

# Test Anxiety: Recognize Your Triggers

## EXTERNAL TRIGGERS

<b>Visual Triggers</b> <b>The sight of...</b>	<b>Auditory Triggers</b> <b>The sound of ....</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students getting up and turning in their tests</li><li>• A room becoming more and more empty</li><li>• People turning the pages of their exams</li><li>• The clock ticking away</li></ul> <p><b>My visual triggers:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pencils dropping on the table</li><li>• Backpacks being zipped up</li><li>• Desks moving around</li><li>• The sound of clocks ticking</li><li>• The door opening and closing as people leave</li><li>• The sound of people outside of the classroom</li></ul> <p><b>My auditory triggers:</b></p>
<p><b>Possible Solutions:</b></p> <p>Choose your seat wisely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What seat might be exposed to the least amount of distractions?</li><li>• Perhaps sitting right up front might prevent you from scanning the room for distractions.</li><li>• Sitting away from a window might be wise for those who feel they are easily distracted.</li><li>• Avoid the temptation to look up often. Stay focused on the exam in front of you.</li></ul> <p><b>Strategies that will work for you:</b></p>	<p><b>Possible Solutions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use ear Drown out sound by sitting near a noisy fan or vent.</li><li>• Use ear plugs.</li><li>• Ask the instructor if you can listen to music while taking your exam.</li></ul> <p><b>Strategies that will work for you:</b></p>

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## INTERNAL TRIGGERS

### Feelings are a by-product of what you think...

The meaning of an event lies not within the event itself but rather with the interpretation of the event. Examine the negative thoughts you are having so you can change what you're feeling. Recognize every time a negative thought creeps into your head. STOP the negative talk and analyze your thought.

<u><b>I find myself thinking....</b></u>	<u><b>I find myself feeling...</b></u>	<u><b>I am physically feeling ...</b></u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much brighter the other students are than me</li> <li>• Of the consequences of failing</li> <li>• I won't ever graduate from college</li> <li>• Why bother</li> <li>• About the time limit for the exam</li> <li>• No matter how much I prepare, I never will do well on tests</li> <li>• The teacher should offer more papers than tests</li> <li>• I can't concentrate because there are so many thoughts racing through my head</li> </ul> <p><b>My negative thoughts:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Panic</li> <li>• Depressed</li> <li>• Nervous</li> <li>• Disappointed</li> <li>• Worry</li> <li>• Angry</li> <li>• Irritated</li> <li>• Frustrated</li> </ul> <p><b>My negative feelings:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racing/pounding heart</li> <li>• Rapid breathing</li> <li>• Perspiration</li> <li>• Knots in the stomach</li> <li>• Change in appetite</li> <li>• Shaking, trembling, muscle aches</li> <li>• Numbness/tingling</li> <li>• Headaches</li> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Feeling too hot or too cold</li> <li>• Crying</li> <li>• Clammy hands</li> <li>• Grinding teeth</li> </ul> <p><b>My negative physical feelings:</b></p>

### **Strategies for ending negative thoughts:**

Is your thought a true statement? If not, remind yourself of your positive work you've done to prepare for the exam and the work you're putting into combating your anxiety.

Repeat some normalizing statements to yourself: I'm prepared for this; I can handle the situation; This feeling is normal and can be overcome; I'm in control; I'm going to focus on my strengths.

Focus on things you've done to prepare and the body of knowledge you've developed.

### **My strategies for stopping negative thoughts:**

If you have thoughts that do leave room for reality-based doubts (example - I haven't prepared adequately for the test), these are areas you need to address. Enlist the help of your support network (family, friends, advisors, instructors) when confronting these issues.