Managing Test Anxiety

**True or False**: Test anxiety is normal?

**Answer**: True

* Most people feel some level of anxiety before an important test.
* It is not only normal, but the resulting increase in adrenaline can actually enhance performance, both on a test and in other performance arenas like the tennis court.
* However, researchers estimate that up to 30% of the population get so anxious prior to a test that their ability to perform well is impaired.
* If you are among that 30%, don’t despair. Below are the major causes of test anxiety and some solutions to try.

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|  | MINDFULNESS EXERCISES & RELAXATION STRATEGIES: |
| - | Think about a time you *overcame a setback*. How did you do it? (Increases **resilience**.) |
| - | Think about a time you *were successful*. How did you do it? (Reinforces **positive attitude**.) |
| - | Deep breathing, meditation and yoga all divert focus from anxiety to calm. |
| - | Try phone apps for coloring, jigsaw puzzles, tangrams, solitaire and relaxation. |
| - | Do some actual coloring, jigsaw puzzles, or try Zentangle. |

**The Five Causes of Test Anxiety**:

1. **Fear of the Unknown** (Find out as much as possible before the test.)o Material to be covered o Weight of the test (percentage of overall grade) o Test format [i.e., essay, multiple choice, T/F] o Time allotted for test o Test location
2. **Feeling inadequate** o **Prepare!** Refer back to note taking and study skills resources o Write out your worries
   * Try exercises on resilience and positive thinking (see box, above)
3. **Fear of the stakes** o your entire future doesn’t rest on one test.
   * You may have to revise your plans if you do poorly on a test.
4. **Perfectionism** (Pressure from outside and self-pressure)to **Prepare!** and do your best o “Failure” is a great teacher. Learn where your weaknesses are so you can strengthen them.
5. **Past Failures (**Negativity bias)