

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Managing Test Anxiety

1. Prepare for the exam ahead of time. Avoid “cramming.”
2. Maintain a healthy lifestyle including nutritious diet, regular exercise, good and consistent sleeping habit, and moderate social activities. Avoid drugs and alcohol.
3. Do not “cram” the day of the exam. Come early to the exam. Avoid anxious classmates. In short, avoid anxiety provoking situations and people and try to relax.
4. During the exam, look over the test. Organize your time. Work on the easiest questions first. If you cannot answer a question, skip it and come back to it later.
5. Focus on the exam not the grade.
6. Change the way you view the exam. It is only a test. Do not magnify the importance of a grade.
7. Challenge your irrational beliefs and negative thinking such as “I am stupid,” “I am going to flunk,” or “I will not graduate,” etc. Counter them with positive messages such as “I don’t have to be perfect,” “I am prepared for the exam,” or “I can do this.”
8. Take a few deep breaths: inhale for four seconds, hold your breath for six seconds, and exhale for four seconds.
9. Practice progressive muscle relaxation.
10. Ask for the instructor’s permission to go outside to get fresh air, to get a drink, to stretch your legs, or to go to the bathroom.
11. Envision a peaceful scene that tends to relax you.
12. Think of a reward that you would give yourself after the exam. Envision it.