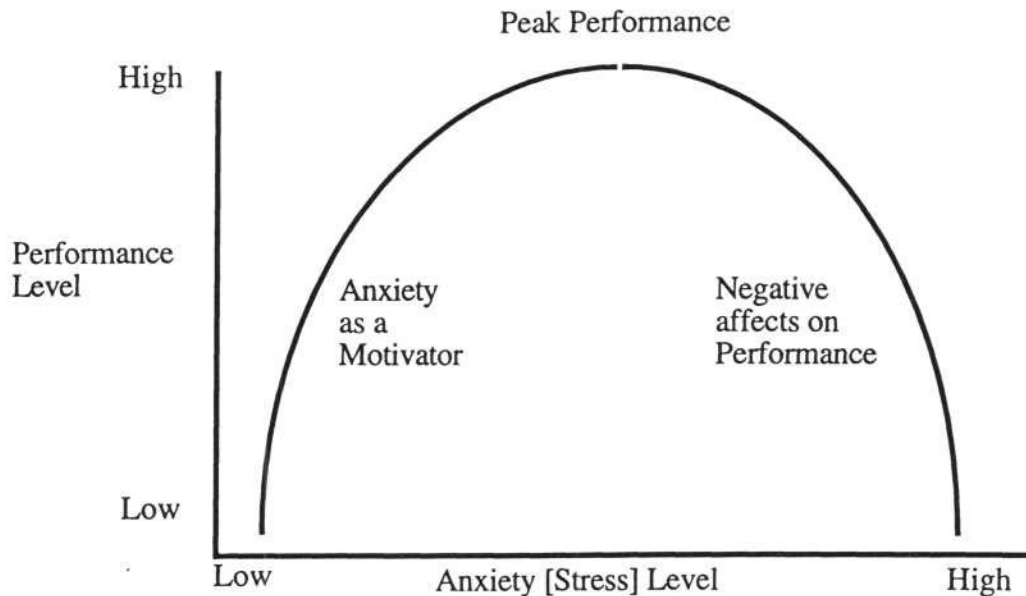


Relationship Between Anxiety and Performance



SOURCES OF ACADEMIC ANXIETY

Genetic Disposition

Educational History

Family History

Developmental Issues

Situational Variables

Personality of Instructor - distant, uncaring, unfriendly

Time Pressure

Critical Nature of the Class/Test

Relationship of Task to Test

ACADEMIC ANXIETY QUESTIONNAIRE

DIRECTIONS: Answer the following questions as truthfully as possible. Circle T *if the statement is generally true for you; F is the statement is generally not true for you.*

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. While taking an important exam, I perspire a great deal. | T | F |
| 2. I feel very panicky when I have to take a surprise test. | T | F |
| 3. During tests, I find myself thinking of the consequences of failing. | T | F |
| 4. After important tests, I am frequently so tense that my stomach gets upset. | T | F |
| 5. While taking an important exam, I find myself thinking of how much
brighter the other students are rather than how bright I am. | T | F |
| 6. I freeze up on things like ACT's and finals. | T | F |
| 7. If I were to take a difficult course I would worry a great deal before
taking it. | T | F |
| 8. During exams I find myself thinking of things unrelated to the course
material. | T | F |
| 9. During exams I frequently get so nervous that I forget facts that I
already know. | T | F |
| 10. If I knew I was going to take a very difficult course, I would feel confident
and relaxed beforehand. | T | F |
| 11. I usually get depressed after taking a test. | T | F |
| 12. I have an uneasy, upset feeling before taking a final. | T | F |
| 13. When taking at test, I always feel I have done better than I actually did. | T | F |
| 14. Getting a good grade on one test doesn't seem to increase my confidence
on the second test. | T | F |
| 15. After taking a test, I always feel I have done better than I actually did. | T | F |
| 16. I sometimes feel my heart beating very fast during important exams. | T | F |

Key: 1 point for each True except #10 and #13; 1 point for False on #10 and #13

Scoring: 12 or more points indicative of test anxiety.

STUDENT STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING CLASSROOM AND TEST ANXIETY

1. Create a set of positive self-talk statements to use while you study and when taking tests. If you feel yourself starting to panic, use thought-stopping (yelling to yourself “Stop!” or something similar) to stop the negative thought process. Then say some positive things to yourself to replace the negative thoughts.
2. If you cannot get away from negative thoughts, try expanding on them to the point of absurdity. Go from “I’m going to fail this test” to “I’m going to fail out of school” to “I will be a failure the rest of my life.” Expanding fears like this can help you detach from them by realizing how unrealistic they are.
3. Develop a personalized set of relaxation exercises which relax the particular sets of muscles which get tense the most. Use these exercises while you are studying for the exam, not just during the exam itself. (That way the body associates relaxation with the material you are studying.)
4. Think up a nice scene to visualize when you feel yourself getting anxious. This could be a scene of you succeeding at the task at hand, or a neutral scene with or without you in it.
5. Develop strong test-preparation skills. The Academic Achievement and Access Center can help with this. Test anxiety is frequently caused by poor preparation!
6. Remember, the goal is not to avoid anxiety, but to manage anxiety so it helps you, not hinders you.
7. If you find yourself beginning to panic during a test, stop working on the test, use your tools (relaxation, visualization, self-talk, etc.) and remind yourself you know how to deal with this panic now.
8. Detach your self-esteem from your academic performance. You are much more than just a student. Think about what is special about you as a person separate from the letter grade on that test and remind yourself liberally of your gifts and talents. This itself can decrease anxiety by putting the current academic situation into perspective.

Self Scripts to Reduce Test Anxiety

Here are four questions to answer about Test Anxiety:

1. Before the test, have you read, studied and recited, using your best and most appropriate study skills?
2. During the test, can you get relaxed and comfortable?
3. Do you use the wisest test-taking techniques?
4. Do you talk to yourself in a helpful and supportive way during the test?

Test anxious students often answer question number 4 with a “**No**”.* They talk themselves down during a test. They complain about the professor, look for a trick in each question, call themselves dumb, stupid, incompetent, or worse. Usually, their predictions of failure are correct. People just don’t generally do well when they expect to fail.

Now, consider how you might turn any of your negative self-suggestions around. See yourself relaxing, using the best calming techniques you have available. Tell yourself of what you do know, recalling any facts related to the test question. Stimulate your recall for the material you need to answer the question. Dig out the test wiseness cue and any other test-taking techniques that you know. Above all, say something supportive and kind to yourself: ***You need it at that moment.***

The following are examples of supportive self-instruction scripts for use during test-taking. Each one was written by a student in a “How to Study” class. Notice that the scripts contain 1) instructions to relax, 2) suggestions for recalling material, 3) test-wiseness cues, and 4) some generally supportive and up-beat language. As you read what other students wrote, consider what you might put in your own script.

SCRIPT 1 - Relax, get as comfortable as you can. Settle back and breathe deeply. Keep breathing deeply, exhale slowly. You studied for this test and you know the material. You passed the last one and did just fine. You knew it all last night when you studied for this exam. Relax, loosen up your neck muscles. Breathe deeply and exhale slowly. This test will go well when you get calm. You can do it.

SCRIPT 2 - Calm down, breathe from my stomach and relax. I’ve studied hard to prepare for this exam and I know the materials. I will focus on one item at a time, not at the whole test. I will read each problem calmly and carefully to be sure I understand it, and not let myself get bogged down on one question. I remember the great feeling of accomplishment from getting an A on other exams. Now is my opportunity to experience that feeling again.

- Very anxious students answer all the questions with a “**No**”!

SCRIPT 3 - Relax and take three deep breaths. Don't panic, I've studied and I know this material and I'll stay relaxed. I'll think and be aware of all the test-wiseness cues. I'll focus on one item at a time and I'll remain calm throughout the entire test. It's OK if one item doesn't come to me right now - it will. I'll just go on and remember it in a little while. I'll think about what I learned during that class period. I know this material and I feel good about it.

SCRIPT 4 - Relax, if you don't understand the first part, go on to what you do understand, it will come back to you. When did the professor talk about that? What else was he talking about? What examples did he give? Relax.

SCRIPT 5 - Oh well, I might as well go in and get this thing over with. I'll just blow it anyway because I didn't study enough. And even if I had studied more it wouldn't have helped because I can't remember most of the things I've read when it comes to the test. First, I'll read through some of it to get a general idea of what's in it. Here goes, dummy.

Sound familiar? It's a real script, for a loser. It represents what NOT to say to yourself!

SCRIPT 6 - Relax, breathe from the stomach. Go through the exam and answer the ones I know first. Then, go through the test a second time and use test-wiseness cues. Think about what was discussed in class lecture just before the question material. If I've got to just plain guess - say the answer is "C" or "True". Then tell myself that it's now unimportant and just forget about the test until I receive my grade.

SCRIPT 7 - Relax, stomach breathe, don't get too wrapped up in one question. Do the easy questions first, remember past lectures, you studied and are well prepared for this test.

SCRIPT 8 - Now write your own. Be sure to get in the four elements:

1. Relaxation
2. Recall of facts
3. Test-Wiseness
4. Good vibrations for you