

Test Anxiety Student Workbook

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STUDENT WORKBOOK FOR TEST ANXIETY PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION FOR STUDENTS

The following workbook is a specially designed program designed to reduce test anxiety in college and high school students. It can be used as part of a teacher/counselor led class, or as a self-paced program. Each chapter can be used as a "stand-alone" unit that is used without the others. However, it is recommended that all units be completed because the relaxation tapes that are part of the program follow the sequence of the chapters.

The key to success in reducing the test anxiety is **practice**. Your anxiety didn't develop overnight and it will take considerable effort on your part to undo its effects, but you can make a difference! This workbook will take you through key elements in reducing the test anxiety; your responsibility is to try them out. All too often we are looking for the quick answer, such as, "Tell me what I can do on tomorrow's test." But quick answers provide only temporary solutions. By completing the assignments and practicing the skills, you stand a very good chance of significantly and permanently reducing your test anxiety. It will take a lot of time to complete the work for this program, but it will be worth the effort!

Each chapter has some brief introductory comments and ideas followed by some practice activities. At the conclusion of each unit you will be given homework assignments that give you an opportunity to practice some of the skills. Many of the concepts presented will be repeated in later units so that you will practice them again. One of the best test anxiety reduction methods is to practice taking tests and you will be given several opportunities to do that here. The basic structure of each unit is:

A.) **Presentation of Information.** A brief presentation of information about anxiety or the test anxiety reduction skill to be practiced. Several topics may be presented in each unit, some of the topics will be repeated.

B.) **Practice Activities.** Trying out some of the skills immediately following the presentation. These will be called, "Practice Pauses."

C.) **Homework Assignments.** You will be given one or more assignments to complete before moving on to the next unit. Students doing the class on a self-paced basis will bring the assignments to the teacher or counselor for check-in prior to going on to the next unit. Students in a teacher-led class will bring the assignments to the next class session.

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR THE CLASS

Student will need the following materials for the class:

Student Workbook
Relaxation Tapes, two sided (one general, 3 desensitization)
Calendar and Daily Assignment Book

I wish you luck on your endeavor of reducing test anxiety. Many students have significantly reduced or eliminated their anxiety. With diligent work, you can also.

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STUDENT PROGRESS CHECKLIST

The following student progress checklist is to help you and your instructor keep track of the activities completed.

<u>Homework Assignment</u>	<u>Date Completed</u>
Unit One: General Relaxation Tape and Log	_____
School Anxiety Self-Assessment	_____
Unit Two: Test Anxiety Tape, Step 1	_____
Study Calendar	_____
Unit Three: Test Anxiety Tape, Step 2	_____
Study Calendar	_____
Unit Four: Test Anxiety Tape, Step 3	_____
Reading and Memory Worksheet	_____
Diet Log	_____
Unit Five: Test Anxiety Tape, Step 4	_____
Diet Log	_____
Unit Six: Test Anxiety Tape, Step 5	_____
Practice Test	_____
Unit Seven: Test Anxiety Tape, Step 6	_____
ABC Practice Worksheet	_____

TEST ANXIETY REDUCTION

UNIT ONE

WHAT IS ANXIETY AND HOW DID I GET IT?

Do Not Read This Chapter! Before going any further please skim through the entire workbook so that you have a general idea of what is included. This is a necessary step in learning new material. Please do it now, and be certain that your fingers touch each page.

Thank you. Now we can begin:

Have you ever had any of the following types of reactions?

"I felt I was ready for the test, but when it started my mind just went blank."

"Before the test started I felt sick. I just wanted to get out of there."

"I kept thinking to myself what would happen if I did poorly on this test, I just knew it would be awful because I was going to fail again."

"I thought I did just fine, but when the grade came back it was a 'D', I don't know what happened."

"I am always feeling under pressure, my life is just too hectic."

If you have signed up to take a test anxiety reduction program you know already about the above kinds of thoughts and feelings. *Where do they come from and how do I get rid of them?* That is what this course is about.

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is a very complex human reaction that has both physical and mental elements to it. The physical elements include things such as **sweaty palms, accelerated heartbeat, and a queasy stomach**. The mental elements include **self-doubts and constant worry** about things. To control your test anxiety you will need to deal with both of these elements, taking a pill to relax more or "concentrating harder" probably will not solve the problem.

Anxiety reactions can be very powerful and to understand that intensity we can look at our body's natural arousal systems. If we are presented with a real situation that is threatening, we respond with fear and our bodies are aroused. This fear is very natural and protects us from harm; we would not survive long as a species without this responsiveness. Within our autonomic nervous system we have two divisions, the **sympathetic division which helps arouse us** and the **parasympathetic division that helps with the calming process**. Both of these are necessary and complementary. The sympathetic gets us going and protects us during those threatening situations, the parasympathetic calms us down so that we can rest and recuperate from the sympathetic arousal. The following are the specific reactions of each of the systems:

Sympathetic. (The part that gets us "pumped up")

Our heart starts to beat rapidly, and the blood pressure goes up.

The blood goes to our muscles and less to the thinking part of our brain (which is why we go blank when nervous).

Digestion is slowed down.

Breathing rate increases.

Blood sugar is released to give us energy (also depleting energy reserves).

The rate of perspiration increases (you sweat!).

Adrenalin is released in the body giving an overall excited effect.

Parasympathetic. (the part that calms you down)

Breathing is slowed down.

Digestive processes increase.

Heart rate slows down and blood pressure decreases.

Perspiration returns to normal.

There is a myth that all anxiety is bad, but a little bit of sympathetic arousal might be good for times when you have to take a test because it will get you "up" for the test and make you more alert. However, too much of this type of reaction will make it hard to concentrate. One explanation is that all the body's energy is being focused into the large muscle groups and the brain-stem (which controls the automatic functions of your body), and not enough is being brought to the cerebral cortex which is responsible for thinking. This explains why you go "blank" when you are real nervous, then everything comes back to you when you relax later.

During anxiety reactions we start breathing more rapidly, and that breathing tends to be upper chest breathing rather than from the diaphragm. If you are jogging this type of breathing is great, but if you are sitting at a desk taking a test, you will start to **hyperventilate**. When you hyperventilate you increase the proportion of oxygen in your blood and reduce the proportion of carbon dioxide. You start feeling light headed and can't think as straight. (Try it right now. While sitting in a chair start to breathe rapid and shallow. Do this for thirty seconds and notice how you feel.) You can control this tendency by concentrating on breathing while extending your **diaphragm, or "belly breathing."**

While in an aroused state your body is calling for more energy. This energy comes in the form of blood sugar, the fuel for our cells. We obtain the blood sugar through the digestion of the foods we eat. If we stay in an aroused state for a considerable period of time, it substantially reduces our reserves and we have to "re-fuel." In a later unit we will look at the need for a proper diet to support the stresses of school.

One way to define anxiety is to say that it is a **fear-like arousal**, when the situation really isn't that threatening. Granted, a test can be threatening to your grade point average, but it is not a physical threat and doesn't warrant a full-blown physical reaction.

Our mental, or cognitive, reactions are harder to measure than the physical ones. But, nevertheless they do contribute to anxiety reactions. Have you ever noticed that two people in the same situation will react in entirely different ways. An instructor gives an assignment in class, and some students just nod and smile as if they enjoyed the experience. Other students cringe and look like they are ready to cry. **Attitudes and beliefs help determine how we react.** One way we look at these attitudes and beliefs is through what is called, **self-talk**. Self-talk is literally what we say to ourselves. Going back to the teacher giving the assignment, some of the following are the self-statements that students may be making:

"Boy that assignment sounds like fun, I will learn something new."

"Give me a break, he knows we won't have time to do all that."

"Same old stupid assignment."

"That is my worst area, what will I do? I'm sure I can't get that done."

"Well, I guess that is what I expected."

As you can see, we all react differently to situations. You can make your own interpretations as to the effect of the various self statements made above.

In summary, test anxiety involves a complex reaction that has resulted from a sympathetic nervous system arousal and a mental reaction that is somewhat affected by our beliefs.

PRACTICE PAUSE #1

Think about your last test. Write down the physical and mental reactions.

Physical: What was your body feeling like before and during the test?
Describe it in as much detail as you can.

Mental: What were you saying to yourself?

ANXIETY, WHERE DOES IT COME FROM AND HOW DO I GET IT?

Where did you get the test anxiety? Like most human behaviors you **learned it**. How you learned it is a more complex question. The following might be some of the starting points in the early development of test anxiety:

When you were first in school members of your family may have made a big deal about an upcoming test. You interpreted this interest as pressure to succeed.

You may have really "blown it" on a test one time and a great deal of attention was brought to it by teachers or parents.

You may have had to take a test one time when you were sick or being influenced by a great deal of family stress.

The previous situations will not cause you to be test anxious, it may simply be the starting point. If the feelings are continually reinforced then it may begin to develop into test anxiety over time. The following areas are often specific sources of test anxiety that are experienced by high school and college students:

Unfamiliarity. New situations are scary. Remember the way it felt the first day you walked into this school: "Will I know anyone? Will I do okay? Can I find my classrooms without looking like a fool?" It is natural to feel a little nervous the first time you encounter a new situation. Your first test with a particular instructor is likely to raise your anxiety level. Once we have had some experience with the new situation, then we relax a little more. Having a "dress rehearsal" is one of the main strategies used to counteract this problem. While it is impossible to totally anticipate a new testing situation, taking practice tests and learning test-taking strategies is one of the ways it is done.

Preparation. Students who have not learned the material that is included on a test will not do well. Or stated more directly, if you haven't studied sufficiently, you deserve to be nervous. One method to control test anxiety is to spend more than adequate time studying material and to study in an effective manner so that you feel comfortable with your ability to recall important facts and concepts.

General Lifestyle. Having a lot of stress in our lives will not necessarily cause us to have test anxiety, but it certainly does increase the likelihood that we will have problems. Many test anxious students also have significant things causing stress in their lives. How we take care of our bodies in terms of diet and exercise influence our ability to cope with stressful situations. One way of helping our school performance is to examine and modify life stressors, and to practice healthy maintenance of our bodies.

Conditioned Anxiety. Sometimes when we get in a testing situation there is an automatic chain reaction in our minds and bodies that results in an anxiety reaction. We hear "test" and we start to sweat. This is an indicator of a learned behavior. We have learned that when we are taking a test, we should be uptight. Sometimes a single, traumatic event, (like being ridiculed in math class by a teacher) can result in an apparent permanent anxiety reaction every time you deal with similar material. More common is a gradual reinforcement of the anxiety over time by continually doing poorly on tests. A type of relaxation training is used to control this automatic reaction and teach the body to stay more physically relaxed.

Irrational Thinking. At times our thought patterns set up unrealistic goals for ourselves, or we are always convincing ourselves that something awful will happen if we don't do well on a particular tests. We keep saying negative things to ourselves that aren't necessarily based on the facts. To control this type of thinking we can practice "**positive self-talk**" which serves to block the irrational negative talk.

PRACTICE PAUSE #2

Several different causes of test anxiety were just listed. What do you think are some of the causes of your test anxiety? You can include the ones listed above, or some of your own.

RELAXATION TRAINING

One of the ways that anxiety is controlled is to prevent your body from getting physically tense. If you are relaxed, it is physiologically impossible to be anxious. Our mind constantly interprets our physical state, and when we are really tense in certain situations, we tell ourselves we are anxious. Effective relaxation can help us prevent this interpretation from happening.

There are many ways to relax, all of which are effective provided that we use them. You can choose to use your own methods to relax (such as taking a walk, or listening to music) and they will help prevent you from getting nervous. As part of the process of this workbook you will learn two specialized ways of relaxing that may help you in school. The relaxation practice tape that goes along with this workbook will teach you two methods:

Deep Muscle Relaxation. It takes about 20 minutes to complete and shows you how to tense and relax all the muscle groups of your body. This is a good method for persons who have not practiced a lot of muscle relaxation previously because in a relatively short period of time you can learn to be very relaxed.

Deep Breathing Relaxation. This one only takes 2-3 minutes and teaches you to focus on breathing with your diaphragm. It takes a little more practice to learn to get deep relaxation this way, but once learned it is a very fast and effective method.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS -- Unit One

1. Practice using the general relaxation tape, doing the deep muscle one first. Then try the shorter, deep breathing one. Record your reactions on the log sheet that follows.
2. Complete the "School Anxiety Self Assessment" found on the following pages.

RELAXATION LOG SHEET

Name _____ Date _____

1. Describe what your body felt like when you had completed the deep muscle relaxation tape:

2. Did you have any problems relaxing any particular part(s) of your body? If yes, describe.

3. Were you able to get reasonably deep relaxation with the shorter, deep breathing version? Describe.

4. General Comments:

SCHOOL ANXIETY SELF ASSESSMENT

Name _____ Date _____

Answer the following questions as honestly and completely as necessary. It will help you identify the areas in which you need to work.

1. Your Study Routine.

A.) On the average, how many hours per week do you spend studying for your classes?

_____ hours per week.

It is recommended that you study enough to master the material, not just cover it.
Are you putting in enough study hours?

_____ Not enough _____ Just Right _____ Too Much

B.) Good students use what are called "active reading" techniques that keep them alert when reading and help them remember what they have read. Place a check next to each strategy that you use:

_____ Skimming chapters before reading.

_____ Reading the Chapter Review first.

_____ Writing down questions as you read.

_____ Outlining the chapter while reading.

_____ Reading difficult portions out loud.

_____ Discuss the readings with a friend.

_____ Reading the chapter before it is covered in class.

_____ Other strategies: _____

How do you rate your overall reading strategies:

_____ Good _____ Adequate _____ Need Improvement

C.) There are some good approaches to getting ready for taking a particular test. How many of the following test-preparation strategies do you use?

- Reviewing notes a few minutes every day.
- Discussing upcoming test with a study group.
- Writing and taking your own practice test.
- Using chapter review questions as a practice test.
- Other strategies: _____

How do you rate your overall test preparation strategies:

Good Adequate Need Improvement

2. Managing the test situation.

A.) Many good students have learned about the science of taking tests and employ many different approaches to success. The following are some of the techniques used, how many do you use now?

- Underlining key words in test questions.
- Careful reading of the directions.
- Setting a time budget for completion of questions.
- Skipping questions when stumped.
- Making outlines of essay questions.
- Other strategies: _____

How do you rate your test-taking strategies?

Good Adequate Need Improvement

B.) When anxiety strikes during the test, there are steps that can be taken to reduce it. How many of the following do you use?

_____ Do something relaxing the few minutes prior to the test.

_____ Close your eyes and do deep breathing or other relaxation during the test.

_____ Just start doing or writing something.

_____ Skip around until you find something you can answer.

_____ Ask the instructor if you can get a drink of water.

_____ Other strategies: _____

How do you rate your anxiety management strategies?

_____ Good _____ Adequate _____ Need Improvement

3.) Controlling Stress and Taking Care of Yourself.

A.) One contributing factor to stress in our lives is the amount of change that we have experienced. On the following _____ lines try to list the significant changes that have occurred in your life in the last year. List things such as: illness, getting a job, adding or losing family members, moving, natural disasters, etc. Take some time and try to list as many as possible.

MAJOR CHANGES _____

How do you rate the amount of change in your life?

_____ Too much _____ Just right _____ Not enough

B.) Another way of looking at stress is the general pacing of our lives. Too much or too little going on can cause stress. If you are constantly on the run and your days and nights are fully scheduled, then you may have too much going on. If you find yourself sitting around, not motivated to do anything, then you may have too little going on.

How do you rate the pacing of your life right now?

_____ Too much _____ Just right _____ Not enough

C.) The emotional support we receive from others can help us function in school and manage the stress in our lives. Which of the following statements describes your living situation:

- I receive emotional support both at home and from friends.
- I receive emotional support primarily from family.
- I receive emotional support primarily from friends.
- I don't feel I receive adequate support from either family or friends.

D.) What we eat also impacts our performance in school since food is our body's fuel. Regular consumption of good foods will make you a better student. Which of the following describes how you eat:

- I normally eat three meals a day and tend to eat from all major food groups.
- I normally eat three meals a day, but do not do a good job getting a balanced diet.
- My meal for the day is generally at dinner time, I snack other times of the day to get by. But what I eat is generally good food and balanced.
- My meal for the day is generally at dinner time, and I do not do a good job at eating a balanced diet.
- My diet is sporadic and unpredictable.

E.) Regular exercise can serve to relax us and strengthen our bodies to deal with normal life stress. Which of the following best describes your physical conditioning:

- I am in excellent physical condition.
- I am in moderately good physical condition.
- I am in poor physical condition.

SELF ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Go through the anxiety self-assessment and try to determine which of the areas need the greatest work. Improvements in any or all of them will help you as a student. After reviewing the self-assessment try to write at least three specific goals that you wish to accomplish with this anxiety reduction program.

Examples: "I want to learn specific test taking strategies
that will help me when I get flustered."
"I want to practice healthy eating habits."

My Goals: 1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

TEST ANXIETY REDUCTION

UNIT TWO

EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT

REVIEW

How well did you read and understand Unit One? The following is a quiz. The purpose is to provide a learning check and to give you practice at taking tests.

Unit One Review Quiz.

1. List and briefly describe the two main elements of anxiety.

2. When we are nervous while taking a test we go "blank" because we have studied too much and our brains can't handle any more information. TRUE FALSE

3. The sympathetic division of the autonomic nervous system serves to calm us down.
TRUE FALSE

4. The following are body functions. Write a "P" next to those that are parasympathetic stimulated, and a "S" next to those that are sympathetic stimulated.

___ Dialation of pupils.

___ Increased digestion.

___ Increased heart rate.

___ Rapid breathing.

___ Reduced perspiration.

___ Release of glucose by the liver.

5. The messages that we hear ourselves saying are called,

_____.

6. How does faulty or negative thinking prevent us from doing our best in school?

-----The answers to this quiz are found at the very end of the workbook-----

TIME PLANNING

When we are anxious it seems that time is our enemy. We look at the clock on the wall and see it moving and yet we are not progressing through the test or our homework. The more we hurry, the more anxious we become. Is it possible to change or control this? Not completely, but you can begin to change things a little by **becoming a time planner**. A time planner is a person who makes a deliberate attempt to plan how his or her time is to be used. Time planners attempt to change the psychology of time and use it to their advantage.

Now, in this workbook it is not possible to come up with a scheme to totally organize your time, but we will make an attempt to try to organize the time that is related to school.

Test anxious students are worriers. We tend to worry a lot about upcoming tests and assignments. In fact, we worry so much about upcoming assignments that it is hard to concentrate on what has to be done today. The first step in effectively managing your time is to **learn how to concentrate on today**. If we can concentrate just on today, then we don't have to expend a lot of energy worrying about the future. The simplest way to accomplish this is to develop a study calendar. A study calendar can be as simple as a list of "what I have to do today", to a complex scheme that attempts to map out everything you have to do and when you plan to do it. How you approach it depends on you. If you have never done anything like it before, just starting with a simple daily plan is a good beginning. Try it now.

PRACTICE PAUSE #3

Make a list of your school priorities for today (just today, not the whole week). Divide them into "Top Priorities" which have to be completed today, and "Other Assignments" which are ones you would like to get done, but aren't as urgent as the others.

Top Priorities _____

Other Assignments _____

Making a simple list of daily assignments is good first step in starting to be a time planner and can easily become a daily habit. But once you are in the habit of doing it daily it is easy to expand it into a weekly, monthly, or term plan. One suggestion is to get a large monthly calendar so that you can see the entire month at a glance. When school assignments are given out write the assignment on the due date, then work backwards to today, breaking the assignment down into daily study goals. This way you don't have to worry about the entire assignment, only what has to be done today. Look at the following example:

Sample Study Calendar

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WED.	THURS.	FRIDAY	SAT.
(Week one) Read History	Write ideas for topic in English Review class notes	 Math Probs. Chapt 5, 6	Library: Research on Eng. Paper Math Probs. Chapt. 5, 6	 Read Chapt.4 Review 4 Sample test Chapt 4, 5, 6	More Library research Sample Questions Chapt 4,5	 Read Chapter 6
(Week 2) Outline paper Review class notes. Math probs. Chapt. 7.8	Write first draft. Study with friends	History test Chapt 4,5,6 Review homework 5,6,7,8,	Edit and start typing Math sample test: 7,8	 Read Chapter 7 Math test 5,6,7,8	English paper due.	

The above example doesn't require you to make extremely detailed notes on each day, it just **breaks down the assignment into smaller pieces**, and forces you to spread out the study time. You then can still keep a more detailed daily list of study goals. It seems like in doing this you will waste a lot of time making lists. True, but this listmaking keeps you organized and keeps you from worrying about all that you have to do. **Just concentrate on today.** In the homework you will be given an assignment of making a study calendar and keeping a study log. After trying out these methods, you should design your own study-goal system.

GENERAL LIFE PRIORITIES

It would be great if all we had to worry about was just going to school, but few of us have that luxury. We have jobs, family activities, sports, community commitments, religious activities, and a myriad of other commitments in addition to going to school. There are some days we barely have enough energy to crawl into bed. When the pace of our lives gets to be too hectic, we run the risk of not fulfilling our commitments and have a higher probability of getting sick (getting sick is one way our bodies tell us to slow down). Frequently people say, "I really can't change anything, there aren't any responsibilities that I can give to someone else." We do make choices in live and at times we have to set our priorities. We cannot do everything, so we have to choose what we can do. Think about it now.

PRACTICE PAUSE #4

Think about a recent hectic day, and list what you did that day. Include as many things as possible, such as: soccer practice, going shopping with your kid sister, helping a friend with a problem, studying your algebra, going to choir practice, etc.

MORNING ACTIVITIES:

AFTERNOON ACTIVITIES:

EVENING ACTIVITIES:

Now go through the list of activities and divide them into the following categories:

1. Things that have to be done, and only I can do them:
2. Things that have to be done, but possibly someone else could do them or help with it:
3. Things I would really like to do, but probably could be discontinued:

4. Things I would really like to do, but can be postponed until a later time (like the end of the term):

5. Things that are not essential and should be discontinued:

It may be overwhelming to try to re-prioritize your entire life, but you can start the process by looking at a few particular days. By analyzing what we do on these days we can begin to alter how we spend our time in general, and can concentrate on expending our energy in the ways that are really important to us. Changing what we do may take some **re-negotiating of responsibilities** within our families or with our friends. Don't change things without letting others know about it, so they can be aware of it and make adjustments.

SYSTEMATIC DESENSITIZATION

This section of this unit is unrelated to the time management topic, but is one of the special things done to control test anxiety. It is called **Systematic Desensitization by Reciprocal Inhibition**. This is a fancy way of saying a step-by-step breaking down of fears by relaxation preventing the anxiety from happening. With systematic desensitization you will be taught how to completely relax your muscles. Then while you are in this relaxed state you will imagine the situations that make you nervous. You start with very low level nervous situations (like being at home studying) and work up to situations that normally make test anxious students very nervous (like reading the first test question and going blank). These steps of nervousness are called a **hierarchy**. The goal is to be able to clearly imagine this anxiety producing situation and keep your body totally relaxed. When you can do this you decrease the automatic tendency of your body to get nervous in the real situation. Therefore, when you go to take your test you will not be as physically tense as normal and your mind will interpret that as your being less anxious.

This program uses six steps on audio tapes to provide the systematic desensitization, one will be assigned for each of the units. You are to go through each step one or more times until you can imagine the scenes presented without having your body tense up. The following are the six steps in the hierarchy used:

1. Imagine that you are at home studying.
2. Imagine that your instructor announces a test in two weeks.
3. Imagine that you are trying to go to sleep the night before a test.
4. Imagine that you are receiving back a graded tests.
5. Imagine that you are entering class the day of a test.
6. Imagine that you are reading the first question of a test and skipping it because you cannot answer it.

After completing each of the tapes you will be asked to complete a log sheet with your comments and feelings about the experience, and this will be shared with your instructor. The relaxation process used

on the tapes is the same one used on the deep muscle relaxation tape that went along with this workbook. Your instructor may provide additional information on the use of the tapes.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Listen to Test Anxiety Tape Step 1 and complete the log sheet.
2. Make a study calendar and study log and follow it for at least five days.

TEST ANXIETY TAPE LOG SHEET

Name _____ Step # _____ Date Completed _____

1. Describe how your body felt at the close of the relaxation segment:

2. Did you have any difficulty relaxing any portions of your body? If yes, what portion?

3. What type of scene did you use as your "neutral scene?"

4. Did you have any difficulty visualizing any of the scenes? If yes, what scene(s)?

5. While imagining the scenes did you feel any additional tension in your body? If yes, which scene(s)?

6. General Comments:

STUDY CALENDAR AND LOG

Name _____ Dates Covered _____

On the following log please list your daily study goals on the left hand column,
on the right side comment on what actually happened with the goals.

STUDY PLAN	WHAT HAPPENED
Day/Date	
Day/Date	
Day/Date	
Day/Date	
Day/Date	
Day/Date	
Day/Date	

TEST ANXIETY REDUCTION

UNIT THREE

MANAGING THE MOMENT OF CRISIS

LEARNING TO COPE

Part of controlling test anxiety is to do everything possible to prevent it from ever occurring. Improving your study skills and using systematic desensitization are two ways to prevent it from happening in the first place. But realistically these two methods cannot totally prevent the anxiety. You are still going to feel anxious. So what are you going to do about it? One way to deal with the anxiety as it occurs is to simply accept the fact that it will happen and be prepared to employ a deliberate plan of attack. In this unit we will go through three types of coping strategies that you can use: **Physical Relaxation, Positive Self-Talk, and Managing the Test Situation.**

PHYSICAL RELAXATION

With the audio tapes you have begun the process of learning how to totally relax your body, but this relaxation is not directly related to what happens while you are in a test and going crazy. However, by learning how to effectively relax your body, you can apply those skills to help in the moment of crisis. Any relaxation method will work, provided it gets you relaxed, and that you can use it in a real situation. Lying down on your bed listening to favorite music is very relaxing, but in the middle of a test you cannot say, "Excuse me, I have to go home and lie down on my bed." You may, however, get relaxed by clearly imagining what it felt like. You should use your relaxation method at the following times:

- a.) When you are studying and you start to tense up.
- b.) Just prior to the test because the calming effect will last for a while.
- c.) During the test if you feel yourself starting to get anxious.

PRACTICE PAUSE #5

You have had some opportunities to try the relaxation methods using the audio tapes. Now you should try it without any help.

From where you are sitting (or standing) right now, take the next 30-60 seconds to try to physically relax: by closing your eyes, rolling your head and shoulders, visualizing your neutral scene (favorite relaxing activity) and deep breathing using your diaphragm.

Describe how your body felt: _____

What was going through your mind?: _____

If you had difficulty doing this, practice by using your relaxation audio tape.

As you may recall from unit one, keeping your body more relaxed will enable your body to use less energy and you won't get tired out as fast. More blood will be flowing to your brain and you will think more clearly.

POSITIVE SELF-TALK

In a later unit (unit 7) we will talk more about something called "rational thinking." One part of that is to engage in **positive self-talk**, which is another way of saying to keep a positive attitude and focus attention on the task at hand. Prior to the anxious situation we can have prepared a set of statements to say to ourselves, such as:

- "You are well prepared, show them what you know."
- "Stay relaxed and go slow."
- "If first you don't succeed, go to the next one."
- "I have plenty of time to finish, I don't have to be an early one out of the room."
- "I don't have to complete all the questions correctly."

We all establish patterns of thinking that tend to work against us at certain times. For example, you may say to yourself, "I have always done terrible on math tests, I will again." This may indeed be true, but substituting a more positive statement will help you from getting more anxious.

PRACTICE PAUSE #6

Close your eyes, relax, then think about the last test that you took. What were some of the things that you said to yourself?

Self-statements during my last test: _____

Look at each of the above statements. Try to think of another statement that you could have said to yourself that would have been more positive.

Positive Self-statements: _____

Write these positive self-statements on a three by five card and carry them with you to your next test.

MANAGING THE TEST SITUATION

There are no magic tricks to reducing the anxiety in the middle of a test, because what works for one person may not work for another person. But the following are some things that you might be able to try. (Later in Unit Six specific strategies for handling test questions will also be covered):

- 1. Plan to Use the Entire Time.** It is very upsetting to see another student complete a test and get up to leave while you are still struggling. When that happens you begin to feel the time pressure even more. Counteract that by deciding in advance to use the maximum time allowed, and plan to be the last student in the classroom. Check with the teacher to determine how much time you have to complete the test.
- 2. Stop, Pause, and Relax.** If you feel tension creeping in, take a relaxation break. Close your eyes, lay down your pencil, and use the deep breathing relaxation until you are back in control. This is time well spent.
- 3. Start Skipping Around.** When you continue to work on questions that you have blanked on, you will get more and more anxious. Move around the test answering all the questions that you know, hopefully this will "un-block" you and give clues to the answers of other questions.

4. **Ask for a Change of Location.** If you continually have severe reactions in a particular class, ask the teacher if you can take the test in a different location. Some instructors will permit you to take the test in a supervised learning center, in a departmental office, or in the instructor's own office. Being by yourself, without other anxious students nearby, may permit you to concentrate on the test more.

5. **Do Something.** The worst thing you can do is just sit there feeling paralyzed. Do something to get your body or mind moving: begin to draw a picture of a concept, start writing anything, stretch, relax, say some of your positive self-statements. Sometimes when you are blocked you just need something to break the grip of the anxiety.

PRACTICE PAUSE #7

Review the anxiety management hints and even try to think of some of your own. Begin planning for your next test by selecting one or two that you will use during your next test. Try to predict what it will do for you.

Strategy	What will happen if you use it.
1. _____	_____

2. _____	_____

Write down these strategies on the same 3 x 5 card as your positive self-statements. Take it with you to your next test.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS - Unit Three

1. Listen to Test Anxiety Tape, Step 2. Complete the log sheet on the next page.
2. Practice the Deep Breathing relaxation method on your own or with the audio tape.
3. Do another study calendar and log and follow it for at least five days.

TEST ANXIETY TAPE LOG SHEET

Name _____ Step # _____ Date Completed _____

1. Describe how your body felt at the close of the relaxation segment:

2. Did you have any difficulty relaxing any portions of your body? If yes, what portion?

3. What type of scene did you use as your "neutral scene?"

4. Did you have any difficulty visualizing any of the scenes? If yes, what scene(s)?

5. While imagining the scenes did you feel any additional tension in your body? If yes, which scene(s)?

6. General Comments:

STUDY CALENDAR AND LOG

Name _____ Dates Covered _____

On the following log please list your daily study goals on the left hand column,
on the right side comment on what actually happened with the goals.

STUDY PLAN	WHAT HAPPENED
Day/Date	
Day/Date	
Day/Date	
Day/Date	
Day/Date	
Day/Date	
Day/Date	

TEST ANXIETY REDUCTION

UNIT FOUR

ACTIVE READING AND MEMORY TECHNIQUES

Units Two and Three Review Quiz.

The first few questions in the review are taken from an "Academic Anxiety Coping Scale" (used with permission of the author, Allen J. Ottens). This coping scale was designed to measure how well students know and use particular types of strategies to help them control the anxieties they experience in college. Situations are presented with six possible actions that might be taken. Three of the situations are positive and should help control the anxiety (facilitating) and three will not help or may even increase it (debilitating). Your task is to go through and circle the letters of the ones that are helpful coping strategies:

1.) If I spend a good deal of time working the first test problem, and the answer I get doesn't look right, _____

(Circle the ones that will help reduce the anxiety)

- a.) I go on to the very next problem and ignore the first one.
- b.) I go on to the very next problem, but I can't help thinking back to the first one.
- c.) I leaf through the exam to find a problem I'm sure to answer correctly.
- d.) I push myself faster to make up for lost time.
- e.) I feel compelled to stay with and rework the first problem.
- f.) I caution myself about second guessing my answers.

2.) When I start feeling physically weak or nervous during an exam, _____.

(Circle the ones that will help reduce the anxiety)

- a.) I worry that the weakness or nervousness will be worse.
- b.) I remind myself that those feelings are normal and needn't upset me.
- c.) I start paying attention to how I feel rather than what the exam questions says.
- d.) I set aside a few moments to relax and calm down.
- e.) I try to push away the thoughts about how I feel and concentrate harder on the test.
- f.) I wait and hope for the feelings to go away.

3.) When I worry about going blank on an upcoming exam, _____.

(Circle the ones that will help reduce the anxiety)

- a.) I find that preparing for such an exam is something I avoid.
- b.) I tell myself over and over, "don't worry, don't worry."
- c.) I impress upon myself how I can't afford to go blank.
- d.) I learn the material thoroughly so that the chances of memory loss are minimal.
- e.) I reassure myself that my worry is exaggerated.
- f.) I remember how I pulled through other exams despite apprehension.

4.) When I hear classmates just before the exam discussing course material, _____.

(Circle the ones that will help reduce the anxiety)

- a.) I make an effort to avoid listening to them.
- b.) I get confused whether their answers or mine are correct.
- c.) I spend a few minutes calmly reviewing the material just to be safe.
- d.) I feel a growing sense of panic as I let their sense of urgency "infect" me.
- e.) I remind myself that last minute cramming won't help me.
- f.) I worry that I'm not as prepared as I should be.

5.) When, upon finishing the exam, I feel an urge to go back and change answers, _____.

(Circle the ones that will help reduce the anxiety)

- a.) I may change answers, but only if it will help me.
- b.) I glance to see whether my answers compare with those of a classmate.
- c.) I put the paper face down or turn it in so I won't be tempted to change anything.
- d.) I think about how these could be trick questions and I look over my answers carefully.
- e.) I get flustered and against my better judgment I change some of the answers.
- f.) I resist the urge by telling myself to be confident with the original answers.

6.) What is systematic desensitization and how does it work?

7.) What are "positive self statements" and how do they work?

8.) Relaxing just before a test will not help because you tense up anyway once you get into the actual testing situation.

TRUE FALSE

----Answers to the quiz are found at the very end of this workbook---

Active Reading

Do you often read a page in a textbook only to suddenly realize that you don't remember anything from the page? If that is the case you can benefit from learning **active reading** techniques.

Do you recall the beginning of Unit One of this workbook? The first thing you were asked to do was scan the entire workbook to get an idea of what was to be included. That is an active reading technique. Active reading techniques are ones that force us to do something with the reading material. If you are reading a novel it is fun to curl up in bed with a few pillows under your head and read through it at any pace you choose, that is passive reading. But that same type of reading will get you in trouble with textbook because you have to understand and recall the material.

If reading has always been a difficult area for you, this brief section will not change that. Semester long courses are given to teach you a wide variety of reading styles and skills. If you need significant help in reading, take a reading development course in addition to completing this test anxiety workbook.

Active reading means that you have to keep your body and mind alert and focused on the task at hand. You have to use all of your senses, you literally have to "touch, taste, hear, and smell" your reading assignment. In other words, you have to totally engage and experience the things that you read. It takes a lot longer to read your textbooks this way, but passive reading is almost a total waste of time. The following are some things you can try:

Pre-Reading or Scanning. Scan through the entire material to be covered before starting to read. Scan an entire book when you get it, and scan each chapter individually just prior to intensive reading. This will give you an idea what is included and prepare you to look for key ideas.

Outlining on Separate Paper. Most textbooks are written from outlines prepared by the author. By following the natural progression of the author you are analyzing key concepts. The physical act of writing aids memory, you also have an excellent chapter summary from which to study. This is very tedious, but a very efficient way to study. It keeps you from losing your concentration.

Make Flashcards While Reading. A variation of outlining is to have a stack of 3 x 5 cards on your study table and make flash cards of key concepts, vocabulary, and diagrams. This can be used for later study.

Write Sample Test Questions. Pretend you are the teacher who will be asking students to take a test on the material. After reading a particular section write a sample test question. Save these questions for later when you will give yourself your own test as a way to practice for a test and to check your knowledge.

Read Aloud. Sometimes difficult passages are better understood if they are read aloud. You can do this exactly as they are printed, or can rephrase them in your own words. You can even record this reading for playback later. Put the tape in your walk-man and listen to it while you are driving, jogging, or doing the laundry.

Draw a Picture. "A picture is worth a thousand words," is true when applied to study. If you can draw a picture, graph or visual representation of a concept, you can recall it better. Put the picture in your notes or on your flashcards. When you start blanking out on a test you can close your eyes, relax, and see the picture in your mind.

Discuss the Material. Try reading together with a "study buddy." After reading a section discuss it with your partner.

PRACTICE PAUSE #8

Put one of these active reading techniques to practice right now. (By design these "Practice Pauses" are forcing you to use active reading techniques). Go back over the material presented in the last two pages and write one multiple choice question and one essay question on the subject of active reading.

Multiple Choice Question:

Essay Question:

Now try to answer your own questions.

Memory Techniques

When you are very nervous you have difficulty remembering because the thinking portions of your brain are not getting sufficient blood and glucose, and you are getting a lot of interfering thoughts. Because of this, test anxious students must work harder than other students at getting ideas and concepts firmly planted in their memories. One way to do this is to use information gained from learning theory. Consider the following situation:

John and Bill are taking a psychology class together. Both of them have a test on Friday. John studies for two hours on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Bill studies for eight hours on Thursday. Who will probably do better?

As you can guess, John will probably do better than Bill, even though they put in the same amount of study time (no guarantees, though). This is the difference between **distributive practice** and **massed practice**. The distributive practice approach is to spread things out over time so that the study can be intense and the material is given time to "sink in." When you study for a long period of time, exhaustion begins to take its effect and the study becomes less efficient. Also there is no time for the "sinking in." In learning theory this is called going from short-term to long-term memory. Under pressure we can recall things from our long-term memories better than from our short-term memories.

Another term that comes from learning theory is **overlearning**. This is the practice of going through things so many times that it can hardly be forgotten. Usually this applies to physical activities, but can also be used for mental. For example, once you learn to ride a bicycle you will never forget. There have been so many thousands of repetitions of the physical and neurological movements that a person who has not ridden a bicycle for 30 years can get on a bike and ride down the street. People rarely forget their phone or house numbers because they are repeated so many times. Most school material does not need to be mastered this way because you must rely on concepts, rather than memorized facts. However, sometimes we do need to commit things to memory. The way this is done is through many repetitions, such as:

Regular Review of Class Notes. Take fifteen minutes every single day to review class notes, going back often to a total review of all notes taken in the class. By the time you have reached a test time or the end of a term, you will have done this scores of times.

Put Memory Items on Flashcards. Those items that must be recalled can be placed on flash cards and studied much the same way you learned your multiplication table: Speaking them aloud through many repetitions.

Write and Re-write Items. On numerous occasions re-write and re-phrase your outlines, notes and flashcards. The action of writing helps reinforce the learning.

There are numerous other repetitive strategies that you can use, but the key is to be faithful in doing it. As you build your study plan or calendar include statements such as: Review Chapter 6. You can also take advantage of short bits of waiting time we have in our lives: waiting for the bus, between classes or before a class begins, standing in a check-out line, etc. Some people like to do a quick review just before they go to sleep at night or just as they wake up.

PRACTICE PAUSE #9

You may have developed some of your own memory techniques, describe one here.

My Memory Technique:

Why It Works:

A final area related to memory is the difference between learning facts and concepts. Things like distributive practice and constant repetitions are excellent ways to remember facts, because they have to be recalled in a precise manner. But concepts, or the ideas behind what you study, have to be understood, rather than memorized. When you are young it is relatively easy to memorize facts, as one gets older it becomes more difficult. Older students tend to deal better with concepts because of the wealth of life experience that is brought to the learning situation. Concepts are best remembered when they are related to previous learning. The following are things you can do to better understand concepts:

Tutor Another Student. If you really want to understand the ideas you are studying, then try to teach them to another student. When you tutor another student you have to explain a concept in several different ways. This is an excellent way to get ready for a test, especially if the test will involve a lot of short answer or essay questions.

Participate in a Study Group. A study group can provide you with the opportunity to discuss ideas with fellow students. Somehow speaking things out loud help us understand difficult ideas.

Develop Your Own Examples. When a textbook is presenting a concept, usually an example is provided. In your notes try to create your own examples from your life experiences.

Practice Writing Essays. Essay tests rely more on concepts than other types of tests. Practice explaining things in your own written words.

HOMEWORK

1. Listen to Test Anxiety Tape, Step 3, and complete the log.
2. Complete the Reading and Memory Worksheet which involves selecting one active reading and one memory technique to try.
3. Complete the diet log to be used for discussion in Unit Five.

TEST ANXIETY TAPE LOG SHEET

Name _____ Step # _____ Date Completed _____

1. Describe how your body felt at the close of the relaxation segment:

2. Did you have any difficulty relaxing any portions of your body? If yes, what portion?

3. What type of scene did you use as your "neutral scene?"

4. Did you have any difficulty visualizing any of the scenes? If yes, what scene(s)?

5. While imagining the scenes did you feel any additional tension in your body? If yes, which scene(s)?

6. General Comments:

ACTIVE READING AND MEMORY LOG

Name _____ Dates Included _____

Select one active reading and one memory technique that you would like to try for at least five days. Write your choices on the log sheet and then after five days write down your comments about using the technique.

Active Reading Technique Selected: _____

How I will use it: _____

Evaluation and comments after five days:

Memory Technique Selected: _____

How I will use it: _____

Evaluation and comments after five days.

DIET CALENDAR AND LOG

Name _____ Dates Covered _____

On the following log please list everything that you eat and drink, it will be used to evaluate whether your diet supports or detracts from your school performance.

Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack

TEST ANXIETY REDUCTION

UNIT FIVE

HEALTHY LIVING HABITS

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

The foods that we eat supply the basic energy that fuels our body. Without a proper diet we cannot perform at our best. Read the following example and see if it is you:

It is test day for Jenny, so she is in a hurry to get to school to do a little extra studying. She had a good dinner last night, then stayed up late studying. This morning she is in a hurry so has a glass of juice and a cup of coffee. After her 8:00 class she studies for a while and has a coke. By 10:30 she is tired and has a little headache. She feels hungry and a little nervous about the test that is at 11:00. She has another coke and a bag of M&Ms, and starts to feel a little better. About half way through the test the headache comes back and she starts to feel sick to her stomach. After school she goes home and "crashes" until dinner time. When she gets up she feels hungry enough to eat a horse.

Jenny was demonstrating a pattern that is fairly common to students of all ages, consuming most of her calories for the day at the evening meal, after her school activities. This is what was happening inside her:

The dinner meal supplied a good source of food and as it is slowly digested some of the blood sugar is absorbed directly into the blood, some is stored in the liver for use later. As she goes through time the blood sugar is slowly being used. The anxiety of the upcoming test causes a sympathetic arousal which increases certain bodily functions that call for more blood sugar. Since the reserves are low, she starts craving sweets. The caffeine in the coffee and coke serve to suppress her appetite and further stimulate the sympathetic nervous system. As the blood sugar drops further she starts to get a headache, ingestion of the coke and M&Ms temporarily relieves this as the sugars are rapidly digested and absorbed. Halfway through the test the reserves begin to run out again and she starts feeling bad. Exhausted, she falls asleep and when she wakes she definitely needs supper.

Jenny probably could have prevented this "yo-yo" effect by eating a decent breakfast of foods that are digested slowly.

PRACTICE PAUSE #10

Go back through the diet log that you kept, or think about the last five days and answer the following questions:

How many times did you eat breakfast? _____

On how many days did you eat something from all the four major food groups? _____

The food groups include: Dairy Products and Egg
Fruits and Vegetables
Breads and Cereals
Meat, Poultry and Fish

Do you consume a large amount of caffeine? _____
(don't forget to include soft drinks and chocolate)

Do you consume large amounts of sugar-rich foods? _____

Is your diet regular or sporadic? _____

What are two things you would like to change about your diet?

1. _____

2. _____

The simplest and fastest way to see a dramatic change in how you feel while taking tests is to be certain that your diet supports maximum performance. Preparing for school is much like an athlete preparing for competition, and a portion of that is a training diet. The following are some things that you should do:

1. Increase the regular consumption of food throughout the day. Not necessarily more calories but spread throughout the day. Students need to eat a good breakfast, just as our mothers always told us.

2. Increase the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. Fresh fruits and vegetables are high in vitamins, minerals, and complex carbohydrates that are digested more slowly than processed foods. Fresh products are better than canned or processed because their vitamin content is better and there are no added salts and sugars.

3. Increase the consumption of whole grain products such as: whole grain breads, oatmeal and other cereals. These products are high in the B vitamins (that are depleted rapidly in stressful situations) and are also foods that are more slowly digested.

4. Maintain adequate levels of protein through consumption of: eggs, milk products, lean meats, fish, beans, nuts. Caution should be taken not to overload in this area because many of these foods are also a source of fats and cholesterol.

5. Decrease the consumption of caffeine. Substitute things such as de-caffeinated coffee and tea, fruit juices, and water for beverages. Fresh fruit in lieu of a chocolate candy bar.

6. Decrease the consumption of high sugar content foods and beverages. Safer snack foods such as fruit or low-salt crackers can help, but eating regular meals will also help reduce the desire for snacks.

7. Decrease or eliminate the consumption of alcohol and other drugs. In addition to the impairment of performance, the alcohol is metabolized into blood sugars that reduce the desire for "real food".

THE ROLE OF EXERCISE IN REDUCING ANXIETY

The lack of exercise will not cause anxiety, nor will vigorous exercise eliminate anxiety----but it can help. One way to dramatize this is to keep track of your resting heart rate. The resting heart rate is how fast your heart will beat when you are calm and at rest. Resting heart rates can vary greatly from individual to individual and still be within a normal range. A well conditioned marathon runner may have a resting rate of 40 beats per minute, but that is quite unusual. Typically women have higher rates than men. When we are anxious our heart rates go up dramatically and that serves as a cue to our minds that we are getting nervous. We can "fool" our minds if we can keep our heart rates lower, and exercise will help.

Regular aerobic exercise (exercise that increase heart and breathing rates) is needed to condition our bodies. To condition ourselves aerobically you need to bring your heart rate up to about 70% of the maximum rate (up to about 140 beats per minute) for 20-30 minutes 3-4 times per week. Popular aerobic exercises are: running, brisk walking, swimming, bicycling, aerobic dance, and cross country skiing.

PRACTICE PAUSE #11

Learn how to measure your heart rate. Two basic methods are used:

- 1.) **Feeling the wrist.**
- 2.) **Feeling the carotid artery in the neck.**

To take a wrist pulse lay your left hand on a table, palm up (you may use the opposite hand if you wish). Place the first two fingers of the right hand firmly on the large bone in wrist on the same side of the wrist as the thumb. You should be able to feel a strong pulsation. Practice until you can do it.

To take a carotid pulse take the first two fingers of your left hand and press them against the side of your neck, just below your jaw. To find the right location go down from your ear and move slightly forward. You should be a little behind the Adam's apple. Practice until you can feel a pulse.

Choose either method that works for you and take your resting pulse rate. Count the beats for 15 seconds then multiply by 4 to get the beats per minute.

Resting Pulse Rate _____

Now run in place for 30 seconds or walk briskly up 2 or 3 flights of stairs and take another pulse rate.

Active Pulse Rate _____

Try taking your pulse rate the next time you are nervous, then try to reduce it by relaxation methods

If we are well conditioned, we will have a lower resting pulse rate and will also recover more quickly to a resting rate after exertion. By improving your general conditioning you will enter a testing situation with a lower heart rate and therefore can have a greater increase without feeling anxious. You will also be able to reduce your pulse more quickly.

Exercise itself can serve a relaxing function. If you have been very anxious or tense, a good workout will significantly reduce the tension. The next time you are very uptight while studying, take a study break for a 15 minute brisk walk, then return to study. It will help.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

1. Listen to Test Anxiety Tape, Step 4 and complete the log sheet.
2. Complete the diet log for another 5 days: discuss it with your family.

TEST ANXIETY TAPE LOG SHEET

Name _____ Step # _____ Date Completed _____

1. Describe how your body felt at the close of the relaxation segment:

2. Did you have any difficulty relaxing any portions of your body? If yes, what portion?

3. What type of scene did you use as your "neutral scene?"

4. Did you have any difficulty visualizing any of the scenes? If yes, what scene(s)?

5. While imagining the scenes did you feel any additional tension in your body? If yes, which scene(s)?

6. General Comments:

DIET CALENDAR AND LOG

Name _____ Dates Covered _____

On the following log please list everything that you eat and drink, it will be used to evaluate whether your diet supports or detracts from your school performance.

Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Day/Date: Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack

TEST ANXIETY REDUCTION

UNIT SIX

TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

UNITS FOUR AND FIVE REVIEW QUIZ.

The first few questions will again be from the "Academic Anxiety Coping Scale" by Allen Ottens. Situations are presented with six possible actions that might be taken. Three of the situations are positive and should help control the anxiety (facilitating), and three will not help or may even increase it (debilitating). Your task is to go through and circle the letters of the ones that are helpful coping strategies:

1.) When I'm having difficulty concentrating or paying attention to what I am studying, _____.

(Circle the ones that will help reduce anxiety)

- a.) I decide it's time to take a study break.
- b.) I wonder what is wrong with me that I can't concentrate.
- c.) I change my method of studying, such as copying notes instead of reading.
- d.) I decide to study some other subject.
- e.) I question whether I'm in the right school or course of study.
- f.) I persist with what I'm studying and force myself to complete assignments.

2.) While I'm sitting in the exam room waiting for the test to be distributed, _____.

(Circle the ones that will help reduce anxiety)

- a.) I plan a strategy for how I can most effectively approach the test.
- b.) I use the last moments to cram as much of the subject matter as possible.
- c.) I try to relax or distract myself by thinking about something besides the test.
- d.) I notice a building tension that gets harder to handle as the test time approaches.
- e.) I relieve tension by talking or joking with classmates.
- f.) I doubt that my knowledge of the subject will be reflected by my answers.

3.) When, during an exam, I forget information that I actually know, _____.

(Circle the ones that will help reduce anxiety)

- a.) I relax and try to recall the information from a lecture or textbook.
- b.) I find that during the rest of the test I'm distracted by trying to remember it.
- c.) I check to see how another student answered the question.
- d.) I interpret it as a signal to move on to another question.
- e.) I minimize its importance by thinking that it's only one item.
- f.) I get angry and frustrated with myself.

4.) If a final exam in one of my courses were to be held tomorrow, _____.

(Circle the ones that will help reduce anxiety)

- a.) I would stay up all night to cram for it.
- b.) I would "overpsych" myself for it by remembering how important it is to get a good grade.
- c.) I would be reassured by telling myself that I've kept up with the course.
- d.) I would not bother to study for it since it would be too late to do anything.
- e.) I would review the main points and hope for the best.
- f.) I would try above all else to get a good night's sleep.

5.) When I'm studying and I think back to how poorly I've scored on some previous tests, _____.

(Circle the ones that will help reduce anxiety)

- a.) I get so dismayed that I just want to put my books aside.
- b.) I criticize myself for having botched so many opportunities.
- c.) I try to boost my confidence by recalling how well I've done on some others.
- d.) I use this recollection as an incentive to prepare even harder for the next test.
- e.) I worry that upcoming tests will end up badly, too.
- f.) I remind myself that I've actually learned from the errors.

6.) What is distributive practice and why does it work for studying?

7.) One way to help remember things is to use multiple _____ when you study.

- a.) senses
- b.) repetitions
- c.) courses
- d.) all of the above
- e.) none of the above
- f.) a & b only

8.) Which one or more of the following are likely to improve school performance?

- a.) Regular meals throughout the day.
- b.) Having a coke before a test.
- c.) Reducing the amount of sugar consumed.
- d.) Fasting before a test to clear your mind and body.
- e.) Having a few drinks the night before to relax.

9.) One measure of aerobic conditioning is _____.

(The answers to the quiz are found at the end of the workbook)

TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

Have you ever known someone who would brag by saying, "I hardly studied at all, I just showed up and took the test and got an 'A'." First of all, they are probably lying. **Very few people can get high grades without a lot of hard work.** However, some people seem to have a knack for taking tests. Even when they haven't studied as well as they should, they seem to be able to go into a test situation and do better than you. How did they learn to do this? Can I learn also?

There is a real science to taking tests, detailed and extensive textbooks have been written on this subject. You can be taught how to analyze the structure of the language used to help determine the best answer or the analyze the probability of certain answers based on the words used. You could spend countless hours learning how to do this, but if you are like most students you do not have the time for it. With years of testing experience you may be able to acquire the skills on your own. In this workbook you will be taught several **simple strategies** that are designed specifically for test-anxious students. They are ones you should be able to recall even when you are very anxious. If you want to learn more than is provided in this workbook, go to the library and check out a book on test-taking skills.

The simple skills you will be taught are:

- 1.) **Developing a Plan of Action.**
- 2.) **Reading for Key Words.**
- 3.) **Developing a Skipping Strategy.**
- 4.) **Outlining for Essay Questions.**
- 5.) **Preparing Practice Tests.**

PRACTICE PAUSE #12

Think about your last test. Did you have a plan or strategy? Describe how you approached working on the test:

How did your plan work?

DEVELOPING A PLAN OF ACTION

Developing a plan of action means that you map out in advance what you are going to do on a particular test, particularly how you are going to spend your time. If you can anticipate the kind of test that your instructor will give you can begin even before the test is distributed, but generally students start setting their plan the moment they receive the test. Do not start your test when it is first distributed, take a few moments and go through the entire test first and do the following:

Set a Time Budget. Determine how much time you have to take the test, and allocate time for each section. Often students spend a lot of time on one section of a test and don't adequately cover another. The time spent should correspond to the point value of each section. If you have 50 multiple choice questions worth one point each, and two essays worth 25 points each, then spend equal time on each.

Decide Where to Begin. You don't have to begin with question #1 and move in order, you can start any where you wish. It feels good to be successful, so start with a question that you can answer.

PRACTICE PAUSE #13

You have a 50 minute class period to finish a test. It includes 20 multiple choice items worth one point each, 10 short answer worth 2 points each, and 2 essays worth 10 points each. Set a time budget for:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Minutes</u>
Planning	_____
Multiple Choice	_____
Short Answer	_____
Essay	_____
Cushion (leftover)	_____

READING FOR KEY WORDS

Do you recall the experience of getting back a test, looking at a question that you missed and say, "I knew that, I just misunderstood the question!" **Often we miss a critical word in a test question and it changes the meaning of everything.** We are in a hurry to get through the test and we make silly mistakes. Starting with the directions for the test and going through each question, get in the habit of underlining key words with your pencil. Key words are those that are most significant or can change the entire meaning. For example, look at the following question with the key words underlined and an explanation in parentheses:

Test anxious students often have their minds go blank during a test. Which of the following is the best explanation for this phenomenon?

("minds go blank" is the construct being requested. "best explanation" suggests that more than one answer could be true, you have to pick out the best.)

- a.) In preparing for the test the student has tried to remember too many facts and the brain can't handle the information overload. (This suggests that the information going into the brain is the problem, possible, but not very likely)
- b.) Most test anxious students have poor study habits and don't know the material. (Word "most" makes this an absolute type of statement, which is very hard to make true, even though it may be partially true.)
- c.) As a result of the excited physiological state there is reduced blood flow to certain parts of the brain, interfering with the thinking processes. (The blanking described in the question is an internal brain process, this is the only item that is internal, making it THE BEST ANSWER.)

Words such as, "sometimes," "always," "never," "usually," "may," frequently give you clues about how to answer the question and can totally change the meaning if they are missed or misunderstood. But without trying to get too complicated, simply get in the habit of underlining what you think are the key words. It will keep you focused on the task at hand and will prevent some of those silly mistakes.

PRACTICE PAUSE #14

Try your hand at underlining now, by marking the key words in the following test questions:

1. Abraham Lincoln is regarded by the vast majority of historians as the greatest American President.
TRUE FALSE
2. One way to get the attention of your audience and relax yourself while giving a speech is to tell a joke.
TRUE FALSE
3. Which of the following is the most popular explanation of why the citizens and government of the United States felt they had the right to the westward expansion and settlement of lands during the 19th century.
 - a.) It was a challenge to see if it could be done.
 - b.) It was felt to be a God-given right of settlement.
 - c.) The territory was needed for economic growth.
 - d.) The Indians really didn't need all that land.

Answers: There can be several different interpretations to the questions, but this is what this author suggests. 1. "vast majority" and "greatest" are the key words. Some historians believe this, but it is hard to get the vast majority of historians to agree on anything, therefore it is FALSE. 2. "One way", "attention", and "relax" are key words. It doesn't even have to be the best way, so telling a joke could do this, TRUE. 3. "most popular explanation" and "felt they had the right" are important. This would have to be a fairly commonly agreed upon explanation and a,b, and c all are partially true (some people even felt d was true), but b is another way of phrasing the popular concept of "manifest destiny."

How did you do? Try it on your next test.

DEVELOPING A SKIPPING STRATEGY

At times our mind set dictates that we complete one question before moving on to the next, and this pattern is hard to break. Usually we start with question #1, then go to #2, etc. But when we blank out on a question then we can't seem to get back on track. **A more efficient way to work is to skip questions we cannot answer.** The advantage to skipping is that we do not spend all of our precious time struggling with a question that we may never answer correctly anyway. How often have you gotten hung up on a few questions while never even getting to some questions that you probably could have answered.? One way to

prevent this is to have developed a plan about how to skip questions. The following is what this author uses:

- a.) Read the test question. **If you immediately recognize the answer** or how to complete it, go ahead and **answer the question**. Under no circumstances should you ever return to this question. Go to the next question.
- b.) **If you think you know how to do it, go ahead and give it a try**. If you are unsure of your answer when completed, **put a "?" next to the item number**. You will return to this question only if time permits.
- c.) **If you don't have the slightest idea how to proceed, place a "--" next to the question** and skip it. You will return to this question after going through the test once.
- d.) Once you have gone through the entire test and answered as many questions as possible, then go **back to the items with a "--"**. These are the ones that were skipped completely. Sometimes in the process of taking a test your thoughts will be triggered and you can now answer these. Answer as many as possible.
- e.) After going through the skipped items **then look at the ones with a "?"** Change these answers only if you have a strong reason. You probably got it right the first time.

A plan like this gives you the maximum chance to be able to answer as many questions as possible. When you are able to answer a question promptly you probably are answering it correctly, especially if you have taken the time to underline key words. **You should not change an answer unless there are very strong reasons to change**, such as missing a key word. If you think that possibly you have made a mistake, then you should not change it. The skipping strategy presented is just one approach, you should feel free to develop your own system.

OUTLINING FOR ESSAY QUESTIONS

With the emphasis on communication skills in colleges and high schools today, more teachers are relying on essay and short answer tests. In many ways essay tests are much fairer than multiple choice tests because the student is not limited by the choices presented by the teacher. You can say what you want, as long as you can back it up. **Points are normally awarded for essay questions based on: a.) presence of key concepts or facts b.) clarity of expression**. Normally grammar and punctuation are not graded unless they interfere with the clarity of expression. Students often lose points because they are writing so fast and furious that they leave out major sections. Or they have started an essay only to recall an important fact and have difficulty working the point into the essay in a coherent manner. **One simple strategy is to make an outline before you start writing**. You wouldn't think of writing a major paper without an outline, use the same level of planning on your essays. On the margin or the top make a brief outline of what you are going to write, this will save you a lot of time. With the planning you can write a coherent essay and stay on task and probably complete the essay in a shorter time period. Your teacher will read the essay first, and some will award partial credit based on the outline even if you do not finish the essay. Look at the following example:

Explain the reasons why HOMELESSNESS has become such a great problem and how do people at large react to homeless people?

OUTLINE: Intro: What is homelessness.
The extent of the problem
Reasons: Economic Problems
De-institutionalization of mental patients
Change in government policy.
Always been there, now more publicized.
Reactions: Fear/Avoidance
Condescending or Patronizing
Social Action.
Conclusions: I recommend change of policies and social action.

"Homelessness is the condition of being without a regular place to live. Most social service agencies define it as being without a place to live for"

PRACTICE PAUSE #17

Try your own hand at outlining an essay question. Pretend this is a test and you have been given the following question:

Should the Federal government exert more or less influence in schools today?
Present your rationale.

Your Outline: _____

PREPARING PRACTICE TESTS

The best way to acquire good test taking skills is to have lots of practice taking tests. Students who have been away from school for many years are often terrified of tests because they haven't had one in so long. This is a very natural fear and usually disappears after trying their hand at a few. You can practice your test taking skills and study at the same time by doing practice tests.

With a practice test you **simulate the real testing experience**. Get a pad of paper, set up a timer, and go. If you have done a good job with practice tests then the real situation will not be as scary because "you have already been there." Some students will go as far as to take the practice test in the actual classroom. Practice tests are by far the most effective test preparation strategy. Where do you get the questions for your practice test? Try the following:

- 1. Write your own.** It was mentioned in the "active reading" section that writing down test questions is a good way to concentrate on your reading and check your understanding. This is the most difficult, and the most effective way to get sample tests.
- 2. Textbook supplements.** Most college textbooks will have a "chapter review" section at the end of each chapter with sample test questions. Some textbooks have optional supplements or student workbooks that have detailed sample tests. It is a good idea to buy one of these if it is available with your textbook.
- 3. From your teacher.** Some (not all) teachers will give you old tests or provide a special review sample test, just ask.
- 4. From your study group.** If you are working with a study group each of you can write a few questions, then pool them for a test. Take the test together, then grade and discuss your answers.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

1. Listen to Test Anxiety Tape, Step 5 and complete the log sheet.
2. Take one of your classes and write a 10 item practice test from the textbook material or class notes.

TEST ANXIETY TAPE LOG SHEET

Name _____ Step # _____ Date Completed _____

1. Describe how your body felt at the close of the relaxation segment:

2. Did you have any difficulty relaxing any portions of your body? If yes, what portion?

3. What type of scene did you use as your "neutral scene?"

4. Did you have any difficulty visualizing any of the scenes? If yes, what scene(s)?

5. While imagining the scenes did you feel any additional tension in your body? If yes, which scene(s)?

6. General Comments:

TEST ANXIETY REDUCTION

UNIT SEVEN

RATIONAL THINKING

A THEORY OF RATIONAL THINKING

An influential psychotherapist by the name of Albert Ellis discovered that many of his patients said things to themselves that contributed to their problems. It was their **irrational beliefs** (beliefs not based on the facts or reality) that were contributing to strong emotional reactions and negative behaviors. By helping his patients think in a more rational (based on the facts) manner, many of their problems were eliminated or reduced. From this experience he built a very simple explanation of this mental and emotional sequence, and called it his **A-B-C method**:

A-Activating Event. Something that triggers the whole sequence. It could be something inside our minds or bodies, or it could be in our environment.

B-Belief. These are the thoughts we have regarding the activating event.

C-Consequences. This is what happens as a result of A and B.

For example, the following is an example of a sequence of thinking:

A-Activating Event. While taking a difficult test a student begins to feel physically tense.

B-Belief. When I feel this way I always get into trouble, and I can't stop it.

C-Consequences. The student gets a full blown anxiety attack and goes completely blank.

Two students experiencing the same activating event can interpret that situation in two different ways:

A-Activating Event. A teacher assigns a major research paper for the class to complete in one month.

B-Belief. Student #1: I am never able to get things done on time, I'll probably fail again (irrational).

Student #2: That is a difficult assignment that will be hard and will require a lot of preparation. (rational)

C-Consequences. Student #1: Begins to procrastinate.
Student #2: Starts making an outline.

PRACTICE PAUSE #16

Try out the ABC's yourself. Complete the following:

A-Activating Event. You are taking a test and your mind starts going blank.

B-Beliefs. What are you thinking or saying to yourself?

C-Consequences. What usually happens when you think this way?

CHANGING THE IRRATIONAL BELIEFS

It is hard to stop ourselves from thinking irrational thoughts. We can't simply decide some morning to be rational and it will happen, it takes planning and practice.

One method is to **dispute the belief** and try to come up with an alternative belief. With our first example, the student who started feeling tense said to himself:

"When I feel this way I always get in trouble and I can't stop."

Disputing the Belief. Begin by asking a question about the belief that focuses on the facts, then answer the question:

"Do I always get in trouble when I am tense?"

"No, not every time. It is possible to feel tense, yet not get overly anxious."

--or--

"Why can't I stop?"

"Because I let the physical tension take over. If I can control the physical tension I can control the anxiety."

Part of the process is to plan in advance what you will do when the activating event is present. In doing that you can develop a set of positive or rational self-statements, such as:

"I have prepared well, I can pass this test."

"There probably will be some questions I can't answer, that doesn't mean I can't get a good grade."

"I don't have to get an 'A', I just have to pass it."

"People who complete the test early and leave don't necessarily know more than I do, they just work faster."

PRACTICE PAUSE #17

Close your eyes and do your deep breathing relaxation. Think about what happened during your last test. Take one of the negative experiences or reactions you had and answer the following:

A-Activating Event: _____

B-Beliefs or Irrational Self-Statements: _____

C-Consequences, what happened: _____

Now try to think how you might have done it differently.

D-Dispute. Ask a question that challenges your belief. Then try to answer that question.

Positive Self-Statements. Before and during your next test what are some things you could say to yourself:

Copy these self-statements on a 3 x 5 card and take them with you the next time you have a test. Read them aloud to yourself just before the test, and say them to yourself during the test if necessary.

Coping Strategies--A Review

In Unit Three the idea of using planned coping strategies was presented. These coping strategies are closely related to controlling your irrational thinking. The coping strategies approach assumes that **you cannot totally eliminate all the anxiety** in a testing situation, you have to accept it as a normal part of life. By anticipating the anxiety and planning what you are going to do, you will keep it at a manageable level. Lets try to review and summarize the coping strategies that were discussed and show how they relate to the approach of maintaining a positive and rational thought process:

a. **Physical Relaxation.** When your mind becomes aware that you are becoming tense you have two choices:

Irrational: "Here it comes, I can't stop it."

Rational: "Here it comes, it is time to relax."

By continuing to practice the quick relaxation methods you will be able to stop the physical sensations.

b. **Positive Self-Talk.** The positive self-talk is at the core of learning to control the irrational thoughts. Once you have identified some of the typical negative self-talk that you maintain, you can have your prepared set of positive statements. Repetition of the positive statements prevent the negative ones from taking over. In time the positive ones become the habit, rather than the negative.

c.) **Managing the Test Situation.** The rational element of this is to be saying to yourself, "I am in charge of the test and I control what happens." By using the test management approaches you reinforce this belief of being in charge by controlling the pace of the test, deciding in which order you answer questions, taking a break

as necessary, etc. Without this active stance you are forced to take the passive role of having it "done to you," which is an irrational way of approaching something this important.

In summary, it is not easy to change how you think overnight, it has taken you quite a few years to establish the patterns that you have and habits are hard to break. But by attacking and challenging a few of the negative thoughts that you have, you begin the process of change.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

1. Listen to Test Anxiety Tape, Step 6 and complete the log sheet.
2. Complete the "A-B-C" practice worksheet.

TEST ANXIETY TAPE LOG SHEET

Name _____ Step # _____ Date Completed _____

1. Describe how your body felt at the close of the relaxation segment:

2. Did you have any difficulty relaxing any portions of your body? If yes, what portion?

3. What type of scene did you use as your "neutral scene?"

4. Did you have any difficulty visualizing any of the scenes? If yes, what scene(s)?

5. While imagining the scenes did you feel any additional tension in your body? If yes, which scene(s)?

6. General Comments:

RATIONAL THINKING PRACTICE WORKSHEET

Name _____ Date _____

Practice using the Ellis "A-B-C" model by completing the following worksheet on two events that you select.

A-Activating Event (describe fully):

B-Belief (what you said to yourself):

C-Consequences (what feeling and actions resulted):

Disputing: (ask questions to challenge those beliefs, then answer)

A-Activating Event (describe fully):

B-Belief (what you said to yourself):

C-Consequences (what feeling and actions resulted):

Disputing: (ask questions to challenge those beliefs, then answer)

- A:
- B:
- C:
- D:

7. Describe your favorite coping strategy and why it works:

(The answers to the quiz are found at the end of the workbook)

REVIEW OF GOALS

As a homework assignment for Unit One you completed something called a "School Anxiety Self-Assessment." At the end of that you were asked to set three goals that you wanted to work on during the Anxiety Reduction Program. Go back to that self-assessment now. Copy the goals here and write a comment on how well you have accomplished them.

PRACTICE PAUSE #18

Please list the goals you set in unit one, and write a comment on how you have done in completion of the goal.

Goal #1. _____

Comment: _____

Goal #2. _____

Comment: _____

Goal #3. _____

Comment: _____

Summary and Review

Test Anxiety is both a physical and a mental experience, so this workbook has provided suggestions to address both. But as a result of these activities your anxiety will not disappear, it is only better controlled. You will need to continue with your activities and monitoring until you have certain actions as well established habits. The following summary will briefly state things that you can do to control your test anxiety. As you think back over each of these and the activities that you completed as part of this program, try to decide if you have a plan or goal of continuing work. If you feel you have more work to do in an area write down a specific goal for you to pursue.

1. PRACTICE REGULAR RELAXATION. One component of anxiety is an arousal of the sympathetic portion of the autonomic nervous system, forcing your body to relax during crisis situations will reduce the anxiety and will prevent things such as hyperventilation and panic.

Continuing Goal: _____

2. USE POSITIVE SELF-TALK. This is one of the ways to prevent the irrational thoughts from taking over.

Continuing Goal: _____

3. REGULARLY CHECK LIFE PRIORITIES. All the general life stressors you have will eventually impact your ability to perform in school.

Continuing Goal: _____

4. SET STUDY GOALS. Keeping a study calendar or plan will enable you to concentrate on one day at a time, and not worry about the whole term. Spreading out your study into small portions helps with memory.

Continuing Goal: _____

5. PRACTICE ACTIVE READING AND STUDY TECHNIQUES. Doing things with your reading material, rather than just reading it will keep you attentive and improve your ability to remember.

Continuing Goal: _____

6. EAT REGULARLY AND EAT GOOD FOODS. Having a regular consumption of good foods will enable you to perform at your physical and mental best.

Continuing Goal: _____

7. EXERCISE TO RELAX AND STRENGTHEN YOUR BODY. This enables you to better tolerate stressful situations.

Continuing Goal: _____

In conclusion, there is very little else that needs to be said other than you will significantly reduce your test anxiety if you continue to follow your goals. The systematic desensitization of test anxiety you completed (the test anxiety tapes) was a crutch that you used to get yourself started, now you should be able to rely on your own resources.

Good luck on your efforts!

QUIZ ANSWERS:

Unit One

1. Physical and Mental.
2. False
3. False
4. S,P,S,S,P,S
5. Self-Talk
6. (Many explanations acceptable)

Units Two and Three

1. a,c,f
2. b,d,e
3. d,e,f
4. a,c,e
5. a,c,f
6. Systematic Desensitization is a step by step breaking down of fears with relaxation preventing the anxiety.
7. Positive self-statements are things that we say to ourselves to keep us focused on the task and thinking positively. The work by preventing the negative thoughts from surfacing.
8. False, the effects of relaxation will stay with us for a while.

Units Four and Five

1. a,c,d
2. a,c,e
3. a,d,e
4. c,e,f
5. c,d,f
6. Distributive practice means to spread out your learning over time. This permits the information to go from short-term to long-term memory.
7. f
8. a,c
9. Resting Heart Rate, or Recovery to Resting Heart Rate

Units Six and Seven

1. A coping strategy is something that you plan in advance to use when anxiety strikes in a testing situation.
2. I,R,I,I,I,R
3. Reading for key words means going carefully through a question and underlining those words that are most important or likely to change the meaning of a question.
4. False
5. a,c,d,e
6. A-Activating Event, B-Belief, C-Consequences, D-Dispute
7. There are many ways to cope, what works best for you?