Help Your Child Reduce Test Stress/Anxiety

Parent Workshop
February 25, 2020
PS 174 William Sidney Mount
Agenda:

• Anxiety
  – What is Testing Anxiety?
  – Symptoms of Testing Anxiety
• Tips & Strategies
  – the home
  – before test
  – during test
What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress – apprehension, tension, or uneasiness – it helps you cope with tense situations. It is the body’s natural response to stress.

ADULT EXAMPLES: Job interviews, seeing a doctor, public speaking
What are some causes of anxiety in children?

- Separation
- Socialization
- Major life changes (divorce, moving, new school year, etc)
- Changes for normal day routines
- Social Media
- Grades
Testing Anxiety

- Testing Anxiety - involves apprehensions of performing at levels below those at which we’d like to perform, or even apprehensions of failure.
  - This type of anxiety may be a product of our underestimating our abilities to perform or of the resources we have available to help us to perform to our desired levels on exams.
  - Conversely, exam anxiety may be a natural reaction to insufficient exam preparation.
# Symptoms

Exam anxiety can result in:

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<tr>
<th>Physical Indicators</th>
<th>Perspiration, sweaty palms, feeling too hot or cold</th>
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<td>Headaches, upset stomach, nausea</td>
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<td>Rapid heart beat, shallow/irregular breathing, dizziness</td>
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<td>Muscle tightness</td>
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<td>Emotional Indicators</td>
<td>Feeling guilty, angry, depressed or unsure</td>
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<td>Behavioural Indicators</td>
<td>Procrastination and avoidance</td>
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<td>Excessive study</td>
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<td>Over/Under eating; Poor nutrition</td>
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<td>Sleeping too much or too little</td>
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<td>Fatigue or inability to relax</td>
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<td>Alcohol or drug misuse</td>
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<td>Cognitive Indicators</td>
<td>Negative or defeating self-talk</td>
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<td>Excessive worry</td>
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<td>Difficulty with concentration or focus</td>
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<td>Difficulty retrieving or selecting key terms or concepts</td>
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<td>Difficulty organizing, integrating or expressing your thoughts</td>
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<td>Going blank on exam questions</td>
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<td>Remembering the correct answers after the exam is over</td>
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What is testing anxiety sound like?

• “My head feels like it’s in a clamp.”
• “My stomach hurts.”
• “I’m sweating.”
• “I studied this stuff yesterday, why can’t I remember?”
• “I can’t think!”
• (After taking the test) “As soon as I leave the test, I remember everything.”
When testing anxiety become problematic

High levels of Test Anxiety
Interfere with your ability to
Prepare for,
Think about or
Take an Exam.

1. Test failure
2. Test anxiety
3. Can’t study effectively
4. Under- or un-prepared for exam
5. More test anxiety
6. Interference with test performance

Test-Anxiety Cycle
...Not a Bad Thing

- Please note: most of the time anxiety of a test is not a bad thing. It is a normal and natural response.
- Some physiological symptoms can be helpful: blood pumping, outburst of energy, mind races, etc.
- Some people say work well under stress
Tips & Strategies In the Home
Ways to Help

- Cognitive
- Emotional
- Physical
Cognitive

• Prepare Well: Overlearn the Material
• Practice good time management
  – Space out your studying
  – Avoid procrastination
  – Eliminate cramming
• Use active study techniques
  – Review regularly, short periods of time

9. Take breaks. Attention is usually your age + 2.
   12 years old + 2 = 14 minutes
   11 years old + 2 = 13 minutes
   10 years old + 2 = 12 minutes
   9 years old + 2 = 11 minutes
   8 years old + 2 = 10 minutes
Understanding Your Child's Learning Style

Different learning styles

- Auditory
- Visual
- Tactile
- Other

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-JWFbww9OM
• Practice relaxation techniques – long and short
• Recite positive self-talk
• Use visualization
• Identify TA triggers and plan how they will cope with them
  – Ex: Instructor announcing the time
  – Consult a counselor if necessary
• Be patient!
The Power of Self Talk

- Preparation + the power of positive self-talk
  - “I am always calm and confident under pressure.”
  - “I can do it!”
  - “I am smart!”
  - “I am an amazing person!”
Physical Control

• Get exercise everyday
  – Clear out the stress hormones!
• Do something you enjoy everyday
• Practice relaxation techniques regularly
• Avoid cramming the night before tests
• Get enough rest and proper nutrition
• Set up a calm study environment
Test Taking Skills

• Teach your child test taking strategies.
  – Process of elimination
  – Key words
  – Come back later
  – Plug in
  – Flashcards
  – Make studying a game
Tips and Strategies Before Test Time
Before the test...

- Deep breath
- Focus on test and not what is going on around them
- Block out distractions
- Positive Messages
- Smile
- Be confident
- Relax, shoulder, neck roll
- Tighten fist, release
- Lucky pencil!
Tips and Strategies During Test Time
## During test time...

| First Impression | - Read the directions first, review the entire exam, then read the directions again  
|                  | - Think of the exam as an opportunity to show off what you know (which may be more than you first think) |
| Organize Yourself | - Organize your time efficiently - work on the easier portions of the exam first  
|                  |   - This can increase confidence and reduce anxiety  
|                  |   - Pace yourself throughout the exam  
|                  |     - Check to see if you are rushing or getting behind |
| Tackling Exam Questions | - Essay Questions: construct an outline to organize and avoid rambling, repetition, and missed information  
|                       | - Short-Answer Questions: answer only what is asked and keep it short and to the point  
|                       | - Multiple Choice Questions: read all alternatives then eliminate those that are incorrect  
|                       |     - Watch for qualifying words - “only”, “always”, “most” |
| Possible Fears | - Difficulty with a question: show the material that you do know  
|                | - Think you’re unable to finish the exam: concentrate on those portions that you can answer well  
|                | - No time to review exam: review your answers as you go and recheck answers only if you have time |
During test time...

If it starts to feel overwhelming...

| Overcoming Anxiety      | - Slow down and become intentional about your physical movements, this can increase your sense of self-mastery and control  
|                        | - Use relaxation and visualization methods (ie. controlled breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, visualizing peak performance)  
|                        | - Stretch, stand up or walk around to relax tight muscles |
| Calming Distractions    | - Focus on an inanimate, calming object (ie. Wall, floor, pen)  
|                        | - Perform a calming action (ie. Rubbing a stone)  
|                        | - Use a mantra (ie. Silently, slowly repeat a calming word/phrase)  
|                        | - Use affirmative self-talk (ie. Relax, concentrate, it’s okay)  
|                        | - Create a mild, harmless pain that can override over other thoughts and impulses (ie. Pressing fingernails into palm)  
|                        | - Have a drink of water or a snack  
|                        | - Wear, touch or look at something with positive associations; this can trigger a calming response (ie. Photo, special stone) |
# After the test

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| **Learn** | - Learn from the experience  
- Keep notes about what does and doesn't work for reducing exam anxiety  
- It helps to be strategic, intentional and creative in developing and applying an anxiety reduction plan |
| **Reward** | - It's not helpful to punish yourself and mull over what didn't go well  
- Treat yourself well and give yourself a reward for your efforts |
| **Review** | - Review what worked well for you and increase your awareness of those assets and resources for the future  
- Review what didn't go as well so that you can develop new strategies  
- Continue to practice and develop relaxation and visualization methods |
No Child Is The Same

- Each child has their own strengths.
- Praise is important.
- Acknowledge the effort.
Thank You!
Questions?
Please Take Handouts