

Tips on dealing with test anxiety

**“Depend upon it, Sir,
when a man knows he is about to be
hanged in a fortnight,
it concentrates his mind wonderfully.”**

- Samuel Johnson



Two Kinds of Test Anxiety

If you are stressed about the big exam then you are normal. There is an energy that comes from stress and with the right attitude, you can harness it. It keeps you alert.

There are two types of test anxiety. If your anxiety is due to lack of preparation, we deal with it by studying and taking practice exams. This is normal test anxiety. We all have to deal with it.

If you are prepared but still panic, "blank out", or overreact, you may have more than the usual test stress. We deal with that by attitude adjustment.

Preparation

Preparation is the best way to minimize normal pre-test anxiety. There is no shortcut. If you want to be prepared, you have to do the work. Here are three tips:

1. Space out your studying

Research suggests you learn better from three 2-hour study periods than from one 6-hour study session, even though the total amount of time is the same.

Late night cramming is also inferior. If you only have a little time to study, give it the hours of the day when your mind is freshest.

2. Get comfortable with practice tests

You don't prepare for a marathon by reading about it: you run, every day. So practice testing must be a part of your study plan, period.

Do the 48 practice VTNE questions provided by the [American Association of Veterinary State Boards \(AAVSB\)](#) - this is your BEST way to get a sense of the question format and depth.

Also, see the free Zuku Review sample tests and [Zuku question of the day archive](#), for more practice.

3. Cramming happens

Some cramming is inevitable, but if you waited until the day before the test to study 4-years of material well, that's self-inflicted, people.

However, in the highly unlikely event that you are short of time just before the big test, you might want to give notes you have written down in your own hand first priority for a review. Because you went to the trouble to organize your thoughts and put something down on paper at one time, a quick skim now can pay off because you are reminding yourself of something you have already processed mentally.

Changing Your Attitude

It's been shown that performance suffers when you carry too much emotional baggage into a test. I.e: "I've GOT to pass this test" or "If I fail, I'll never get a job "

If you feel overwhelmed or feel that uncontrollable emotions are interfering with your test performance, your test anxiety may be beyond the "normal" range.

Do:

Focus on the task at hand
Study as much as you can
Take practice exams
Hold onto the big picture- a test is only a test
Your best
Exercise

Don't:

Waste energy psyching yourself out. Panic is not productive.
Think of yourself in irrational, all-or-nothing terms. (I.e: "I'm just stupid")
Hang around classmates who generate anxiety and upset your stability

On test day:

Arrive at the test location early .
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'
Counter negative thoughts with other, more valid thoughts like, "I don't have to be perfect"
Take a deep breaths. Fill your lungs and abdomen, hold your breath, and then exhale

Returning to the luggage metaphor: deal with excess baggage later. Unpack after the exam.

“From reading too much, and sleeping too little,

his brain dried up and he lost his wits.”

-Miguel de Cervantes
Don Quixote



References:

[University of Illinois Counseling Center](#)

[The Social Psychology Network](#)

“What Smart Students Know” by Adam Robinson, co-founder of [The Princeton Review](#) test preparation company



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