

Reducing Math Anxiety and Stress

Math Anxiety

Math anxiety is a fear of failing to do the math correctly. The more frustrated and anxious a student becomes, the greater the possibility of “drawing a blank.”

Causes of math anxiety include

- the pressure of having a time limit on a test
- a lack of confidence

Take the following steps to help overcome math anxiety:

- Try to have a positive attitude.
- Ask questions in class in order to understand the math fully. The more you understand, the more confident you will be. If you find this to be a difficult task, make an appointment to see your teacher outside of class in order to discuss your questions.
- Practise math regularly, especially when you are having difficulties. When you have struggled and succeeded, your confidence level will improve.
- Know how to get help when you need it. Work with classmates, go to your teacher for extra help, or arrange for a tutor. Sometimes, it just takes a different approach in order to understand the concept.
- If you have had a negative past experience with learning mathematics, talk to your school counsellor about strategies to overcome the impact this experience has had on your learning. Discuss appropriate ways to deal with stress with the goal to improve your test scores.

Stress

We all experience stress in our personal lives to a lesser or greater degree. Stress affects our brains by causing memory problems and cell damage. It can shrink and age our brains. In general, stress takes a toll on our overall health.

Group Work

Study the list of strategies to alleviate stress. In groups of four, brainstorm and add to the list.

How to Alleviate Stress
Reduce the noise level around you.
Take some deep breaths.
Calm yourself by asking, “How important will this be in a month, a year, or ten years?”
Reduce the amount of caffeine you may ingest from cola products or coffee.



Name: _____ Date: _____

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Class Activity

Relaxation techniques can help the body and mind return to a balanced state and reverse some of the effects of stress. Try this relaxation exercise. The teacher or a student should lead the class through the following meditation. It should be read in a gentle voice, with pauses after each sentence.

*Sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Relax all your body parts. Take very slow, deep breaths. Feel your body surrounded by the energy in the air around you. **As you take in each breath, pull some of that energy into your feet, up your legs, your body, and to the top of your head. As you let out each breath, move that energy down your head, down your shoulders, down your arms, and out of your hands.** Focus on moving the energy in this manner every time you inhale and exhale. (Repeat the bolded text.) Now, focus on and breathe into parts of your body that you feel are not completely relaxed. Allow each of these body parts to “melt.” Now, for the next two minutes of quiet time, use your intention and your deep, energy-moving breaths to bring yourself to a completely relaxed state.*

Once you have completed this meditation, you may wish to try a similar one on your own before or during a math test or any other stressful situation. Even 30 seconds of relaxation and deep breathing may help bring your mind back into a state of balance and improve test performance.

