

Positive Thinking

The Learning Center has compiled a series of exercises intended to assist you in developing a positive outlook on your academic abilities. Small changes in *Positive Thinking* can have a big impact on reducing test anxiety, improving exam performance, and ultimately, increasing the likelihood of achieving your goals this semester.

Positive Thinking Exercise # 6: Muscle Relaxing

This anxiety release requires some practice. Between exercises, you can practice your controlled breathing. The idea is to focus as much on the technique as possible, allowing you to block out harmful anxiety. Basically, you will tense each muscle group, inhale, count, release the tension, and then exhale.

1. Seat yourself in a comfortable position.
2. Bend your head and try to rest your right ear as close as you can to your right shoulder. Take a deep breath and count to five. Assume normal position, relax, and exhale.
3. Repeat the same procedure but bend your head to the left shoulder.
4. Repeat again but this time try to touch your chest with your chin.
5. Next, make a fist and tense your left forearm. Take a deep breath and count to ten. Release your fingers, relax, and exhale.
6. Now, do the same with your right arm.

Continue moving from your arms to your midsection, and then to your legs. You should begin feeling yourself relax, and ultimately, releasing your anxiety.

Ten Practical Suggestions

Managing stress that is tied to an upcoming exam is an important aspect of a student's college routine. Moreover, overcoming test anxiety is a challenge that many students face. It takes work and concentration, practice...and more practice. This handout presents ten practical suggestions to assist you in building a strong test preparation approach.

- 1. Know what to expect.** Ask your instructor what kind of questions to prepare for. Is the exam multiple choice, true/false, essay, etc.? Students typically feel more prepared if they take time to understand the structure and expectations of upcoming exams.
- 2. Manage your daily routine.** This includes getting a sufficient amount of sleep, which should be happening in the days leading up, not just on the day of the test.
- 3. Avoid caffeine.** Be health-conscious about your eating habits, including well-rounded meals. Limit caffeine and other foods that contribute to reduced concentration.
- 4. Before the Exam.** Take an intentional walk or go up and down a set of stairs two to three times. This might help reduce some pre-test jitters, and get rid of excess energy.
- 5. Dress for success.** Students who dress in clothes that make them feel confident and comfortable can be less distracted during an exam.
- 6. Avoid cramming and arrive early.** Never study immediately before an exam. The more important the test, the more time you should schedule for arriving. Give yourself some time to breathe!
- 7. Organize your supplies.** Prepare supplies you may need for the test in advance, and have them ready before the class begins. Set yourself up for success!
- 8. Pay attention to the instructor.** Listen to specific instructions given by the professor before beginning the exam, as the information being offered is typically important.
- 9. Keep a positive outlook.** Utilize your Positive Thinking exercises before, during, and after the exam, as necessary.
- 10. Have reasonable expectations.** A key element of this is to compete only with yourself. Challenge yourself to set personal expectations based on past performance and your current goals. Overall, focus on the process rather than solely on the outcome.