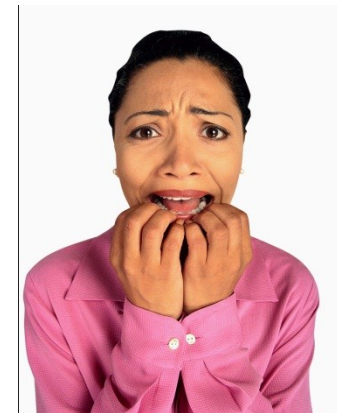


# TACKLING TEST-TAKING ANXIETY

Student Success Workshop Series  
Sauk Valley Community College

# Symptoms of Test Anxiety

- Feeling nervous about an exam is normal and, in fact, it is beneficial to be moderately stressed right before the exam.
- Insomnia, loss of appetite and sometimes even hair loss can be due to a rise in stress levels. This can obviously affect your performance on the exam.



# Symptoms of Test Anxiety

**So how do you know if you suffer from test anxiety?  
Here is a checklist to see if you may be a little too *frazzled*...**

- ❑ I have trouble sleeping at night and spend those last few minutes before sleep worrying about upcoming exams or projects.
- ❑ The day of an exam, I experience drastic appetite changes and either overeat, or skip breakfast and lunch.
- ❑ While studying for or taking an exam, I often feel a sense of hopelessness or dread.
- ❑ While studying or taking an exam, I have problems concentrating and I sometimes feel bored or tired.

# Symptoms of Test Anxiety

- ❑ During an exam, I often feel confused or panic.
- ❑ During an exam, I experience sweaty palms, mental blocks.
- ❑ While taking an exam, I sometimes experience headaches, vomiting, or fainting.
- ❑ After the exam, I pretend the exam meant nothing to me and discard the result as meaningless.
- ❑ When I am finished with an exam, I sometimes feel guilt and blame myself for not studying enough.
- ❑ I sometimes get angry or depressed after an exam.
- ❑ As a general rule, I view test taking as a stressful situation and dread it.

If any of these statements are true for you,  
you may suffer from test anxiety.

# Symptoms of Test Anxiety

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The first thing to do is realize that this is NOT a lost cause.

You CAN manage the anxiety to work for you, instead of against you.

# Dealing with Thoughts

- Yell STOP (if you need to clear your mind!)
- Get your mind off of worrying if you are feeling overwhelmed
- Visualize Success
- Focus on the task at hand
- Praise yourself



# Dealing with Physical Tension

- **Check for tension**
- **Tense and relax-** If your shoulders are tense, flex them and pull them back. Arch your back to make them even tenser and hold that position for a count of five.
- **Exercise aerobically** to reduce general stress and even improve your health.

# Causes and Eliminators For Test Anxiety:

Causes	Eliminators
Apprehension of not living up to other's expectations of you.	Set your own goals and try to attain them. Don't let others determine your aspirations.
You allow grades to determine your personal worth.	Grades don't determine your worth as a person.
You have a fear of losing affection of significant people in your life if you don't succeed.	Know that people like you for a variety of reasons, which have nothing to do with the grade you receive on a test.
You feel helpless with no control over what happens.	Take control of your life and improve your study habits. Prepare for your next test and see the relationship between the amount and quality of your studying and the grade you receive.



# Tips for Reducing Test Anxiety

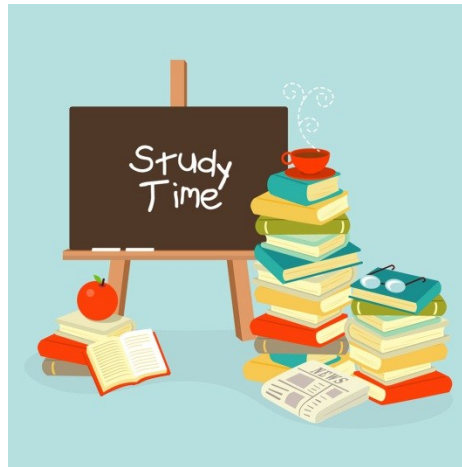
1. Learn to relax.
2. Face your fears and accept the fact that you have a problem.
3. Become task oriented and give total attention to the test.
4. Engage in positive self-talk and replace negative thoughts with positive ones.
5. Improve the way you prepare for tests.
6. Learn to recognize signals that you are becoming anxious and then try relaxation exercises.
7. Dress comfortably for tests.
8. Arrive on time at test site.
9. Develop a test-day tradition.

# Test Preparation Strategies

(Taken from Essential Study Skills by Linda Wong)

## 5 Day Study Plan

You can use a 5 day study plan to help you organize your materials and time to review for a major test. Using this plan will help to reduce tendencies to procrastinate, cram, or suffer test anxiety.



# 5 Day Study Plan

## **Step 1 – Set specific goals**

- Be specific and realistic by making a list of all of the topics you will need to review for your test. You will want to include textbook readings, lecture notes, homework assignments, lab reports, projects, or any other materials covered in class.

## **Step 2 - Set a specific target date and time**

- Choose the days and times that you are available to study. Days 1, 2, 3, and 4 are organized as review sessions. Day 5 of your study plan (the day before the test) should be dedicated to reviewing the special notes you created in step 3.

# 5 Day Study Plan

**Step 3 - Identify steps** – determine what you need to study and when you will study.

This step requires some careful planning!

- First, create a list of materials you need to review - your textbook readings, lecture notes, homework assignments, lab reports, projects, or any other materials covered in class.
- Next, group your study materials in four logical categories by putting topics that go with each other together. You will review one category of information each day during the first four days of your schedule.
- Next, create a plan for how you will review the information. **For example**, you may want to begin by reading the chapter summary, reviewing your textbook notes, reviewing your class notes, reviewing your homework assignment, and reviewing terminology.

# 5 Day Study Plan

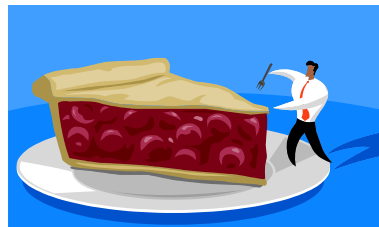
## Step 3 - Identify steps (con't)

- Then, create summary notes to use as you review each chapter. Summary notes are special notes that you make for only the materials that need to be reviewed one final time before the test.
- Examples of summary notes:
  1. Lists or categories of information to remember
  2. Charts that compare or contrast different subjects studied
  3. Chapter outlines
  4. Flash cards of categories or terminology
- Finally, create your five day plan by writing a list of what you will review each day.

# 5 Day Study Plan

## Step 4 - Plan a reward

- Choose a reward for yourself after you have completed your five day study plan and after you complete the test.



# 4 Steps to Creating a Study Plan

Step 1 – Prepare for the midterm in Sociology scheduled for Monday by reviewing:

Chapters 1-4	Textbook notes
Terminology (study guides)	Homework questions
Lecture notes	Notes from video
Papers	Notes from guest speaker

Step 2 – Target dates and times to study

Mon	8 – 9:00 am	Sat	10 – 12:00 pm
	3 – 4:00 pm		4 – 6:00 pm
Wed	8 – 9:00 am		
	3 – 4:00 pm	Sun	2 – 4:00 pm
Fri	8 – 9:00 am		7 – 9:00 pm
	3 – 4:00 pm		

Step 3 – Identify the specific steps involved. Review lecture notes first, then textbook notes, and make flashcards for key terms.

Step 4 – Choose a reward

# Example of a Five Day Study Plan

Monday	Wednesday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8 – 9:00 am Chapter 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• class study guide</li> <li>• homework questions</li> <li>• handouts</li> </ul>	8 – 9:00 am Chapter 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• study guide</li> <li>• homework questions</li> <li>• video notes</li> </ul>	8 – 9:00 am Chapter 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• class study guide</li> <li>• handouts</li> <li>• homework questions</li> </ul>	10 – 12:00 pm Chapter 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• study guide</li> <li>• homework questions</li> <li>• 2 short papers</li> </ul>	2 – 4:00 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review summary notes</li> <li>• Self quiz on chapter 1 &amp; 2</li> </ul>
3 - 4:00 pm Chapter 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lecture notes</li> <li>• textbook notes</li> <li>• notes – guest speaker</li> </ul>	3 – 4:00 pm Chapter 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lecture notes</li> <li>• textbook notes</li> </ul>	3 – 4:00 pm Chapter 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lecture notes</li> <li>• textbook notes</li> </ul>	4 – 6:00 pm Chapter 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lecture notes</li> <li>• textbook notes</li> </ul>	7 – 9:00 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review summary notes</li> <li>• Self quiz on chapter 3 &amp; 4</li> </ul>



# In Conclusion . . .

## **Dos and Don'ts of Dealing with Test Anxiety**

**Don't** cram for an exam. The amount you learn won't be worth the stress.

**Don't** think of yourself or the test in a negative sense.

**Don't** stay up late studying the night before. You need the sleep. Begin studying a week in advance if possible.

**Don't** spend time with classmates who generate stress for you on test day.

**Don't** take those last few moments before the test cramming information you do not know. Try to relax. You may spend that time reviewing material. Reviewing material that you already know will also help to boost your confidence!

**Do** remind yourself that the test is only a test.

**Do** reward yourself after the test for a job well done!

**Do** tell yourself that you will do your best on the test, and that will be enough!

# **STAY POSITIVE!!!**

# Information retrieved from:

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Understanding Test Anxiety from the Purdue University website.

[http://www.ulc.psu.edu/studyskills/test\\_taking.html#symptoms](http://www.ulc.psu.edu/studyskills/test_taking.html#symptoms)

Essential Study Skills by Linda Wong