

# Techniques to Control Test Anxiety con't

## Visualization Techniques

Visualization allows you to reduce anxiety by mentally leaving the exam room while maintaining the physical presence - in effect, to escape from the room without leaving the chair.

Begin by choosing a picture, photograph, poster or drawing that provides very pleasant, relaxing memories or thoughts. You must examine this picture in great detail so that it can be recalled by memory in the testing room. Begin the test session by practicing deep breathing techniques. If your anxiety level begins to increase, you may or may not practice the breathing techniques again and then begin using the visualization techniques.

Start the technique by putting your head in a position as if reading the exam. Close your eyes and recall the picture that was selected for this technique. Examine the picture carefully. Take two long, slow breaths and tell yourself to relax. You may use this technique several times during the test session, whenever you feel tension returning.

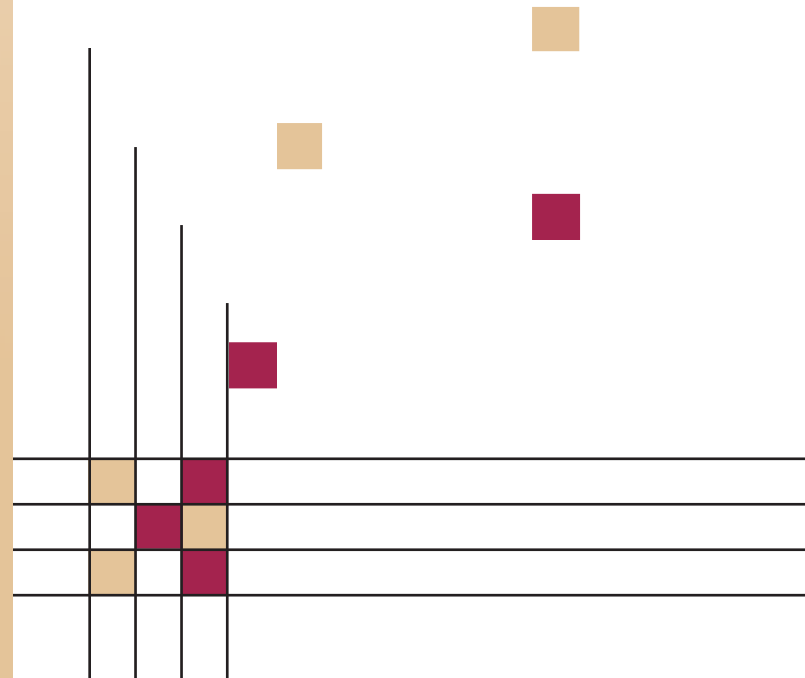
If you are experiencing test anxiety and would like to talk with a counselor, please call 319-398-5471 or come to 123 Linn Hall to make an appointment.

This handout is part of a Self-Help Information Series written by Kirkwood Community College Counselors, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 319-398-5471 or 1-800-332-2055 ext. 5471.

Please share this information with family, friends and classmates.

**Kirkwood**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# Test Anxiety



Learning To  
Control It!

## Test Anxiety

# Learning to Control It!

The dictionary defines test as “a set of questions for determining one’s knowledge.” The same dictionary defines anxiety as “worry or uneasiness about what may happen.” Probably everyone who has taken a test has experienced some anxiety. A little anxiety is good. However, when the worry or uneasiness becomes severe or “takes over,” you may need to seek help in dealing with the problem.

Students who suffer from test anxiety can learn to reduce it by taking charge and controlling the level of anxiety. Symptoms of test anxiety may include:

1. Feeling panicked
2. Disrupted breathing patterns
3. Extreme nervousness
4. Sweaty hands
5. The inability to remember study materials
6. The inability to read or comprehend test questions

Students with test anxiety should continue to study and prepare for exams and discuss their concerns with instructors. Some students find it helpful to take exams at the Test Center or in a quiet, private room. Additional time to take tests may also help reduce the anxiety level. A “documented disability” must be present to receive these two accommodations, and you must apply for these in advance. Contact any Kirkwood Counselor or someone in Learning Services, 133 Linn Hall, to find out if you qualify.

# Techniques to Control Test Anxiety

There are some special techniques students can use to reduce their level of anxiety. Some students can practice these techniques alone; others may prefer to work with a counselor. These techniques must be practiced regularly if they are to be of value. One cannot expect them to work without consistent practice. Practice the techniques at the beginning of each study session. By doing this, the techniques will come more naturally and be more effective prior to the exam

## Relaxation Techniques

Begin by sitting in a “regular” study position at a desk or table. Close your eyes and inhale deeply. As you exhale, say to yourself “relax.” You are combining a mental relaxation message with a physical response. During exhalation, pretend that the air is draining from your body and is leaving through the toes.

During this process you will be tensing and relaxing different muscle groups while inhaling and exhaling. You must tell yourself to relax when exhaling and you must relax the specific muscle group as the air drains through that area.

The process is as follows:

1. Close your eyes. As you inhale deeply, tense and hold the tension in all the muscles in both feet. Say to yourself “relax” as you exhale. As you relax the tension in your feet, let the air drain from your body. Picture the air draining from your head through your arms, hands and chest; through the stomach and hips; through the thighs; through the calves; through the feet and out of the body at the very tips of your toes.
2. Follow the same process. This time, tense the calf muscles by lifting the heels.
3. Now continue the process by focusing on these muscle groups, one at a time:
  - Thighs
  - Stomach, hips and buttocks
  - Chest
  - Neck and shoulder area
  - Arms and hands
4. Finish the process by taking two long, slow breaths and telling yourself to relax. Make your whole body relax as you do so.