

CONTROLLING TEST ANXIETY

Test anxiety may be characterized by nervousness, sweaty palms, nausea and/or dizziness. If your anxiety is because you know you are unprepared, the cure is simple: next time, come prepared!

But if your ability to perform is affected by an anxiety closer to stage fright—a blanking-out, freezing on material that you know very well—then you need to work on your self-talk, your inner game.

Here are some exercises that may be useful to you; if they are not, we urge you to make an appointment with the Counseling Center (<https://sites.udel.edu/counseling/>) for more in-depth assistance.

WHAT'S THE WORST THING THAT COULD HAPPEN?

What will happen if you fail this test? Will you fail the course? Flunk out of college? Lose your significant other's love? Be disowned by your parents? Never get a "real" job? End up in the gutter? ***Not likely!***

There is always another way—you can go forward. If you fail this test, you can learn from your mistakes and do better next time. If you fail this course, you can take it over. If you flunk out, you can work to get back in. While tests are serious and important, they are not *that* important: your whole life is not riding on one single test. YOU are not a failure because of what you do in one hour on one day on one test.

Put things in perspective. Sit down and have a talk with yourself: name your worst fears. Push them to the farthest extreme, until they seem silly enough to you that you can laugh about them, then think *realistically* about the job you have to do.

PRACTICE SUCCESS

Picture every detail of the test situation and see your success:

- Visualize the classroom: see yourself arrive in plenty of time, with your head full of what you need to know.
- Picture yourself relaxed and confident, ready and eager to show what you know.
- In your minds' eye, walk through the process of receiving the test, calmly reading the questions, feeling confident of your answers, having plenty of time to go back and check your work, turning in the test with the assurance that you did your best.
- Visualize receiving the test back, marked with the grade you deserve.

Repeat this several times, creating a mental habit that you can step into on the day of the test.

GIVE YOUR INNER VOICE A NEW SCRIPT

When your self-talk tells you you'll fail, silence it. Replace it with a new way of talking to yourself that reminds you you're OK—I am a competent human being. I have worked hard, I will do my best, I can show what I know.

BREATHE!

If the adrenalin is making your pulse race, slow it down by **taking control of your breathing:**

- Slowly breathe in through your nose for 7 counts, then
- hold for 4 counts
- Breathe out through your mouth for 8 counts

Repeat 3-4 times.