

## *Symptoms of Test Anxiety*

It is normal to feel nervous about an exam. In fact, it is beneficial to be moderately stressed right before the exam. A little tension can give you just the right amount of adrenaline you need to do your best. It can heighten your awareness and sharpen your reflexes, allowing you to perform more quickly. It can even help you recall information you may not have otherwise remembered.

However, if your level of stress rises too high, it can result in insomnia, loss of appetite, and sometimes even hair loss! This can obviously affect your performance on the exam. So how do you know if you suffer from test anxiety? Here is a checklist to see if you may be a little too frazzled...

### **Test anxiety quiz (don't stress, it's a take home!)**

(True/False)

- I have trouble sleeping at night and spend those last few minutes before sleep worrying about upcoming exams or projects.
- The day of an exam, I experience drastic appetite changes and either overeat, or skip breakfast and lunch.
- While studying for or taking an exam, I often feel a sense of hopelessness or dread.
- While studying or taking an exam, I have problems concentrating and I sometimes feel bored or tired.
- I often yawn during an exam or while studying.
- During an exam, I often feel confused or panic.
- During an exam, I experience sweaty palms, mental blocks.
- While taking an exam, I sometimes experience headaches, vomiting, or fainting.
- After the exam, I pretend the exam meant nothing to me, and discard the result as meaningless.
- When I am finished with an exam, I sometimes feel guilt and blame myself for not studying enough.
- I sometimes get angry or depressed after an exam.
- As a general rule, I view test taking as a stressful situation and dread it.

If any of these statements were true for you, you may suffer from test anxiety. The first thing to do is realize that it is not a lost cause, and you can manage the anxiety to work for you, instead of against you.

## ***Dos and Don'ts of Dealing with Test Anxiety***

- **Don't** cram for an exam. The amount you learn won't be worth the stress.
- **Don't** think of yourself or the test in a negative sense.
- **Don't** stay up late studying the night before. You need the sleep. Begin studying a week in advance if possible.
- **Don't** spend time with classmates who generate stress for you on test day.
- **Don't** take those last few moments before the test for last minute cramming. Try to relax and spend that time reading the newspaper or some other distraction.
- **Do** remind yourself that the test is only a test.
- **Do** focus on integrating details into main ideas.
- **Do** reward yourself after the test with food or a movie or some other treat.
- **Do** something relaxing the last hour before the test.

**Do** tell yourself that you will do your best on the test, and that will be enough!

Downloaded on April 19, 2009 from Penn State University Learning Center:  
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