Student Counseling Services
Guide to Reducing Test Anxiety

1. Prepare ahead of time
   - Get adequate sleep the night before the exam.
   - Eat a nutritious breakfast and bring a snack for long exams.
   - Reduce stress by engaging in physical exercise the night before the exams or the morning of the exam.
   - Always continue your daily routines before & during exam times.
   - Use positive visualization to imagine yourself doing well on the exam. For example, visualize the following: you are in the classroom, seated in your chair with the test in front of you... You know the material on the exam... You are answering questions correctly... You feel confident during the exam... You complete the exam and leave the room feeling proud of yourself.

2. Directly before the exam
   - Don’t go into the exam room too early. Hearing others talking can increase your anxiety about the material.
   - Avoid spending time with anxious people and classmates.
   - Stay away from others’ discussions of the material prior to the exam. This can cause you to doubt what you studied.
   - Continue to practice visualization technique.
   - Repeat positive phrases to yourself. For example: “I can do it,” “I have prepared to the best of my ability,” “I am a bright and capable person,” “I am a good & valued ‘person,” etc.
   - Avoid negative thoughts such as “I did not study enough,” “I am going to fail this,” “I am not smart enough to be in this program,” etc.

3. During the exam
   - Continue practicing calming phrases during the exam. For example, “My grade on this test will not permanently affect my future,” “I’m going to feel calm, relaxed, and get back to the test,” “I can do this,” “I can achieve my goals,” “I am in control of my life.”
   - Don’t worry about temporary memory lapses. Skip that item and return to it later. Sometimes subsequent items will jog your memory.
   - It is very important not to worry about items you think you might be missing. This will only serve to increase your anxiety and further harm your performance.
   - If your mind begins to race or if you are confused or feel dizzy, take two slow breaths, put your pencil down and stretch out.
   - If your anxiety is very high and your concentration is poor, take a moment to return to the positive visualization you have been practicing.
   - If needed, walk to the bathroom to stretch.

4. Keep it in perspective
   - Grades are not a measure of your intelligence, self worth, creativity, or what you will contribute to society.
   - Grades only measure how well you take tests. They do not always accurately reflect how well you know the material or what type of future doctor, pharmacist, dentist, nurse, or professional you will be.

Contact OU-Tulsa Student Counselor for more information or to make an appointment to improve your study habits. (918) 660-3109.