

TEST ANXIETY NARRATIVE

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Dana – Video “hello” and introduction of the topic

Slide 1 – Test anxiety intro slide

Slide 2

- Just so you know you are not alone!
- Most students experience test anxiety sometime during their college years.
- Being a little nervous is natural and actually increases your adrenaline level to keep you alert and focused.
- Knowing a few tricks to keep the anxiety at a minimum will make test-taking a more enjoyable experience.

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- What actually is test anxiety?
- It's feelings of apprehension, uncertainty, and in some cases even fear.
- In terms of test anxiety, there are 2 types.
- Anticipatory anxiety is felt when thinking about and/or studying for a test.
- Situational anxiety is felt while taking a test.
- You may experience one or both forms.
- With that said, I think it's helpful for you to know the psychological and physical affects of anxiety.

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- What does test anxiety feel like?
- Some students experience mainly physical symptoms, such as headaches, nausea, faintness, or feeling too hot or too cold.
- Others experience more emotional symptoms, such as crying easily, feeling irritable, or getting frustrated quickly.
- A major problem of test anxiety can be its effect on thinking (or mental) ability; it can cause a person to blank out or have racing thoughts that are difficult to control.
- And lastly, behavioral aspects, such as fidgeting or pacing, may be evident.
- What do you feel like?

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- When anxiety hits, you may be asking yourself.... “What’s up with my body?”
- Actually quite a few things are taking place!
- Adrenaline, the hormone mentioned earlier, is released from the adrenal glands. Its purpose is to prepare you for the fight, flight, or freeze mode.
- You are either geared up to face your issue head on (fight), run the other way (flight), or simply stay at a stand still (freeze).
- Your heart rate and blood pressure rises. You breathe faster and start to sweat. Your digestion slows.
- Refer to the chart on the right for more characteristics.

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- And along these same lines.... “What’s up with my brain?”
- There is an answer for why your mind goes blank!
- Blood moves from the brain’s cerebrum (where we process information) to the brain’s cerebellum (the part that controls our movements)
- As a result, our mind is focused on “running away”, not the algebra questions on the test.

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- In order to keep overall stress to a minimum, it is essential to take good care of yourself.
- Research has proven that getting plenty of rest is the single most important life style factor in better test scores.
- Recent studies have shown that increasing your amount of exercise enhances the brain’s memory centers. So get off that couch!
- Try to eat a balanced diet and watch the junk food.
- Keep tabs on your posture. Think of your spine as an expressway from your brain to your hand. You don’t want those important messages taking side roads while studying/testing.

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- Ok, I’m anxious...now what do I do?
- In the next several slides we will discuss tips to control anxiety *before* the test, *during* the test, and *after* the test.

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NOW WE ARE AT THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF THE TALK. LET’S TAKE A LOOK AT TIPS TO TRY BEFORE TAKING YOUR TEST.

1. **Put things in perspective.** Remind yourself that your entire future doesn’t depend on this exam - there will be other exams and other courses. One test doesn’t determine your talents and abilities as a solid student.
2. **Study, study, study** to increase your confidence factor. Ask your instructor for practice tests or additional homework problems. Participate in tutoring sessions in the LARC or Study Group Central. Do an error analysis of your typical mistakes on homework. Work out lots of difficult questions dealing with tough topics in a random order. FYI that cramming is a huge culprit of test anxiety.
3. **Remind yourself of past successes.** Think of a challenging course or issue you faced in which you struggled, but eventually succeeded. Tell yourself if you did well in the past, then you can do well now.
4. **Don’t overlook physical preparation.** The night before the exam, organize everything you will need. Get a good night’s sleep two nights prior to the exam, so watch caffeine, alcohol, and sugar intake before bedtime. Take walks around the block as study breaks. Eat protein and drink water.
5. **Visualize completing the test with ease.** Play the entire "ideal scenario" in your mind -- from the moment you wake up on the day of the exam to the moment you finish it. Self-fulfilling prophecy does exist! If you think the test will go well, it most likely will, and vice versa.
6. **Arrive prepared and positive.** Don’t come too early or too late. Avoid talking “gloom and doom” with classmates. Refrain from flipping through notes and books 15 minutes prior to testing – relax instead. Text a friend, grab a snack, or read an interesting magazine article. Pick a seat with few distractions. Bring something to munch on and drink. Enter class with a smile and remind yourself that you studied hard and will do your best.
7. **What do you do?**

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LET'S MOVE ON TO SOME SUGGESTIONS DURING THE TEST

1. **Put into practice helpful test taking strategies** (check out the Connect to Success test taking handout for these ideas). Examples include: Read the directions slowly, circle significant words, jot down notes in the margins, or do a "memory dump" on the back of a test page. Doodle if you need to on your exam as long as your answers are clear. Bounce around and start with the simplest questions first to build confidence. It may not be question #1. If you find that you are worrying, comparing yourself to your peers, or thinking about your ultimate test score- STOP!
2. **Approach your studying seriously, but think of the test as a game.** Your goal is to collect as many points as you can in the time available. You are in control of the test and the test is not in control of you. It is YOU vs. the TEST and you will win the battle!
3. **Take one step at a time.** Break your test taking into small, manageable parts. When you finish a portion, give yourself a pat on the back and move to the next portion. Expect a few "curve balls" along the way. When faced with unexpected questions – no worries! Don't dwell on a question too long - simply skip it for now and return to it later to make an attempt. Remember that you can miss questions and still get a great grade.
4. **And lastly, practice calming techniques throughout the exam** if you get overwhelmed. We'll talk about this more on the next slide.
5. **What do you do?**

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Aaah, Calm, Cool, and Collected....

These suggestions are designed to give you a mini vacation from the test.

Turn over your paper and put your pen or pencil down.

Do some relaxing shoulder rolls forward and backward

Put one hand on your stomach and breathe in slowly for 3-5 seconds. Focus on your breath filling up your lower, middle, and then upper lungs. Breathe out slowly for 3-5 seconds. Your hand should be moving in and out.

Squeeze your hands into fists and hold for 5 seconds and gently release. Squeeze your toes for 5 seconds, release, then repeat. This helps to increase your circulation.

Pick a spot in the room and (without staring) gaze there for a bit of time. Better yet, envision a warm sandy beach, cookies baking, or a candle burning.

Bring along a drink (and a snack if possible) to your exam. A little protein and some water can make a difference.

Are you antsy and need to move around? Get up and ask a question, sharpen your pencil, or step out of the room for a moment.

What do you do?

SLIDE 12

SOMETIMES STUDENTS FORGET ABOUT TIPS TO TRY AFTER THE TEST

1. **Reward yourself!** Take a night off with a good movie or dinner out with friends, regardless of how well you think you did. At this point, you can't change your test performance so you need to move forward, not punish yourself, and engage in positive activities.
2. **It's time to face the reality check.** Think about whether or not you need additional study techniques, time management tips, or a learning styles self assessment. Your test anxiety could stem from lack of proper preparation.
3. **Communicate with your instructor.** Let him/her know that you experience test anxiety – perhaps you will get more suggestions. Bring up ideas of taking your test in a different room, completing a second exam for an average score, or exploring other options to evaluate your knowledge that doesn't rely solely on testing. Conversations with your instructor also allow him/her to know your desire and intent to do well in the course.
4. **Learn from your mistakes.** Consider ideas and strategies to improve your performance on the next test. What can you do differently for better results?
5. **What do you do?**

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Whew- this has been a lot of information to soak in. Some suggestions may be feasible for you and some may not.

- The key is to 'pick and practice' just one or two ideas at a time.
- If you find yourself having less anxiety, than keep it up.
- If not, you will want to 'pick and practice' several different ideas.

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- Need more information about test anxiety or other study skills? If so, don't hesitate to contact me or browse the Connect to Success webpage

Dana – Video “goodbye” and thanks for watching