Student Strategies For Managing Classroom and Test Anxiety

1. Create a set of positive self-talk statements to use while you study and when taking tests. If you feel yourself starting to panic, use thought-stopping (yelling to yourself “Stop!” or something similar) to stop the negative thought process. Then say some positive things to yourself to replace the negative thoughts.

2. If you cannot get away from negative thoughts, try expanding on them to the point of absurdity. Go from “I’m going to fail this test” to “I’m going to fail out of school” to “I will be a failure the rest of my life.” Expanding fears like this can help detach you from them by realizing how unrealistic they are.

3. Develop a personalized set of relaxation exercises that relax particular sets of muscles which get tense the most. Use these exercises while you are studying for the exam, not just during the exam itself. (That way the body associates relaxation with the material you are studying.)

4. Think up a nice scene to visualize when you feel yourself getting anxious. This could be a scene of you succeeding at the task-at-hand, or a neutral scene with or without you in it.

5. Develop strong test-preparation skills. Use your school’s learning center to get materials on test-preparation skills and read them. Test anxiety is frequently caused by poor preparation!!!!

6. Remember, the goal is not to avoid anxiety, but to manage anxiety so it helps you, not hinders you.

7. If you find yourself beginning to panic (during a test), stop working on the test, use your tools (relaxation, visualization, self-talk, etc.) and remind yourself you know how to deal with this panic now.

8. Detach your self-esteem from your academic performance. You are much more than just a student. Think about what is special about you as a person, separate from the letter grade on that test, and remind yourself liberally of your gifts and talents. This itself can decrease anxiety by putting the current academic situation into perspective.