

## **TEST ANXIETY**

We all experience tension before tests or other important events in our lives. Some level of anxiety motivates us, however if the increase in our anxiety affects our preparation and performance negatively, it can become a problem.

### **Signs of Test Anxiety**

**Mental:** Disaster scenarios (I'll have a bad grade, I won't graduate, etc.), excessive self-observation, forgetfulness, difficulty in concentration and thought organization.

**Physical:** Increased heart beat, accelerated breathing, muscle tension, trembling, sweating, hot flashes, dizziness, nausea, hand sweating, etc.

**Emotional:** Excitement, nervousness, worry, irritability, pessimism, fear, panic, loss of control, helplessness.

**Behavioral:** Leaving the exam, not attending the exam, underachievement, postponing to study (procrastination), not studying

### **How can I deal with test anxiety?**

The best way to deal with anxiety is to accept and try to understand it, instead of trying to repress it. Because, it is highly probable that you will feel more anxious if you say "I shouldn't be anxious". Instead, you can say "Yes, I'm anxious. What can I do about it?"

If you are anxious because you did not study well, consider it as a normal, rational reaction.

Studying for the exam is the best way to reduce this rational anxiety. Consider the following:

- Avoid cramming. Trying to cover the whole material on the night before the exam is a bad method and it increases your anxiety.
- Try to integrate the information you've been presented throughout the term and concentrate on the basic concepts.
- While you're studying, ask yourself the possible questions and try to answer them by integrating what you've heard in class, lecture notes and the book.
- If you think that you may not be able to cover the whole staff, choose some important sections that you can study well and try to present this information in the exam.

### **I studied and I'm still anxious...**

#### **Change your attitude!**

- Don't overemphasize the grade – grade is not an indicator of your personal worth or future success.
- Keep your expectation at showing as much of what you know as you can.
- Remind yourself that this is just a test and there will be others.
- Avoid all-or-none thinking.
- Reward yourself after the test.

#### **Don't forget your basic needs!**

- You're not just a student who will take a test. Continue eating well, sleeping, exercising, doing recreational activities and socializing.
- Keep a moderate studying pace and take a break when you need.
- When you feel you are prepared enough, do something relaxing.

#### **If your anxiety increases too much;**

- Do something to relax yourself (Hot bath, chatting with friends, etc.) Do something that will keep you busy and draw the anxiety off your head (watching TV, exercising)
- Don't think how less you know and how you will fail; instead, think about what you've learned and the previous tests on which you've performed well.

#### **What can I do on the day of the test?**

- Have a light breakfast and don't drink coffee if you're sensitive to caffeine.
- Spend the hour before the test by doing something relaxing.
- Arrive at the test location early, select a seat that is located away from distractions and relax. If waiting makes you more anxious, read a newspaper or a magazine.
- Try to stay away from your classmates who upset you and increase your anxiety.

#### **What can I do during the test?**

- Before answering the questions, scan the exam and read the instructions twice.

- Think the exam as an opportunity to show what you know.
- Start with an easy question. Skip the questions you don't remember. Don't blame yourself, when you don't know the answer or can't remember it,
- In essay questions, make a short outline first and start with a summary statement. For short-answer questions, write only what is asked.
- If you have difficulty in answering a question, try to show as much knowledge as you can. If you can't remember a term, use your own words to describe it.
- For multiple choice questions, read all the options first and eliminate the most obvious false answers. If you are not sure, rely on what comes to your mind first and pass the item quickly.
- Don't rush throughout the test. Don't panic when people start to leave early.

**If you anxiety increases during the exam...**

- Tell yourself that "It is not the time to worry, I have to do this exam now, I don't have to be perfect, it is not the end of the world, it is important to do my best"
- Think about the answer to the question, not about your grade or others' performances.
- Tighten and then loosen your muscles, take a couple of slow and deep breaths. Try to think positive.
- Change your position. If allowed, eat/drink something or go to the bathroom.
- Ask a question to the instructor or assistant.
- Think about the reward you promised yourself.
- If your anxiety increases too much; you may experience accelerated breathing, dizziness, nausea and you may think that you will pass out. Don't worry. Stop and take slow, proper breaths from your nose. Pull your shoulders up, tense your muscles and then loosen. When you feel better, start with a question you can answer. You will see that your anxiety will decrease as you write. Don't leave the exam, because your anxiety will decrease and you will feel better in a short time.

**After the test...**

Whether you did well or not, reward yourself and enjoy it... Don't ruminate on your mistakes. Don't immediately start studying for the next exam. Give yourself time to relax.

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**For More Information**

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(The services are available only to the students and staff of İstanbul Bilgi University.)

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