



Relaxation Techniques to Cope With Test Anxiety

Directions to Parents: Engage your child in a positive and productive conversation about ways to cope with test anxiety using this information as your guide.

Basic Types of Test Anxiety

- What you are feeling.
- What you are thinking.

Where Test Anxiety Comes From

1. Test anxiety is a learned behavior.
2. The association of grades and personal worth can cause test anxiety.
3. Test anxiety can come from feeling a lack of control.
4. Being placed into a course above one's ability level can cause test anxiety.
5. Timed tests and the fear of not finishing the test, even if one can do all the problems, can be a source of anxiety.

Reasons Students May Turn in Tests Early (Without Checking Answers)

- Their anxiety level gets so high that they have to leave.
- They don't want to be the last one in the classroom.

12 Myths About Test Anxiety

1. Students are born with test anxiety.
2. Test anxiety is a mental illness.
3. Test anxiety cannot be reduced.
4. Doing nothing about test anxiety will make it go away.
5. Any level of test anxiety is bad.
6. All students who are not prepared have test anxiety.
7. Students who are well-prepared will not have test anxiety.
8. Students with test anxiety cannot learn math.
9. Very intelligent students and students taking high-level courses, such as calculus, do not have test anxiety.
10. Attending class and doing my homework should reduce all my test anxiety.
11. Being told to relax during a test will make you relaxed.
12. Reducing test anxiety will guarantee better grades.

Saying No to Negative Self-Talk

Negative self-talk causes students to lose confidence and to give up on tests. Students need to change their negative self-talk to positive self-talk without making unrealistic statements. Examples of negative self-talk follow.

- *No matter what I do, I will not pass the course.*
- *I am no good at reading, so why should I try?*
- *I cannot remember the answers; I am going to fail this test.*
- *I failed the last test, and I am going to flunk this one too.*

Say Yes to Positive Self-Talk

During tests, positive self-talk can build confidence and decrease your child's test anxiety. Using positive self-talk before a test also can help reduce test anxiety and improve your child's grades. Examples of positive self-talk follow.

- *I may have failed the course last semester, but I now I have the study skills to pass.*
- *I went blank on the last test, but I now know how to reduce test anxiety.*
- *I know that with hard work, I will become a better writer.*
- *I prepared for this test and will do the best I can.*
- *I feel good about my self and my abilities. I am not going to worry about that one difficult problem. I'm going to use all my test time and check for careless errors. Even if I don't get the grade I want on this test, it is not the end of the world.*

Activity Challenge: Suggest to your child that he or she try one of the following relaxation techniques during the next test.

The Releasing Tension Method

1. Put your feet flat on the floor.
2. With your hands, grab underneath the chair.
3. Push down with your feet and pull up on your chair at the same time for about five seconds.
4. Relax for five to ten seconds.
5. Repeat the procedure two or three times then relax all your muscles except the ones that are actually used to take the test.

The Palming Method

1. Cup your palms over your closed eyes so there is no pressure on your eyeball.
2. Think of a real or imaginary relaxing scene. Mentally visualize this scene. Picture the scene as if you were actually there, looking through your own eyes.
3. Visualize this relaxing scene for one to two minutes.

Deep Breathing

1. Sit straight up in your chair.
2. Slowly inhale through your nose. First fill the lower section of your lungs and work your way up to the upper part of your lungs.
3. Hold your breath for a few seconds then exhale slowly through your mouth.
4. Wait a few seconds and repeat the cycle.