Tutoring Center backing you, and you are going to do great!