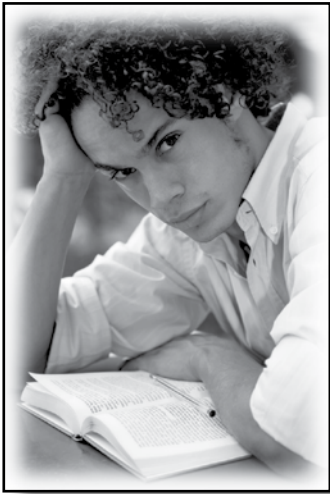


Test Anxiety



What is Test Anxiety?

Test Anxiety is a type of performance anxiety. It's a feeling someone might have in a situation where performance really counts. A person

might experience Test Anxiety when he or she is about to take the SATs or ACTs; prepare for final exams; try out for the school play, sing solo on stage, get into position on the pitcher's mound; or go for an interview. Often negative self talk accompanies test anxiety. Statements like, "You'll never do well, you are terrible at this," go over in one's mind.

What Causes Test Anxiety?

Test Anxiety is not the same as doing poorly on a test because a student's mind is on something else. Everyone's concentration can be affected at some point - such as a breakup or the death of someone. This can prevent one from doing his or her best on a test. Test Anxiety affects the body and mind. When the body is under stress, a hormone called adrenaline, which prepares the body for danger, is released. This causes physical symptoms such as sweating, rapid breathing, stomachaches, a tension headache, and possibly vomiting or passing out. The mind then triggers a cascade of negative statements that only makes the situation worse.

Other Causes

Lack of test preparation is indicated by:

- cramming the night before the exam
- poor time management
- failure to organize text information
- poor study habits

Worrying about the following:

- past performance on exams
- how friends and other students are doing
- the negative consequences of failure

Who is Likely to Have It?

People who worry a lot or who are perfectionists are more likely to have trouble with Test Anxiety. They sometimes find it hard to accept the mistakes they make or to get anything less than a perfect score.

Students who aren't prepared for tests but who care about doing well are likely to experience test anxiety. It is common to be worried about doing poorly when one isn't prepared for a test. Students can feel unprepared for several reasons:

- Didn't study enough for test
- Find material too difficult
- Inadequate rest the night before

How to Reduce Test Anxiety

- Study and know the material well enough so that you can recall it even if you are under stress.
- Use techniques like taking a long deep breath and tensing and relaxing your muscles to counter the negative symptoms.
- Set a timer and practice taking a test.
- Be prepared by studying throughout the semester and avoid cramming the night before the exam.
- Minimize distracting noise
- Consider a "do not disturb" sign
- Study in a cool environment. Don't overdress on test day.
- A desk and straight-backed chair is usually best. Don't get too comfortable - bed is a place to sleep, not study
- Accept that you will make mistakes - everyone does

Call us, we can help.

(Resources: The Nemours Foundation - www.kidshealth.org; <http://ub-counseling.buffalo.edu/stresstestanxiety.shtml>)



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