

Strategies for Managing Classroom and Test Nerves

1) Positive Self-Talk Statements

Create a set of go-to Positive Self-Talk Statements. When you start to panic or notice a negative thought occur (i.e. I am awful at math), replace it with a positive statement (i.e. Learning new things is hard for everyone).

2) Relaxation Exercises

There are many ways to relax, whether through breathing, meditating, or progressive muscle relaxation. Find exercises that work for you and use them in class, while studying, and during exams.

Abdominal (Diaphragmatic) Breathing. Put one hand on your chest and the other hand on your navel (“belly button”). Now, breathe so that only the hand on your navel moves--as you breathe in the hand moves out and moves in as you exhale. The upper hand on your chest does not move. Inhale and exhale like this 10 times.

3) Visualize Relaxing Scenes

Create a relaxing scene to imagine when you are feeling stressed or anxious. The scene might be a relaxing beach or the feeling of succeeding at the task-at-hand.

Ideal Relaxation. With your eyes closed, take a moment to visualize an ideal spot for relaxation. You can make it any place, real or imagined. See yourself in comfortable clothes. Now, once you have created it, go back there for 15 seconds or so—whenever you feel the need to relax.

4) Develop Strong Test-Preparation Skills

Test anxiety is often the result of not being adequately prepared. Refer to the other study techniques to make sure your approach is setting you up for success.

5) Manage Anxiety, Don't Avoid It

The goal should never be to avoid feeling anxious. We all feel anxious from time to time, and it is an important human emotion. Instead, explore strategies to manage this anxiety so it helps you. CAPS is a great resource on campus for learning effective strategies to manage your anxiety.

6) Pause When Starting To Panic

It is a common belief that if you are unsure of an answer on a test, you should just move on. Instead of quickly moving on, it can sometimes be helpful to take a break. During this break, focus on your breath or visualize a relaxing scene. Taking a minute or two to reset when starting to feel panic can prevent the panic from spreading.

7) Remember, You Are More Than Just a Student

Detach your self-esteem from your academic performance. You are more than just a student! Remind yourself of your gifts and talents outside of school. Remembering your strengths in other parts of your life can help decrease anxiety by putting the current academic situation into perspective.