

SOLUTIONS

Volume 2

2014

TESTING IS HERE: *Managing Test Anxiety*

Spring is here, and we know what that means – academic testing is coming up. Whether it is the LEAP test or finals, there are a few tips that help reduce the anxiety of testing.

Test anxiety can cause significant emotional and physical distress that affects the performance on the test. Anxiety and fear are normal survival mechanisms and help us to be motivated. Out of control fear and anxiety produces negative emotions and uncomfortable physical responses that can cause poor performance.

Anxiety is often met with avoidance or overcompensating instead of addressing directly or managing the feelings. With some basic understanding and strategic action plans, you and your child can be on your way to deal with test anxiety. These tips can be used for other anxiety situations as well. You can have some control over anxiety and become happier and healthier.

Some Common Sense About Test Anxiety

- Test or performance anxiety is normal.
- It is not a mental illness and can be effectively reduced.
- Expectations about how you perform should match your ability and preparation.
- Past anxiety should be put back in the past.
- Negative thinking increases normal anxiety and can cause a person to become overwhelmed.
- Be prepared and have a time management strategies during the test (example: plan a deep breath and stretch every 5 minutes to refocus.)

Steps to Reduce Test Anxiety and Increase Performance

Think positively.

- I have a lot of tools and preparation to help me do my best.
- I can do this.
- Anxiety is normal and helpful to us.
- I can ask questions, relax, do my best, and re-focus.

Think realistically.

- It's ok to be anxious.
- It isn't the end of the world.
- I have handled anxiety in the past.
- I have to do this.

4-7-8 Deep Breathing and Relaxation.

- Start with exhaling – breathe OUT for 3 to 5 seconds
- breath IN deeply for 4 seconds
- HOLD breath for 7 seconds
- breathe OUT slow for 8 seconds
- Repeat IN, HOLD, OUT, 5 to 10 more times while relaxing

Use Positive Imagery.

Imagine a calming place and think about it for 1-to-2 minutes – a mental vacation can be incredibly calming!

Focus on what you can control.

Avoid alcohol and drugs.

Get help from a doctor or counselor if anxiety continues!





Why Not Use your EAP?

Most of you know that Solutions EAP provides a great resource for you and your organization- whether it is individual or family counseling, coaching services, a career-saver, a place to get information, referrals, or coping skills to deal with life's challenges. Sometimes the EAP is literally a life-saver. So why would some people who need it not use it?

There are 4 common reasons why an EAP is not utilized. Let's address each one:

Employees don't know about it. Hard to believe, right? We send out quarterly newsletters with informational articles, like this one. We can be found at our organizations' Health Fairs giving out information on our services. Sometimes we are on-site giving presentations and seminars on a wide variety of topics (drugs/ alcohol, stress management, harassment, and professional etiquette- just to name a few). We have posters hanging in your break rooms or near your Human Resources office. It seems like we would be hard to miss! But the truth is, if you see our information at a time when you don't need it- it may not stay on your radar.

The stigma of counseling. Some people are extremely self-conscious about reaching out for help. It may feel like a sign of weakness or be embarrassing to admit to problems in your life. When you take a look at the most common reasons people come to the EAP- stress from relationships, children, stepfamilies, jobs, finances, grief, substance uses, etc- we can all relate to being impacted by at least in one of these areas at some point in our lives.

They think they need to get permission. Most people want their personal business to be *their* personal business, no one else's. So if you think you need to clear it with your employer before accessing the EAP, you might be tempted to skip out all-together. Here's the good news: you don't need to tell or ask anyone. You just need to call us.

They worry about confidentiality. Unless you have given us written permission or you are a threat to yourself (or someone else), information about you will not leave our office. We do not send anything to employers about *who* is accessing our services. It is completely confidential. We even go so far as to monitor which company you are coming from and make our best efforts to minimize people "running into" each other. We also have two separate waiting areas to increase comfort.

Doing something you have never done before can be a scary thing, especially when it relates to telling someone you don't know about your personal life. We want you to feel comfortable at Solutions. If you have any questions about what we do or how we do it, please give us a call at 310-2822!



For caring and confidential help for personal and family problems, call Solutions Counseling & EAP.

710 W. Prien Lake Rd., Suite 103, Lake Charles, LA 70601
337-310-2822 www.solutions-eap.org