Reducing Students’ Test Anxiety

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Reducing Students’ Test Anxiety
High Anxiety ➔ Lower Test Scores

Cognitive test anxiety group differences on course examinations.

Cognitive Test Anxiety

Tendency to

• engage in task-irrelevant thinking during test taking and preparation periods,
• draw comparisons to others during test taking and preparation periods,
• have either intruding thoughts during exams and study sessions, and/or
• have relevant cues escape the learner’s attention during testing.
Writing about their test worries just before an exam improves the scores of test anxious students.
Expressive Writing Prompt

“Please take the next 10 minutes to write as openly as possible about your thoughts and feelings regarding the test you are about to take. In your writing, I want you to really let yourself go and explore your emotions and thoughts as you are getting ready to start the test. You might relate your current thoughts to the way you have felt during other similar situations at school or in other situations in your life. Please try to be as open as possible as you write about your thoughts at this time. Remember, there will be no identifying information on your essay and your response will not be evaluated or graded. Please start writing.”

Fig. 1 Math accuracy in study 1.

G Ramirez, S L Beilock Science 2011;331:211-213
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How to Use the Expressive Writing Strategy with Your Students

Administer the Cognitive Test Anxiety Scale at the start of the course.

Use the writing prompt just before students take tests in your course. Give students 10 minutes to write a response.

Track results. Correlate students’ anxiety scale score with their test scores to monitor performance of high test anxious students.
Download the *Cognitive Test Anxiety Scale* and the *Expressive Writing Prompt* from [http://catl.typepad.com/student_learning/](http://catl.typepad.com/student_learning/)
Want to do the Expressive Writing Intervention as a SoTL Project?

Submitted an IRB Protocol to allow instructors to use student data for research purposes.

Will coordinate research project. Contact me if you are interested.
“Fascinating . . . Whether you want to raise your test score or lower your golf score, Beilock provides a toolbox of techniques and strategies that can short-circuit anxiety and turn high-pressure situations to your advantage.”

—DANIEL H. PINK, author of DRIVE and A WHOLE NEW MIND

Choke

WHAT THE SECRETS OF THE BRAIN REVEAL ABOUT GETTING IT RIGHT WHEN YOU HAVE TO

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More Information

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