

LETTING GO OF TEST ANXIETY

What is stress?

- Response to a stressor; the body's response to demands placed on it.
- We have to prepare for moments of danger, and your body lets you know when to be on guard. (Fight or Flight) YOU NEED TO DIFFUSE YOUR BODY'S PANIC RESPONSE: TRAIN IT TO REMAIN CALM WHEN PRESENTED WITH TESTS.

What is test anxiety?

- Physically: butterflies in stomach, sweaty palms, jittery, tense, nausea, sleeplessness
- Psychologically: worry about future, blank out, panic, negative thoughts

Ways to diffuse the panic response:

1. Stop putting so much weight on the exam.

Exercise:

- Write down the worst thing that can happen on your next test, write down what's the worst thing that failing this test could lead to. Keep writing until you have taken your fears to their end.
- Share your fears. Are these fears plausible? Are they ridiculous?
- What are some more realistic fears?
- What are some solutions to a failed test?
 - exam analysis
 - talk to a teacher
 - use tutors
 - work with a counselor
 - other possibilities?

ONE EXAM WILL NOT LEAD TO MASS DESTRUCTION (aka personal failure).

2. Prepare your body in advance.

- Take the anxiety out of the test situation. Two nights before the exam, take a practice test complete with a quiet room, a classroom-type desk, and a time limit. Make it as real as possible. This should cause some anxiety but help relieve your anxiety on test day. Finish the test completely and then use the results for your studying.

3. Yell "STOP!"

- When your mind is racing with negative thoughts, tell yourself outloud or in your head to stop. You then need to remove yourself from the thoughts by:
 - Daydreaming. Choose one or two places you really like to be. Think of each and every detail. How does it feel to be there, what are the smells, the sights, the sounds? This distance will help you come back and refocus.

4. Think positively
 - Tell yourself over and over that you can do it, that you have studied, that you are smart. Remember positive comments from teachers and friends. At the very least think, "I am doing my best."
5. Stay out of the classroom.
 - Before the exam, put your books and things in the room. Set up to take the test and then go out of the room. Walk around, visualize and relax. Don't try to study, and don't listen to your peers. Their anxiety will cause more anxiety in you and their quick review sessions may confuse what you already know. While waiting for the test to begin, practice relaxation techniques over and over.
6. Breathe.
 - Practice breathing methods. Practice taking deep breaths and holding them, or taking deep breaths and letting the air out through pursed lips. At first, your body will fight you, but continue until your heart slows down with your breathing.
7. Take breaks.
 - Sit up straight, tense and untense back and neck muscles and then breathe deeply. Get back to test.