



Test Anxiety-What You Can Control



Test anxiety is a feeling of agitation and distress associated with test taking, which impacts your ability to study or perform on the test. Some anxiety is natural and helps to keep you mentally and physically alert, but too much may cause physical distress, emotional upset, and concentration difficulties.

The Effects and Causes of Test Anxiety-Physiological reactions to anxiety may include rapid heartbeat, muscle tension, queasiness, dry mouth, or perspiration. Behavioral reactions may include an inability to act, make decisions, express yourself, or to deal with everyday situations. Psychological reactions may include feelings of apprehension, uneasiness, upset, and self-doubt.

Changing Your Attitude-Improving your beliefs and attitudes about the test-taking experience may improve your studying and test performance. Don't overplay the importance of a grade – it's not a reflection of your self-worth, nor does it predict your future success. The most reasonable expectation is to show as much of what you know as you can.

- Remind yourself that a test is only a test - there will be others.
- Avoid thinking in irrational, all-or-nothing terms. Doing this can lead to "catastrophic thinking" where you fear the results of 1 single test means your entire career will be de-railed if you don't get the score you want.
- Reward yourself after the test - watch a movie, go out to eat, or visit with friends as able with the pandemic.

Attend to the Basics-Students preparing for tests often neglect basic biological, emotional, and social needs.

- Have good nutrition and exercise habits.
- Follow a moderate pace when studying and take breaks when needed.
- Get plenty of sleep the night before the test.

The Day of the Test

- Begin your day with a moderate breakfast and avoid coffee if you are prone to "caffeine jitters."
- Try to do something relaxing the hour before the test - last minute cramming will cloud your mastering of the overall concepts of the course.
- Plan to arrive early – allowing yourself to relax & select a seat located away from doors, windows, and other possible distractions.
- Avoid engaging with classmates who generate anxiety and tend to upset your stability.
- If waiting for the test to begin causes anxiety, distract yourself such as reading, listening to music, or playing a game on your phone.

During the Test: Anxiety Control- Try to cope with anxiety in any of the following ways:

- 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 relax muscles throughout your body; take a couple of slow deep breaths & try to maintain a positive attitude.

After the Test-Be sure to follow through on the reward you promised yourself - and enjoy it!

Also, don't forget you can see a counselor through the EAP program in-person, via telemedicine, or even over the phone. We have counselors on-site too Mondays and Thursdays weekly at UAMS. Remember-We are here for YOU and can be reached 24/7 at 800-542-6021 and would be happy to help ☺

