Test Anxiety

Test anxiety is a learned behavior. You are not born with test anxiety. Because it is a learned behavior, it can be unlearned.

Four common sources of test anxiety:

1. Underpreparedness
   **Description:**
   - Knowing you are not prepared
   - Knowing you did not put enough time or effort into the learning process
   - Cramming for an exam - may actually increase your test anxiety by drawing attention to the amount of information that has not been understood or learned.
   **Solution:**
   - Consistent, effective study strategies
   - Stress level will be a motivator, not a hindrance

2. Past experiences
   **Description:**
   - Belief that what happened in past will occur again in the present
   - Impacts your belief system, self-esteem, and confidence
   - Inner voice begins its negative self-talk and reminds of past experiences
   **Solution:**
   - Can be difficult to diminish because of the complexity and dynamics of belief systems, established behaviors, and the power of emotions.
   - For more severe test anxiety, the best strategy may be to work with a counselor to get to the root of the belief system and learn ways to alter your beliefs
   - For milder cases, techniques include: affirmations, positive self-talk, seeing success, and goal setting
   - Additional techniques: use of effective study strategies, working in study groups, using ample feedback, and successful completion of daily assignments – will build confidence & reduce test-anxiety level

3. Fear of failure
   **Description:**
   - Over-emphasis is placed on the importance of one test
   - Rooted in: fear that someone else will be disappointed in you, equate grades to your level or self-worth or self-esteem, the test is given much greater value in your mind than it is worth in reality, or fear of losing a scholarship, financial aid, athletic eligibility, insurance eligibility, and other benefits
   **Solution:**
   - Remember that one test or one grade is only a measure of performance at that one moment in time and for that specific material. It is not a test of everything you learned or everything that you are.
   - Keep the true perspective and be reminded of the actual value of one given test to your overall score. Most classes have a variety of opportunities during the term to earn a grade
   - Consequences are real and sometimes there are severe consequences to pay for not performing well – however, one test is not what put students in difficult predicaments – test anxiety is a learned behavior, and so are study methods

4. Poor test-taking skills
   **Description:**
   - Feel well prepared and in control of the subject material, yet continues to experience test-anxiety
   - Source of anxiety is lack of knowledge on how to take tests.
   **Solution:**
   - Learn how to take tests – see section on test taking skills

*Resources: