

Helping Our Students Cope with Test & Performance Anxiety



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Contact Information

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*Presentation
Philosophy*

<https://sites.google.com/site/marylynneabbottmodlajuly2014/>

Mind-Body Connection

The mind (thoughts, imagination) can create anxiety and stress...

Mark Twain said –

"I've experienced many terrible things in my life, a few of which actually happened."



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Mind-Body Connection

The mind (thoughts, imagination) can create anxiety and stress...

The body (limbic brain) doesn't know the difference between an imagined threat or a real one.



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Triggering Fight/Flight

Stress is a “right time, right place” reaction for defense – Fight/Flight.

Anxiety is often a series of *negative predictions and projections* that trigger the Fight/Flight defense mechanism.



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Fight - Flight

Hormones such as adrenalin, noradrenalin, and **cortisol** are released...

- speeding the heart rate
- slowing digestion
- shunting blood flow to major muscle groups

Thus giving the body a burst of energy and strength in order to fight or flee.



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Cortisol – “Going Blank”

Cortisol interferes with the function of neurotransmitters, the chemicals that brain cells use to communicate with each other.

Excessive cortisol can make it difficult to think or retrieve long-term memories.



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Stress ⇨ ⇨ ⇨ Anxiety

In small quantities, stress is good and some individuals prefer high stress situations.

Stress is beneficial – it can motivate and increase production, however...

Stress that is “out of control” leads to

Anxiety

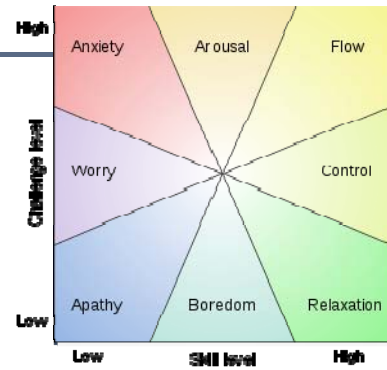


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Flow

Diagram of the mental state in terms of challenge level and skill level.

– By Mihály Csíkszentmihályi in “Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience “



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Improving Success



How To Help Test-Anxious Students

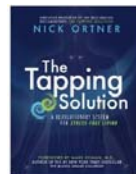


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Test Anxiety Treatment Possibilities

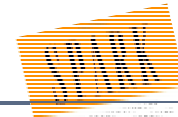


- Exercise
- Meditation
- “Tapping” (EFT)
 - The Tapping Solution by Nick Ortner



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Spark: Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain



Recent research has found that exercise leads directly to the production of proteins which cause neuron growth.

John J. Ratey

Neuron growth → Increased Learning
Increased Learning → Better Performance



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Controlled Breathing

Take several deep breaths.

Breathe in through your nose for the count of 4 while expanding your abdomen... hold your breath for the count of 4... exhale slowly through your mouth for the count of 4 as your abdomen contracts.

Tell yourself that "I CAN DO THIS"



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Test Anxiety Treatment Possibilities

Humor



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5-4-3-2-1 Technique

From the *DIY: Stress Relief* website, this technique can be used as a quick distraction from the physical symptoms of anxiety attacks.

The key is distraction and that this method uses all five senses to distract the brain with a "puzzle" component.



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5-4-3-2-1 Technique

- 5 – **Name** 5 objects you can **see**
- 4 – **Touch** 4 items you can **feel**
- 3 – **Identify** 3 sounds you can **hear**
- 2 – Notice 2 **aromas** you can **smell**
- 1 – **Name** 1 aspect you **like** about yourself

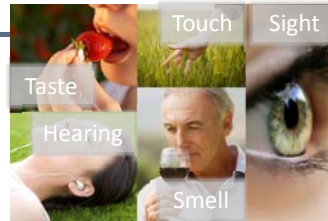
www.diy-stress-relief.com/physical-symptoms-of-anxiety-attacks.html



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Sensory Activation

The power of this particular strategy is that it requires the brain to **use all the senses**.



You must use more than just a "picture" for this to really be effective.

Make a "plan" ahead of testing situation.



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Sensory Activation

Where do you feel safe, the most relaxed and at peace?

- What does my peaceful place look like?
- What does it sound like?
- What would you feel if you were there?
- What smells or scents are there?
- What tastes would you experience?



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Sensory Activation



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Sitting in the grandstand, watching as cars slide around the track.

- See:** Cars on the track; Flagman waving flags; People cheering
Hear: Roar of engines; Announcers and people cheering
Feel: "Dirt hitting my skin & getting in my eyes." The bleachers; "the engines shaking through my body"
Smell: Gasoline; "Smoke mixed in with the smell of Burgers"
Taste: Cheeseburger I am eating; Mt. Dew I am drinking



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At the Mudhouse hanging out.



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See: Lots of people; comfy furniture; tables and lamps; coffee

Hear: Quiet chatter; a bit of laughter; clicking sounds from various computer users; maybe dishes clanging or being washed.

Feel: Table I'm sitting at; my computer or book; or "if I'm lucky my hubby's hand in mine"

Smell: Coffee or maybe something sweet

Taste: "coffee with lots of creamer and maybe even some cheesecake, if I'm hungry"

For You... For Your Students... Discussion...



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*Thank
You*

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