MANAGING TEST ANXIETY
What is test anxiety?

- Physical symptoms
- Feelings
- Thoughts
- Behaviors
Do you have test anxiety?

1. Can you recall the information you forget when you leave the exam?
2. Are you stressed or anxious during the test?
Why do we have anxiety?

Optimal Stress Curve

Maximum Performance

- Good
- Poor

Performance

- Low
- Moderate
- High

Stress (Emotional Arousal)

- Low (underaroused, bored)
- Moderate (optimally aroused)
- High (overaroused, overwhelmed)

Eustress: Poor performance

Distress: Poor performance
What can you do about anxiety?
Alter your actions

- Do something else during the exam.
- Practice guided imagery.
- Engage in progressive relaxation.
- Breathe.
- Change how you take the exam.
- Change where you take the exam.
Before the Exam

- Create a study plan.
- Rehearse taking the test (practice exams and imaginary exams).
- Study in the exam space.
- Plan out what you need for the test.
- Plan time for yourself away from studying.
- DON’T study at least 1 hour prior to the exam.
During the exam

- Write down any information you are apt to forget when you first get the exam.
- Preview the exam.
- Read all of the instructions.
- Plan a timed strategy for the exam.
  - Prioritize high point items.
  - Answer what you know first.
  - Then answer what you half know.
  - Then answer the tough questions.
- Don’t forget to use every tool available to you (e.g. calculator, periodic table, etc.).
If the anxiety starts to creep in...

- Think about the exam as a conversation between you and your professor.
- Revisit your imaginary exam.
- Breathe.
- Sharpen your pencil.
- Move on to another question.
- Substitute simple language for complex terms.
Change your thoughts

- Identify your thoughts
- Evaluate your thoughts
  - Are my thoughts accurate and/or factual?
- Respond and challenge your thoughts
- Relax
Challenging your thoughts

- What is the evidence that the thought(s) is/are true? Not true?
- Is there an alternative explanation?
- What’s the worst that could happen?
- Could I live through it?
- What’s the best that can happen?
- What’s the most realistic outcome?
- What are the consequences of adhering to the distorted thinking?
- What would happen if I changed my thinking?
- If (friend’s name) were in this situation what would I tell him/her?