

Become aware of what you say to yourself. Try writing negative thoughts and then replacing each one with a positive statement.

### The Day of the Exam:

- ❖ Eat a good breakfast
- ❖ Arrive on time
- ❖ Avoid last-minute cramming
- ❖ Avoid talking with classmates before the test. Their anxiety can be contagious!
- ❖ Before the test, distract yourself with something relaxing or take a walk
- ❖ Control negative thoughts
- ❖ Sit away from distractions
- ❖ Do relaxation or breathing exercises

### During Exam

#### First Impression

- ❖ Read the directions first, review the entire exam, and then read the directions again.

### Tackling Exam Questions

- ❖ Essay Questions: construct an outline to organize and avoid rambling, repetition, and missed information
- ❖ Short-Answer Questions: answer only what is asked and keep it short and to the point
- ❖ Multiple Choice Questions: read all alternatives then eliminate those that are incorrect
- ❖ Watch for qualifying words – “only”, “always”, “most”

### Possible Fears

- ❖ Difficulty with a question: show the material that you know
- ❖ Thinking that you are unable to finish the exam: concentrate on those portions that you can answer well.
- ❖ No time to review exam: review your answers as you go and recheck answers only if you have time

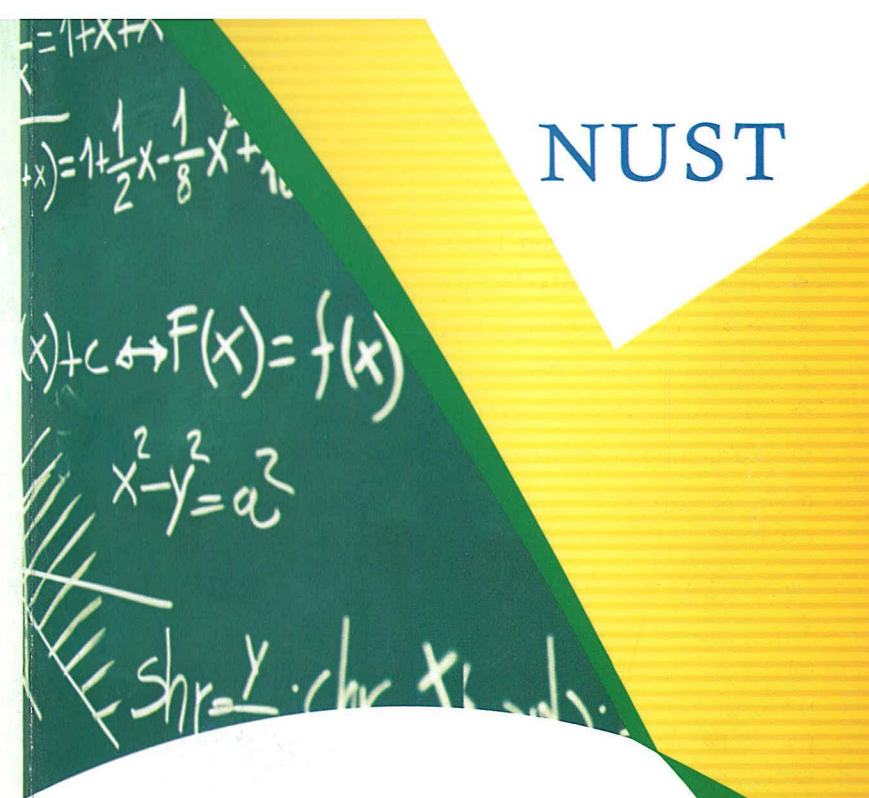
### Other Techniques to Help Reduce Test Anxiety:

- ❖ Visualize yourself doing well and reaching your goals.
- ❖ Aim for an A level of understanding. Do not overprotect yourself by saying you will be lucky to get a C, so why study more?
- ❖ Try not to compare yourself with others.
- ❖ Become an expert in learning what is going well and what you can do to improve.
- ❖ Reward yourself after studying instead of getting involved in avoidance behaviors.
- ❖ Practice relaxing so that relaxation becomes an automatically learned response.
- ❖ Aim for a state of relaxed concentration. When you concentrate, you have all of your energy focused on your work with none wasted on worry.
- ❖ Take care of yourself by eating well and getting enough sleep. Fresh fruits and vegetables are often recommended to reduce stress.
- ❖ Plan time to exercise regularly and do it.
- ❖ Do not try to do last minute review.

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NUST Centre for Counseling and Career Advisory (C<sup>3</sup>A)

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## EXAM ANXIETY



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## During Exams, Do You...

- ❖ Feel like you "go blank"?
- ❖ Become frustrated?
- ❖ Find yourself thinking "I cannot do this" or "I am stupid"?
- ❖ Feel like the room is closing in on you?
- ❖ Feel your heart racing or find it difficult to breathe?
- ❖ Suddenly "know" the answers after turning in the test?
- ❖ Score much lower than on homework or papers?
- ❖ Forgetting whatever you remembered?

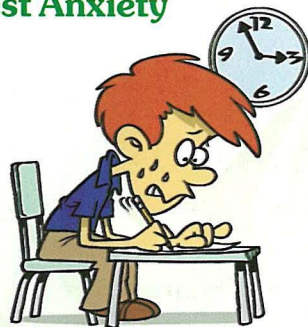
If you answer "yes" to some of these questions, you may be experiencing test or performance anxiety.

## What is Test Anxiety?

Test anxiety is basically a fear of taking tests. When faced with taking an exam everyone feels nervous about how he/she will perform. Some stress is considered to be a motivator and helps you to be alert and do well in exams; however, some people experience overwhelming feelings of worry and fear. Before and during the exam, they may be unable to concentrate, find themselves easily distracted, and experience certain physical, emotional and cognitive symptoms which can adversely effect their performance. Sometimes students forget or "block out" all of the material they have studied. A student with test anxiety may do poorly on an exam, even though he or she may know the material very well.

## Physical Symptoms of Test Anxiety

- ❖ Nausea
- ❖ Headache
- ❖ Rapid heart rate
- ❖ Sweating
- ❖ Dizziness
- ❖ Tense muscles
- ❖ Dry mouth
- ❖ Shortness of breath



## Emotional Symptoms of Test Anxiety

Excessive feelings of:

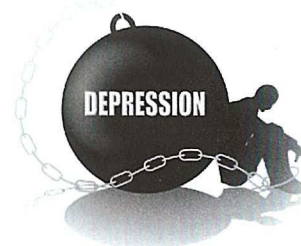
- ❖ Fear/Panic

- ❖ Anger
- ❖ Irritability
- ❖ Fidgeting/pacing
- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Avoidance/need to escape

## Cognitive Symptoms of Test Anxiety

### Difficulty concentrating

- ❖ Racing thoughts
- ❖ Negative self-talk
- ❖ "Blank out" during test
- ❖ Remembering forgotten material after test is over
- ❖ Overreacting or placing excessive importance on one test (worry about future)



## What Causes Test Anxiety?

### Insufficient Exam Preparation

- ❖ Cramming the night before the exam
- ❖ Inadequate time management
- ❖ Inadequate study skills or study habits

### Worrying About...

- ❖ Past exam performance
- ❖ Poor present performance
- ❖ Negative consequences of poor performance
- ❖ How others are doing on the exam compared to you
- ❖ Exam anxiety indicators themselves

### Stimulant Use

- ❖ Caffeine
- ❖ Nicotine
- ❖ Amphetamines
- ❖ Drugs



## Dealing with Anxiety

The first step is to distinguish between two types of anxiety. If your anxiety is a direct result of lack of preparation, consider it a

normal, rational reaction. However, if you are adequately prepared but still panic, "blank out", and/or overreact, your reaction is not rational. While both of these anxieties may be considered normal (anyone can have them) it is certainly helpful to know how to overcome their effects.

## Before Exam

Preparation is the best way to minimize anxiety. Consider the following:

- ❖ Study a little every day
- ❖ Avoid procrastination
- ❖ Do not cram the night before
- ❖ Review past tests
- ❖ Practice taking tests using testing conditions (time limits, etc.)
- ❖ Work in a study group. Make up test questions for yourself or classmates.
- ❖ Over learn material. Continue to review it, even if you think you know it.
- ❖ Get as much rest as you can; 6-8 hours a night are recommended. Even if you cannot sleep, give your body a chance to rest.
- ❖ Learn and practice relaxation and deep breathing techniques.
- ❖ Research shows that the self-talk of test-anxious students almost always tends to be negative and self-defeating. e.g., "Everyone in this class is smarter and faster than I am".

