Tackling Test Anxiety

Test Anxiety is a combination of physical symptoms and emotional reactions that interfere with your ability to prepare for and perform well on tests.

Symptoms include:
- nausea, sweat, racing heart
- worry, depression, stress
- difficulty focusing and learning
- study procrastination and avoidance

Remember Your ONE and ONLY GOAL during a test:
Demonstrate your knowledge as clearly as possible in the amount of time provided.

The following are NOT your goals during a test:
To perform perfectly
To do better than others
To get into graduate school
To make your family proud
Or anything else you can't control in the moment!

Tips for Tackling Test Anxiety

STUDY WELL!
Start early and use active study strategies. Re-reading lecture notes or a textbook is NOT enough.

IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE TEST
✓ Eat something nutritious to help with focus and attention. Bring water to stay hydrated.
✓ Exercise will also help with focus and attention.
✓ Play calming or familiar music to help you relax.
✓ Arrive to test early enough to find a seat that will help, not hinder your focus (up front? near a window?)
✓ Avoid talking to classmates if it raises your anxiety.
✓ Bring ear plugs if you get distracted by noise

DURING THE TEST
Calm Your Body
- Breathe deeply from your belly
- Tighten various muscle groups, and then relax them
- Stand and stretch or shrug shoulders
- Close your eyes and count to ten

Calm Your Emotions and Thoughts
- Focus only on present moment to help you stay grounded
  - EX: “I am sitting at a desk in Carroll Hall. It is 2:00 pm on Tuesday.”
- Avoid thoughts about the future or past
  - EX: “I need an A on this test in order to improve my g.p.a.”
  - EX: “I should have done more practice problems.”
- Replace negative thoughts with positive ones
  - “It’s okay if I can’t answer this question – I can answer another question instead.”

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