Feeling Anxious

Healthy anxiety is a warning that danger may lie ahead. This unsettling feeling alerts us to prepare wisely for future challenges or difficult times. Many Victims, however, exaggerate future threats, replacing healthy concern with paralyzing anxiety. Thus, vigilance is replaced by an inability to employ rational thought, make wise choices, or take appropriate actions. Creators become conscious of anxiety through their body’s clear signals, especially shallow breathing, increased pulse rate, and “butterflies” in the stomach. With this awareness, Creators can pause and wisely choose positive actions to take. Two areas where anxiety hinders academic performance are on tests and class presentations. Here are some wise choices to avoid being hijacked by anxiety:

**Choose new behaviors:** As with anger, allow anxiety-producing chemicals to recede. Here’s how:

* *Relax.* Slowing down helps you reclaim mastery of your thoughts and resulting emotions (but don’t spend this time obsessing about the original cause of your anxiety).
* *Breathe deeply.* Anxiety and fear constrict. Keep oxygen flowing through your body to reverse their psychological impact.
* *Do yoga.* YouTube has helpful yoga videos for beginners. Breathe, stretch, watch anxiety lessen.
* *Prepare thoroughly.* If your anxiety relates to an upcoming performance (e.g., job interview or test), prepare thoroughly and then prepare some more. Confidence diminishes anxiety.
* *Bring a meaningful item from home to a test.* For example, bring a picture of your family.
* *Request accommodations.* If needed, get help by visiting your college’s disability services to request special arrangements, such as a longer time to take tests.

**Choose new thoughts:** Changing our thoughts soothes irrational concerns. Here’s how:

* *Detach.* Once you have prepared fully, there is no more you can do. Worrying won’t help. So do everything you can to ready yourself for a challenge, then trust the outcome to take care of itself.
* *Reframe.* Ask yourself, “If the worst happens, can I live with it?” If you fail a test, for example, you won’t like it, but could you live with it? (If not, consider seeking help to regain a healthy perspective).
* *Visualize success.* Create a mental movie of yourself achieving your ideal outcomes. Play the movie over and over until the picture of success becomes stronger than your anxiety.
* *Assume the best.* Victims often create anxiety through negative assumptions. Suppose your professor says, “I want to talk to you in my office.” Resist assuming that the conversation concerns something bad. In fact, if you’re going to assume, why not assume it’s something wonderful!
* *Distract yourself.* As with anger, consciously replacing anxious thoughts with pleasant ones will help stop the anxiety. So involve yourself with engaging activities that will take your thoughts on a pleasant diversion.
* *Face the fear.* Do what you fear, in spite of your anxiety. Most often you will learn that your fear was just a False Expectation Appearing Real.
* *Accept your mistakes.* Remind yourself that making mistakes is okay. In fact, it’s one of the best ways to learn important lessons.
* *Say your affirmation.* When anxious thoughts creep into your mind, replace them with the positive words of your affirmation.

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