Recognizing and Responding to Test Anxiety

If test anxiety is a problem for you, you are not alone. It is perfectly natural and a common human reaction to experience some anxiety when thinking about taking a test or during the test itself. In fact, a certain level of anxiety can actually help you perform better on a test!

Test anxiety can include but is not limited to:

- Racing thoughts
- Dizziness
- Pounding headache
- Freezing up
- Racing heart
- Sweaty palms
- Going blank
- Upset stomach
- Shortness of breath
- Crying
- Wanting to give up
- Feeling faint
- Trembling or twitching
- Weakness in legs
- Nausea
- Heart palpitations
- Vomiting
- Sweating

The CRC Exam is a high-stakes exam and you want to do your best on the exam. These tips for dealing with test anxiety may help.

The Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA), a nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention and treatment of anxiety, offers this information about recognizing and responding to test anxiety.

Test Anxiety is linked to several causes. Lack of preparation, fear of failure, or poor test history may result in a negative way of thinking before an exam. Some people experience physical symptoms associated with test anxiety while others experience emotional or cognitive symptoms.

Test Anxiety can occur before and after the test, not just during. This is why it is important to manage your anxiety during each of these timeframes.

ADAA provides this advice for dealing with test anxiety:

Be prepared.

- Study in smaller increments of time and over the months before your exam. Try to simulate exam conditions by working through a practice test, following the same time constraints.
- Know the exam format and content.
- Talk with professionals, mentors, or professors in the field to make sure you understand the information.
- Talk to peers who have taken and passed the exam and ask for recommendations on how to prep for the exam.

Get ready on the day of the exam.

- Eat a nutritious breakfast.
- Review just bit of material prior to the exam so that you can jog your memory.
- Approach the test with confidence and listen to music on the way to the exam to help you relax or get energized.
- Say positive things to yourself: "I will do my best," "I will pass the exam," "I am well prepared."
- Drink water to help stay hydrated as anxiety can make your mouth go dry.

Maintain a positive attitude.

- Creating a system of rewards and reasonable expectations for studying can help to produce effective studying habits.
- There is no benefit to negative thinking.

Develop good test-taking skills.

- Read the directions carefully, answer questions you know first, and then return to the more difficult ones.

Stay focused.

- Concentrate on the test during your exam.

Practice relaxation techniques.

• If you feel stressed during the exam, take deep, slow breaths, and consciously relax your muscles, one at a time. This can invigorate your body and will allow you to better focus on the exam.

Stay healthy.

• Get enough sleep, eat healthfully, exercise, and allow for personal time. If you are exhausted—physically or emotionally—it will be more difficult for you to handle stress and anxiety.

Visualization.

Visualization is another way to reduce test anxiety. Prometric offers an online tour of their testing centers. After you complete the online tour, practice visualization. Close your eyes and breathe slowly as you visualize the day of the exam from start to finish.

Anticipate the events of the day:

• Visualize yourself making the trip to the testing center.

• After you check in, you'll enter the testing room.

• Take slow deep breaths and visualize yourself seated and reading the multiple-choice questions and selecting the correct answers.

    o Don't forget to visualize yourself feeling a bit of panic and using deep breathing to feel calmer.

• Imagine yourself completing the exam and making the trip back to your home.

The more often you visualize a successful exam day, the more likely it is that you'll be relaxed during the actual exam.