Dealing with Exam/Test Anxiety

Feeling nervous is a common experience for everyone taking a test or exam. Do you experience the same problem as well? Read on to learn more about how to tackle the situation.

To tackle the situation, you first need to understand that there are two main types of nervousness when it comes to taking a test. You need to distinguish for you which type are you experiencing! If you are feeling nervous because of a direct result of you not preparing sufficiently, it’s absolutely normal. If you are feeling nervous despite being fully prepared but still panic, don’t worry, it’s normal too.

Once done, consider the following options to see how you can cope with the situation better:

**Before the test**

1. **Prepare!**
   - Make sure you prepare by studying sufficiently in a comfortable pace – don’t rush to the last minute and cramp everything in!
   - Ask yourself possible questions that may appear in the exam and see if you can answer them.

2. **Know your exams details!**
   - Know when and where your exams are taking place, trying to find out at the last minute may be painful for some.

3. **Changing your perspective!**
   - Negative self talk is not going to help you do better – watch what you are telling yourself. Be sure to set realistic expectations for yourself
   - Don’t take an exam in too high regards – who you are isn’t defined by your results you achieved
   - Avoid bashing yourself up – emotionally, mentally and physically

4. **Remembering the basics!**
   - Take good care of yourself – sleep sufficiently (especially the night before the exams), eat well and exercise.

**During the test**

1. **Attitude and mentality**
   - When you find yourself too nervous, take a break. Close your eyes and take deep breaths to help calm yourself down.
   - Tell yourself to be nervous after the paper – you’ve got to focus on the paper!
   - Don’t be too bothered by the people around you, thinking about what they are doing isn’t going to help you do well.
   - Think about the rewards that you are giving yourself after the paper.
2. **Helpful exam strategies**
   
   Take some time to read the questions before you start working on them. Tackle the easier questions first.
   
   Write an outline for your essays, don’t jump straight into writing the full essay.
   
   Review your answers once or twice if you have the time.

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**After the test**

1. **Relax!**

   Reward yourself by doing something you enjoy. Take a break before taking the next paper.

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**References:**

‘Test Anxiety’ by University of Illinois brochure 2005

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‘Test Anxiety’ by UHCL Counseling Services

‘How to keep calm during tests’ by UHCL Counseling Services

‘Test Taking Tips’ by UHCL Counseling Services