

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 skills? Yes___No___
2. During the test, can you get relaxed and comfortable? Yes___No___
3. Do you use helpful test-taking techniques? Yes___No___
4. Do you talk to yourself in a helpful and supportive way during the test? Yes___No___

Test anxious students often answer question # 4 with a "No." (Anxious students answer *all* the questions with a "No"! But this guide focuses on question # 4.) Test anxious students talk themselves down during a test. They complain about their professor, look for a trick in each question, call themselves dumb, stupid, incompetent, or worse. Usually, they predict failure. People generally do not do well when they expect themselves 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. Remind yourself of what you do know, recalling any facts related to the test question. Dig out the best test-taking techniques that you know. **Above all, say something supportive and kind to yourself**--you need it at that moment.

The use of positive self scripts is one way to deal with test anxiety. A self script is a set of statements you choose to remind yourself of while studying and taking exams. The point is to focus on positive, helpful ideas, rather than on negative, self-defeating ideas.

Here are some examples of supportive self-instruction scripts to use while studying and test-taking. Each one was written by a student in a "How to Study" class. Notice that the scripts contain:

- **instructions to relax**
- **suggestions for recalling material,**
- **test-taking cues**
- **some generally supportive statements**

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 breath 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.

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. 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? Definitely not helpful!!

SCRIPT 6 Relax, 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 7 Now write your own. Be sure to get in the 4 elements.

- 1.) Relaxation
- 2.) Suggestions for recalling information
- 3.) Test taking strategies
- 4.) Supportive statements