

Test taking anxiety is very real, and can lead students to performing below their ability. Early in the semester is a great time to learn some techniques for managing test anxiety, before the pressure-packed exams actually occur. Stop by the Stress Recess table on Thursday to learn how to manage yourself during exams!

Here are some test anxiety tips:

***RELAX!***

Practicing relaxation techniques (such as deep breathing you can learn at the Stress Recess on Thursday) both regularly and before/during a test can help you decrease your overall level of anxiety. Deep breathing is good because it will help you physically relax and you can do anywhere.

***Positive Self-Talk:***

replacing negative, catastrophic thoughts with more positive, encouraging ones ("I can do this", "I'm well-prepared") can help put a lid on the negative thoughts that only cause/perpetuate anxiety.

***Prepare:***

there is no substitute for studying and preparing. Try to begin studying at least a week in advance, and never go 24 hours without reviewing your material.

***Take your Time***

read instructions carefully, make sure you know what the questions are asking, underline keywords, etc. Plan to be the last person done; this will remove any pressure or anxiety to "finish first".

***Be early:***

get to class early so you don't feel rushed, can sit where you want, and compose yourself before the test

***Don't panic!***

if you don't know the answer, take a moment to relax and think. If you still don't know it, use common sense and good test-taking strategies. Do whatever you can to eliminate incorrect options to improve your chances of picking the right answer. On essay questions, try to remember as much as you can and elaborate on those points; partial credit is better than no credit.

***Focus:***

focus only on the test and not the final grade, what that grade might mean, how the grade may impact your financial aid, etc. Avoiding these catastrophic thoughts will help you stay focused on the task at hand.

**Practice good self-care:**

eating well, getting enough sleep, exercising, and having a balanced study schedule can help you not only before a test, but also keep you healthy throughout the semester.

**Ways to Relax****Deep Breathing:**

taking 10 deep breaths in through your nose and exhaling through your mouth can greatly reduce anxiety, and can be done in a testing situation.

**Muscle Relaxation:**

tense your muscles and hold for 5 seconds, then relax them. Start at your feet and work your way up to your calves, thighs, stomach, arms, neck, and shoulders. This can be done in a testing situation.

**Visualization:**

use your mind to visualize something relaxing. You may choose to visualize a beach scene, or visualize yourself getting the grade you want. This can be done briefly during a test.

**Meditation:**

practicing deep relaxation and meditation away from test situations can help reduce your overall anxiety. Repeating a word or phrase, counting your breaths, or listening to a meditation tape are some techniques that focus your mind while allowing your body to relax.

*(Information is from tips published by the Counseling Services Department at Montana State University)*