# How to Handle Test Anxiety

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# Nursing School is Scary!

- High stakes:
  - Time
  - Money
  - Emotional effort
- 24/7 commitment precludes other activities
  - Isolation
  - Worry

#### Recognize the Stressors

- Time is limited
- Prep Time:
  - Your brain can handle only so much at a time, then it needs a rest
  - Your body, too
- Testing time limits:
  - 72 seconds per item (NCLEX)
  - 60 in nursing school (except math 120)

# Accept What You Cannot Change

- Life Skill it's no use wasting time thinking about things you cannot change
- Focus on the future
- Focus on what you have control over
- Promise yourself you will develop good mental habits

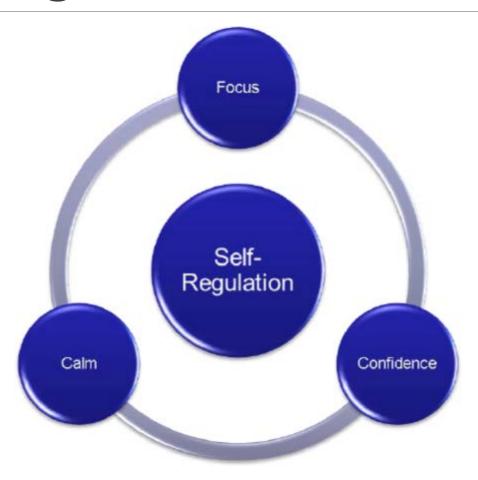
#### Understand the Problem

- Test anxiety is a response to a perceive threat
- Fight or Flight
- Our bodies cannot tell the difference between a psychosocial threat and a physical one
  - Sabre-toothed tiger
  - Car wreck
  - Loss of a romantic partner
  - Loss of a chance at a job

# Recognize the Symptoms

- Preparing for the Test
  - Loss of focus while studying
  - Sleep disturbances
- During the Test
  - Nausea
  - Sweaty palms
  - Difficulty concentrating
  - Difficulty remembering

# Self-Regulation



#### Think About Your Last Test

- Anxious before you began the test?
- Upset tummy?
- Sinking in your seat?
- Heart rate elevated?
- Difficulty focusing?
- Fidgeting (inability to sit still)

#### Anxiety Reduction

- Lean back in the chair and take a deep breath (diaphragmatic breathing)
- Eat something
- Mantra (positive self-talk)
- Relaxation exercises
  - Physical
  - Mental
- Visualize success (guided imagery)

### Successful People

- Practice self-regulation
- Use positive self-talk
- Breathe
- Find their calming center

#### Self-Reflection Takes Time

- Pause a moment
- Consider: What is working well?
- Consider: What is not working well?
- Keep doing what is working
- How can you change what is not working?



#### Plan to Improve Each Time

- Reflect about each test
- Identify any barriers and make a plan to remove them
- Meet with your study group or instructor to go over the items you missed
- Review/remediate each question

#### Study Environment

- Did you have any noise around you?
- Did you have your phone on?
- Did you surf the Web?
- Did you drink at the computer desk?
- Did you eat at the computer desk?
- Did you use your "Please Do Not Disturb" sign?

## Do You Change Answers?

- How many times did you change your answer from correct to incorrect?
- What patterns are you able to identify?
- Unless you misread the question go with your gut

#### Is Timing an Issue?

Do you see a correlation between how long you stayed on a question and whether you answered it correctly or incorrectly?

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- Did you run out of time?
- Keep an eye on the clock
- Two minute rule pick one and move on

#### Timing Suggestions

- Once you eliminate an answer, do not go back.
- Ask whether the information you are thinking about is actually in the question.
- Note how often you know the correct answer but you don't choose it.
- Pat yourself on the back and have confidence in your answers.

#### How to Build Confidence

- We gain confidence by being successful
- Practice makes perfect
- Taking risks shows us what we can do and what we need to work on
- Listen to constructive criticism and ignore the unconstructive kind

#### R-E-S-P-E-C-T!

- Nursing is the most trusted profession
- Be proud of your choice
- Commit to lifelong learning, integrity, and constant progress
- Post your goals
  - Short-term
  - Intermediate term
  - Long-term