

Test Anxiety Tips for Teachers

For many youth, taking tests can be an anxiety-provoking task. They might worry about how they will do on the test, whether or not they prepared enough, or how their grades will be impacted. These concerns are typically short-lived and do not negatively impact their well-being, self-esteem, or day-to-day life. In fact, some anxiety can be a helpful motivator to do well on the test. For other youth, however, test anxiety can persist, causing significant distress and impairment.



Behavioral symptoms

- Asking for reassurance about test performance
- Expressing doubts
- Delaying start of test
- Difficulty finishing test



Physical symptoms

- Shortness of breath
- Heart pounding
- Headaches
- Stomachaches



Cognitive functioning

- Brain fog
- Second-guessing answers
- Memory impairment

What can teachers do to help?

Help develop good study habits.

Encourage students to break content into smaller, more easily digestible chunks and discourage last-minute cramming.

Provide grading opportunities for more than just tests.

Allow students to demonstrate their learning in various formats: take home assignments, group projects, presentations, etc.

Encourage effort and discourage perfectionism.

Highlight and reward hard work instead of placing emphasis on grades achieved.

When does test anxiety become problematic?

Duration: Does the worry happen only right before and/or during the test or does it start way in advance?

Persistence: Does the worry stop shortly after the test or does it last for much longer?

Distress: Is the worry only mild or does it significantly increase when thinking about the test (e.g., crying episodes, feeling overwhelmed, increased irritability)?

Impairment: Does the worry about the test get in the way of actually studying and taking the test?