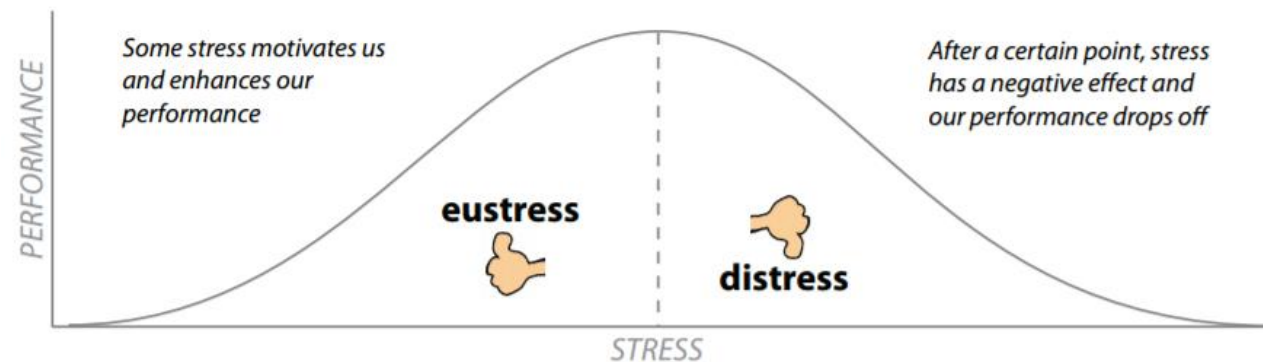




Tackling Test Anxiety

What is Test Anxiety?

- ▶ **Anxiety is something that everyone experiences** to some extent in any stressful situation.
- ▶ The anxious feeling **can occur before** the test, **while reviewing** for the test, **during** the test, or **after**
- ▶ Common Symptoms:
 - ▶ nervous feeling and sweating
 - ▶ forgetting and blanking out
 - ▶ actually becoming physically ill
 - ▶ Most only experience basic nervousness



UNDERSTANDING TEST *Anxiety*

CAUSES

Apprehension

Apprehension of not living up to other's expectations of you.

Grades

Allowing grades to determine your personal worth

Fear

Fear of losing affection of significant people in your life if you don't succeed.

Control

Feel helpless with no internal locus of control – no control over what happens.

SOLUTIONS

Goals

Set your own goals and try to attain them. Don't let others determine your aspirations.

Guides

Understand that a grade is only an approximate measure of performance. Grades don't determine your worth as a person; they are only a guide to help you determine what you need to review.

Friends

Know that people like you for a variety of reasons which have nothing to do with the grade you receive on a test.

Habits

Take control of your life and improve your study habits. Prepare for your next test and see the relationship between the amount and quality of your studying and the grade you receive.

TIPS TO REDUCE ANXIETY

Relax

Muscle relaxation exercises help you control the physical symptoms of test anxiety.

Accept

Face your fears and accept that you have a problem. This way you can eliminate the cause. Define your fear and determine its origin.

Focus

Give total attention to the test. While papers are being passed out, silently review what you have learned. Fight distractions.

Think Positively

Engage in positive self-talk and replace negative thoughts with positive ones.

Improve

Improve the way you prepare for tests.

Learn

Learn to recognize signs that you are becoming anxious and then try relaxation exercises.

Dress

Dress comfortably for tests. Choose layers of loose-fitting clothing.

Normalize

Develop a test-day tradition – like a "lucky" outfit!



Mental Preparation

Mental Preparation

Before the Exam

- ▶ **Be thoroughly prepared.** A confident knowledge of course material is the first step in reducing test anxiety.
- ▶ **Review the material.** Review should be spaced throughout the week. This aids memory development and retention.
- ▶ **Don't cram.** A final review is fine but trying to cover two months of material in two hours is not an effective way to prepare for an exam.
- ▶ **Arrive at the exam location early.** Tardiness only causes more stress!
- ▶ **Relax and don't talk about the test** with friends or other students – frantic review is often more confusing than helpful.

In the exam

- ▶ **Some initial tension is normal.** Generally when you receive a test, stop for a moment, take several deep breaths, relax, and then start reviewing directions and test items.
- ▶ **In a timed test, make a schedule for answering questions.** Allow more time for a higher point question. Pace yourself to get as many questions as possible answered.
- ▶ **Don't spend too much time on any question.** If you can't come up with the answer, move on. You can always come back if you have time. Higher scores will usually result from trying all items.
- ▶ **If you get stumped on a question or series of questions, move on to questions you can answer.** This will get your mental process and concentration ready for more difficult questions.



Physical Preparation

Physical Preparation

Before the Exam

- ▶ **Develop good study habits and techniques.**
- ▶ **Eating adequate amounts of food and getting good rest are important to any part of the study program, especially before an exam. When people are tired they become frustrated more easily and experience more anxiety**

In the exam

- ▶ **Find a place where you will have some privacy, one that is well lit and comfortable.**
- ▶ **Bring the necessary supplies for the exam such as a calculator, pens, etc.**
- ▶ **Avoid sitting near the door or other high distraction places.**





Relaxation

Relaxation

Before the Exam

- ▶ **Go for a walk.** Allow adequate time prior to the exam to go for a walk. Clear your mind as you walk and enjoy the sense of relaxation.
- ▶ **Avoid discussing the test with anyone** – especially fellow classmates as that only serves to fuel anxiety.
- ▶ **Take a series of deep breaths**, holding each breath for 10 seconds. Slowly release your breath.
- ▶ **While sitting or lying down, tense all the muscles in your body.** Hold the tension for seconds. Release. Let your muscles relax completely. Repeat, as needed until you feel less anxious and a deeper sense of relaxation.
- ▶ **Stretch.** Stretching your muscles invigorates the body and is a great pick me up, especially if you are groggy.



More General Tips

- ▶ **Avoid any use of drugs and alcohol**, they can interfere with your mental ability.
- ▶ **Exercise** may increase your alertness and sharpen your mind.
- ▶ **Have a moderate breakfast**, fresh fruits and vegetables help reduce stress; avoid caffeine, sugar and junk foods.
- ▶ **Do a reality check**, how important is this exam in the grand scheme of things. Put it in perspective.
- ▶ **Use positive affirmations**, say a phrase to help keep things in perspective. "I've done this before, I can do it again" or "I have all the knowledge I need to get this done."

During the test take a few minutes to:

- ▶ Take short breaks, tense and relax your muscles throughout your body.
- ▶ Pause, do a few abdominal breaths, say your affirmation.
- ▶ Stay in the present moment.
- ▶ There is no reward for being the first done.

After the test, reward yourself:

- ▶ Try not to dwell on your mistakes.
- ▶ Indulge in something relaxing for awhile.