

Four-Step Model for Reducing Test Anxiety

1. **Catch** yourself when you're having destructive thoughts.
 - When you become aware that you're feeling anxious before or during a test, ask yourself, "What am I saying to myself about this test?" For example, the negative thought might be, "Oh, no – I'm going to fail."
2. **Challenge** the validity of your thoughts.
 - Ask yourself, "Is this thought accurate?" "Is it helpful?"
 - If you determine that your thoughts are not accurate or helpful, actively challenge/refute them. For example, "I don't know for a fact that I'm going to fail this test, and it won't help me to keep telling myself that I will fail."
3. **Change** the thoughts to reflect a more positive, supportive stance.
 - Try to modify the negative thoughts or replace them with ones that are encouraging rather than discouraging.
 - For example, "This is a difficult test, but I'm going to do my best and not beat myself up about the things I don't know."
4. **Relax!** Your body feels the stress of your initial unhelpful thoughts, so try to release the tension by using some relaxation techniques.
 - Tense various muscle groups for five seconds, then relax the muscles in an exaggerated fashion. Do this throughout your body.
 - Take slow, deep breaths. Visualize yourself breathing in relaxation and exhaling stress and tension.
 - Visualize yourself in a calm, peaceful setting and let the relaxation of that scene wash over you.