

# DEALING WITH TEST ANXIETY

Everyone should feel somewhat anxious before they begin to take a test. Anxiety becomes a problem when it begins to interfere with a student's ability to think logically or remember facts.

Physical symptoms of real test anxiety include:

- ✓ Tense muscles
- ✓ Sweaty palms
- ✓ Pounding heart
- ✓ Feeling faint or nauseous

Cognitive symptoms include:

- ✓ Inability to remember simple things
- ✓ Illogical thinking
- ✓ Mental blocks

In dealing with test anxiety, psychologists recommend certain techniques that have proven to be extremely successful if practiced and used correctly. The key is that these techniques must be practiced ahead of time to really work. **There is no magic cure for test anxiety; overcoming it requires practice and persistence.**

## A quick guide to systematic relaxation and desensitization

This relaxation procedure involves systematically tensing and then relaxing different groups of muscles in your body:

1. Begin the procedure by either sitting in a comfortable chair or lying down. Move your arms toward the center of your body and bend both arms at the elbow. Tighten your hands into fists and simultaneously tense the muscles in your upper arms and shoulders. Hold for ten seconds and then relax for fifteen to twenty seconds.
2. Tense your face muscles by wrinkling your forehead and cheek muscles. Hold for ten seconds then relax.
3. Tense the muscles in your chest for fifteen seconds and then relax. Repeat this procedure for all the different parts of your body while telling yourself that you are becoming more and more relaxed. Pay particular attention to the muscles in your neck and back since these muscles become tense easily.
4. After ten or fifteen minutes you will find that your body is completely relaxed.

While you are in a state of complete relaxation you then need to begin to visualize yourself in situations that produce anxiety (the night before the test, the morning of the test, walking to the room where the test will be given). Eventually you should get to the point where you can imagine yourself actually taking the test while remaining completely relaxed.

Visit <http://www.montana.edu/wwwcc/docs/selfhelp.html> to discover more helpful relaxation tips and downloads

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