Somatic Anxiety

The Tensing and Differential Relaxation Method

Before the test arrive 10 minutes early, sit in your normal seat, and prepare your work area (pencils, paper, calculator…). Collect yourself by completing this relaxation method. The Tensing and Differential Relaxation Method helps you relax by tensing and relaxing your muscles all at once. Follow these procedures while you are sitting at your desk before taking a test:

1. Put your feet flat on the floor.
2. With your hands, grab underneath the chair.
3. Push down with your feet and pull up on your chair at the same time for about five seconds.
4. Relax for five to 10 seconds.
5. Repeat the procedure two to three times.
6. Relax all your muscles except the ones that are actually used to take the test.
7. Practice makes perfect. Try this method several times before test day.

The Palming Method

The palming method is a visualization procedure used to reduce test anxiety. While you are at your desk before or during a test, follow these procedures:

1. Close and cover your eyes using the center of the palms of your hands.
2. Prevent your hands from touching your eyes by resting the lower parts of your palms on your cheekbones and placing your fingers on your forehead. Your eyeballs must not be touched, rubbed or handled in any way.
3. Think of some real or imaginary relaxing scene. Mentally visualize this scene. Picture the scene as if you were actually there, looking through your own eyes.
4. Visualize this relaxing scene for one to two minutes.

Practice visualizing this scene several days before taking a test and the effectiveness of this relaxation procedure will improve.

Cognitive Anxiety

Negative Self-Talk

Negative self-talk is a form of cognitive (worry) anxiety. This type of worrying can interfere with your test preparation and can keep you from concentrating on the test. Worrying can motivate you to study, but too much worrying may prevent you from studying at all.

Negative self-talk is defined as the negative statements you tell yourself before and during tests. Negative self-talk causes students to lose confidence and to give up on tests. Further, it
can give you an inappropriate excuse for failing math and cause you to give up on learning math.

Students need to change their negative self-talk to positive self-talk without making unrealistic statements. Positive self-statements can improve your studying and test preparation. During tests, positive self-talk can build confidence and decrease your test anxiety. These positive statements; as well as others, can help reduce your test anxiety and improve your grades. Before the test, make up some positive statements to tell yourself, repeat it to yourself as needed throughout the test.

The 12 Myths About Test Anxiety

1. Students are born with test anxiety.
2. Test anxiety is a mental illness.
3. Test anxiety cannot be reduced.
4. Any level of test anxiety is bad.
5. All students who are not prepared have test anxiety.
6. Students with test anxiety cannot learn math.
7. Students who are well prepared will not have test anxiety.
8. Very intelligent students and students taking high-level courses, such as calculus, do not have test anxiety.
9. Attending class and doing my homework should reduce all my test anxiety.
10. Being told to relax during a test will make you relaxed.
11. Doing nothing about test anxiety will make it go away.
12. Reducing test anxiety will guarantee better grades.

Health Tips to Reduce Anxiety

To heighten your brain power eat 3 or 4 ounces before an exam: fish, skinless chicken, veal lean beef, non-fat yogurt, cottage cheese, tofu, lentils, dried peas or beans.

To calm your nerves and increase focus eat chocolate, cereal, crackers, popcorn, muffins, pasta, potatoes, bagels, rice, bread, pancakes, barley, or corn.

Throughout the semester:

1. Average 7 to 8 hours of sleep
2. Allow time to reflect/meditate/relax each day
3. Exercise at least 20 minutes everyday
4. Eat right
5. Time your high-energy meal 1 hour before tough class or test
6. IF you have trouble sleeping before a test, eat high carbohydrates, low-protein food for dinner to induce drowsiness and sleep
7. Avoid excessive use of caffeine or alcohol
8. If you smoke, you should stop, but not during mid-terms or finals.