

## **COPING TECHNIQUES FOR STRESS ANXIETY<sup>i</sup>**

Here are some coping techniques to try when you feel anxiety coming on before or after an exam or other stressful situation. You may have to try more than one in order to discover what works best for you.

### **If You Feel Anxious Before or After a Test:**

1. **Try exercise.** You don't have to be a professional athlete to use exercise successfully in handling stress. Any physical activity helps, from strenuous sports to simply walking around the block. Exercise releases tension and increases stamina.
2. **Talk to others.** Stress can be controlled by discussing your feelings and fears with others. Counselors, teachers, and fellow students can react to your comments and offer suggestions and advice.
3. **Visualize success.** Picture yourself calmly walking into class and sitting down. Imagine yourself listening carefully to verbal instructions. Watch yourself take the test, cool and confident. See yourself thinking and accurately recalling the necessary information. Watch yourself complete the test and turn it in. Picture yourself leaving the room, satisfied with your performance.
4. **Relax.** Sit or lie in a comfortable position with your eyes closed. Picture yourself in some place where you felt relaxed in the past. Breathe deeply, hold for one count, and exhale. Flex and relax your toes, feet, ankles, legs and so on. Let your thoughts drift. Allow them to come and go freely. Remain calm and quiet. If possible, stay this way for at least twenty minutes. Open your eyes and savor the feeling of relaxation.
5. **Use self-talk.** Stop negative thoughts by repeating positive statements to yourself. When preparing for the exam, say something like, "I can learn this information. Worrying won't help me, so I'm going to stop worrying now and get back to studying." After the exam use positive self-talk again: "Good job! I tried every question and it wasn't as bad as I feared. When I control my imagination, I control my fear."

## If You Feel Anxious During a Test:

1. ***Pause and breathe deeply.*** Ease tension by taking a brief break. Turn your test over. Close your eyes and inhale slowly. As you inhale, say "calm." Then, as you slowly exhale say "down." Repeat this until you feel calmer.
2. ***Answer a question you know.*** This gives you confidence in your knowledge, and confidence reduces stress.
3. ***Use self-talk.*** Face each question by saying, "I can meet this challenge one question at a time. I can complete this test. I can answer this question." Avoid feeling panicked by telling yourself to stay focused. Ask yourself, "What does this question ask of me?"

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i References: Loyola University Chicago, Learning Assistance, 2005