

# Anxiety Exam Stress Transcript

**Narrator:** When there's a big test coming up like an exam or a presentation, it's likely you'll start to get worried about it. A few nerves can help keep you sharp and focused, but too many might make it hard to concentrate and you won't do your best on the day. If these anxious thoughts begin to overwhelm you or you find it hard to switch them off, then it's good to know some ways to overcome those feelings and not let them slow you down.

Nobody wants to do badly on a test, or forget their lines in a play, or have people see them mess up during a presentation. It's easy to start worrying before a big performance, sometimes even weeks or months in advance. You might start to notice you feel differently: headaches, shaking, nausea, butterflies in your stomach, your heart beating faster, feeling dizzy. You might start thinking differently, you can get locked into replaying your fears in your head over and over. You remember what it's like to feel the pressure of time running out, or the uncertainty of not knowing if you've given the right answer, or feeling like you really didn't prepare enough. Thinking back over bad experiences only makes the anxiety build and you worry even more about the next test. Your negative thoughts might extend to how you see yourself. Thoughts like, "I'm not good enough, I'm not smart, I'm never going to get this right, everyone else is better than me, I just can't do this, I'm a failure." These thoughts and feelings can have an effect on your behavior too. It might seem easier to avoid worrying about your test by playing computer games, scrolling on social media, or even sleeping when you should be studying. This avoidance behavior only makes things worse when test day comes around and you realize that you're just not ready.

Avoiding thinking about the test and studying feels good in the short term, but you need to have a plan. It's the first step to dealing with the stress that comes with a big test. Being as prepared as you can be for an exam or presentation will give you less to worry about. If you start to have negative thoughts and fears about failing, talk back to those thoughts, tell them that you've studied and you'll be fine. It can help to plan a study schedule so you don't feel like you need to study everything all at once. Doing work in small chunks over multiple days will ensure you can fit in breaks to relax between study sessions.

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Remember that we all work well in different ways. Maybe you prefer reading things over or drawing a visual chart to show the connections between concepts. Lots of people find talking through the material to someone else, helps them remember it. Use the methods that will help you to feel in control.

You can also talk to your teacher if you're not sure what you're going to be tested on. They can take away some of the uncertainty and point you in the right direction so you know you're studying the right things.

Making sure you eat well is an important part of the plan. You won't be able to get as much done if your body is running low on fuel.

Even with a plan, you might still find yourself in an anxious zone. Mindfulness is a great way to bring yourself out of that and back into the moment. There are lots of useful exercises you can try, but basic mindfulness is simply noticing the present moment. Engage your senses to focus on your surroundings, noises, smells, what you're touching. Pay close attention to your own body and specifically your breathing. Just sit in a room and listen for the sounds that you can hear. When your mind starts to wander off to how much study you've got to do, or what's for dinner, or checking your notifications, gently bring your thoughts back to the noises you can hear in the room, or to your chest rising and falling as you breathe. Mindfulness is useful to allow your mind and body a break from worrying about the future and it will help slow your heart rate and relax your muscles. You can do it at any time and any place to make your worries feel more manageable.

You can also get some of that anxious energy out of your body with exercise or other physical activities. Use stress balls or fidget spinners, anything that helps release some of the tension you might be feeling.

Even if you study and prepare well, testing situations are still going to be stressful. Your thoughts and your body might still be afraid when it's time to perform, but managing your anxious thoughts and feelings will mean that when the test comes along, you can focus on doing your best, and know you'll be able to cope, whatever happens.