Overcoming Test Anxiety

What is test anxiety?

Test anxiety is a psychological condition in which a person experiences distress before, during, or after a test to such an extent that this anxiety causes poor performance or interferes with normal learning.

What are symptoms of test anxiety?

Physical symptoms:
- Sweating
- Headaches
- Shortness of breath
- Rapid heart beat
- Dry mouth
- Sensation of throwing up
- Light-headedness or fainting

Behavioral symptoms:
- Fidgeting
- Pacing
- Avoidance

Emotional symptoms:
- Crying
- Laughing
- Anger

Cognitive symptoms:
- “Going blank”
- Racing thoughts
- Difficulty concentrating
- Negative self-talk
What causes test anxiety?

- Prior negative test-taking experiences
- Lack of preparation
- Lack of confidence
- Self-doubt
- Fear of failure
- Fear of being judged by others (teacher, classmates, family)
- Pressure from others to perform

How can you overcome test anxiety?

- Some nervousness is good...it means you are motivated to do your best!
- Prepare for the test well in advance
- Relax and get a full night of sleep before the test
- Eat a healthy breakfast
- Allow enough travel time to arrive early for class with required materials
- Don’t talk about the test with classmates immediately beforehand, if it raises your anxiety level
- Change negative worries into positive thoughts
- Take 10-20 seconds and think about a happy or pleasant memory
- Don’t allow “negative mind loops”
- Try relaxation techniques:
  - Slow, deep breaths
  - Concentrate on your breathing
  - Close your eyes
- Positive self-talk:
  - Repeat a mantra
- Visualize yourself being successful!!!