Managing Test Anxiety
Benetta H. Wholuba, PhD
Counseling and Psychological Services

BE WELL
DO WELL
Outline

- Types of test anxiety?
- Relationship between performance and anxiety
- Internal and External Experiences that impact Test Anxiety
- Importance of Interpretation
- Coping Skills
Types of Test Anxiety

Test Anxiety

Poor time management & study preparation

Thoughts, feelings, and physical responses related to test taking
### Internal Factors that Impact Test Anxiety

**Thoughts**
- Everyone else looks like they are more prepared than I am.
- I should have prepared more.
- What if I fail? What if I fail again?
- If I don’t do well, I won’t pass the class.
- How am I going to finish in time?
- I can’t concentrate.
- Oh no…I’m getting too nervous again!

**Feelings**
- Panic
- Worry
- Depressed
- Disappointed
- Irritated
- Frustrated
- Difficulty concentrating
# External Factors that Influence Test Anxiety

Things that occur before or during a test taking situation that may impact our thoughts/feelings about the test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Auditory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other students getting up</td>
<td>Pencils dropping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The room emptying</td>
<td>Backpacks zipping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People turning pages</td>
<td>Desks moving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands on the clock moving</td>
<td>The clock ticking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
Is Anxiety Always Bad?

A moderate amount of anxiety helps us perform at our best. But, too much anxiety can cause us to perform poorly. The goal is to stay at the top of the curve of anxiety and performance.
Interpretation Matters

- Our thoughts and beliefs about the presence of anxiety can make us feel worse.
- It’s best to acknowledge that we’re feeling anxious and interpret differently.
- Anxiety can actually be helpful.
## Coping with thoughts

- Try to bring more balance and perspective to your thoughts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thought</th>
<th>Balanced Thought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone else looks like they are smarter or more prepared than I am.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if I fail?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I don’t do well, I won’t pass the class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How am I going to finish in the allotted time?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh no…I’m getting too nervous again!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional Coping Skills

**Progressive Relaxation**
- Tense the muscles where you feel the most stress for 15-20 seconds, then release them. Repeat this for each muscle group.

**Visualization**
- Imagine a peaceful/calm setting (beach/forest).

**Meditation**
- Clear your mind and focus on your breathing for a few moments at a time.

**Desensitization**
- Before the test, imagine taking the test in as much detail as you can. Then, use visualization, meditation, progressive relaxation, or the skill of your choice.
Before the Test

• Managing your time to adequately prepare and study for the your test
• Find out the format of the exam (types of questions, # of questions, time limit)
• Rework problems or homework- Try to recreate the test environment
• Avoid cramming
• Eat well & get an adequate amount of sleep
• Organize your materials the night before the test
• Come up with a clever mantra you can use to help focus the day of the test
On Test Day

• Arrive a little early so you can choose your seat and relax
• Choose a seat that will minimize distractions
• Read the whole exam before answering the questions
• Complete problems that you know first and mark those that you may not know as well
• Work at a reasonable pace
• Try to be positive-remind yourself you prepared adequately
• If you start to worry, use coping thoughts, visualization, or focus on your breathing
Just Remember...

- There will be some stress and moderate amounts of stress are helpful
- There may be some questions that catch you off guard
- You may have difficulty recalling some material
- Be patient and compassionate with yourself
- One test doesn’t equate to your entire grade—there are options
| **LOCATION:**  | Counseling Building - Bldg #27  
|               | (Near Health Center) |
| **TELEPHONE:** | (407) 823-2811        |
| **WEBSITE ADDRESS:** | [www.caps.sdes.ucf.edu](http://www.caps.sdes.ucf.edu) |
| **HOURS OF OPERATION:** | Mon – Thurs (Fall/Spring) 8AM-6PM  
|                       | Fri (Summer) 8AM-5PM     |
| **AFTER HOURS:** | CAPS Hotline #5  
|                   | Victim Services  
|                   | Police  
|                   | Local Hospitals |
Crisis Information

Are you in a crisis?

After-hours crisis services available by phone

Crisis Hotline

407-823-2811

UCF Counseling & Psychological Services

For more information visit caps.sdes.ucf.edu/emergency
Connect with CAPS through our social media sites:

- Facebook: Counseling and Psychological Services
- Twitter: @UCFCAPS
- Instagram: UCFCAPS
- YouTube: UCF Counseling Center