

Test Anxiety Diagnostic Questions

For each of the following questions, follow-up with:

* **How did (do) you feel?**

* **What were (are) your thoughts about this?**

Past Experiences:

- a.) Any bad test (math) memories from childhood?
- b.) Previous unpleasant test experiences?
- c.) How did things go in the last math class you took?
- d.) Family attitude toward tests / math /college?

Present Frame of Mind:

- e.) How do you feel about taking this class?
- f.) **Why** are you taking this class?
- g.) How are you preparing for the test?
- h.) How are you studying overall?

Future Imaginings:

- i.) What are you thinking about during the test?
 - j.) Specifically, what things are you “saying” to yourself?
 - k.) What are your thoughts during a test?
- l.) What grade do you expect to earn?
- m.) Are you worried about something in particular?

Instructor's Guide:

Test Anxiety Diagnostic Questions

- a.)** When a student shares with me a “bad” memory from childhood having to do with testing, school, or even specifically math, I begin by having them detail the experience as much as they can remember. In other words, have them “get real” about exactly what happened – rather than focusing on the emotions of the moment which will only make them want to avoid remembering this even more. (Remember emotions are the key to anxiety.)

Afterwards, I've found that students usually realize that while it was not a good thing that happened, it isn't as bad as they thought. Then we talk about whether they want to let this memory of the past continue to affect their future.

- b.) & c.)** Again, as in part **a** above, have students detail exactly what happened in order to remove the emotions from the event(s). Then discuss what could have been the cause of this bad experience.

- d.)** This is the hardest one to help with. If the family support is not there, then you may want to refer them to counseling services for more in-depth assistance.

- e.) & f.)** These two questions address their motivation and/or present fear of failure. I usually discuss with students what their goals are – what job do they want, etc... This may be the point where the instructor should either give a pep talk (i.e. “don't be so hard on yourself”, “lots of people struggle at first”, etc..) or a tough-love/get-real talk (i.e. if you really want to pass, then you have to come to class; homework is key to passing the tests, etc...)

- g.) & h.)** Obviously, these address their study habits. Discuss ways that you've found help students prepare for tests and do their homework. Perhaps the TLC 023 (Math Skills course is a good idea for them.)

- i.), j.) & k.)** Many anxious students experience racing thoughts, “mind chatter”, spiraling thoughts during a test. These thoughts usually go uncontrolled and unnoticed until pointed out to the student. I usually talk to students about practicing taking a timed test just to see what sorts of thoughts pop into their heads. Again, like in the above part **a**, making students “get real” about what is going through their minds will help intensify those thoughts and get them under control.

- l.)** This question can help address the student with unrealistic expectations. i.e. the perfectionist or perhaps a returning student who is expecting herself/himself to be able to immediately understand the concepts when in reality, it's going to take some time to understand.

- m.)** Basically, this is the last resort/catch-all question. Be prepared for a student to not want to actually share anything about this “particular thing” is that they are worried about and that you may want to refer them to counseling services for more in-depth assistance.