

Katie started Academic Coaching because she was blanking out on tests. She told me that she studied, but once she sat down in the test room it was like everything disappeared from her brain. She would have been pressed to remember her phone number.



Of course this affected her grades, but even worse it affected her confidence. She started to wonder if she was cut out to be a biology major after all. What she really wanted, though, was to know how to get rid of test anxiety. Believe it or not, there *are* ways to harness the power of anxiety and use it for your benefit. Here are three of them:

1. Tell Yourself a Different Story

A test is a challenge. You're not supposed to feel calm when you're taking it. However, the story you tell yourself affects whether your anxiety helps you or holds you back. Consider these two "stories":

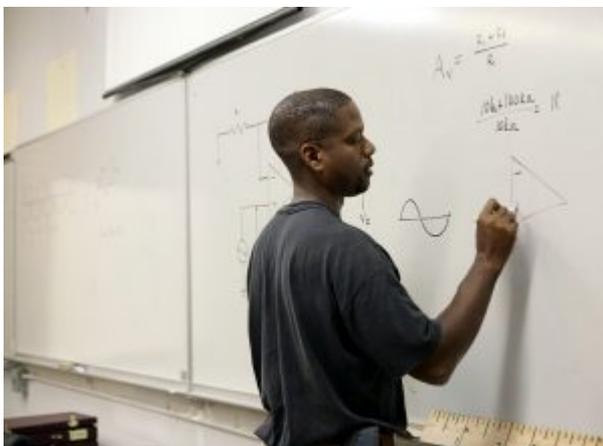
1. I don't know this stuff. This class is too hard. I'm going to blow it!
 2. This class is a challenge! I'm going to start with the parts I know and work from there.
- The first story adds to your anxiety, and anxiety makes harder to remember. If you predict doom, your prediction might just come true.

The second story, on the other hand, acknowledges the challenges and presents a path through the anxiety.

Forbes put it best, "A 2017 study published in the *Journal of Individual Differences* examined individual's appraisals of situations. Those who viewed stressful events as challenges—rather than threats—gained energy from their anxiety. The boost in energy motivated them and improved their performance."

So, how you choose to perceive your anxious feelings can help you shift from anxiety to a state of focused energy.

If you're wondering how to get rid of test anxiety, one way is to change the stories you tell yourself about the test, the class, and your abilities.



2. Know What You Know

Of course stories can only help you if you're prepared.

Prepared means walking into a test knowing that you know everything that is likely to be on it.

My son, who is majoring in financial math, told me that he discovered the secret to getting good grades.

"What is it," I asked.

"Learn everything," he said.

That is the secret, I admitted. But how do you know that you've really learned the material? There's only one way to know, and that is by quizzing yourself. To read more about how this works, check out this post on "[The Single Most Effective Study Technique.](#)"

Other ways of preparing are to:

1. Study in the manner of the test (multiple choice, essay, problems, etc).
2. If the test is timed, time yourself when you practice.
3. Study in blocks of focused time, with breaks, so your brain can absorb and integrate the information.

Also, beware of the urge to ignore that one tiny thing that you don't understand, because it "probably won't be on the test." Actually, it probably will. Learn it all and pay special attention to those hard parts.

3. Get It Out on Paper

Other strategies on how to get rid of test anxiety have to do with writing or journaling.

Writing about how you feel about a test before the test has been shown to **improve performance by as much as half a grade**. So, if you've been looking for ways on how to get rid of test anxiety, try putting pen to paper (or fingertips to keyboard).

Apparently there is something helpful about getting anxiety onto paper (and out of your brain).

If you're not up for journaling your thoughts about the test, you might just write yourself a short encouraging note. Writing yourself an encouraging note or asking others to send encouragement before a big test has also been shown to boost scores.

Invite your friends

Katie used all three of these strategies. First we pushed back against the anxiety by creating new and motivating stories about the tension she felt before a test.

Second, we worked on honing her study skills until she was prepared for the test — and she knew it. And third, she journaled a bit the night before the test to let go of any lingering feelings about past tests.



Once she got these down, instead of freezing during tests, she started getting A's.

Here's one other strategy: Invite your friends. Anxiety is contagious, but so is confidence. It's fine to study alone, but sometimes a group of focused classmates can help you stay focused. You can create positive stories together about the test. You can quiz each other on the content. And you can write each other encouraging notes.

After all, your friends are probably wondering how to get rid of test anxiety too.