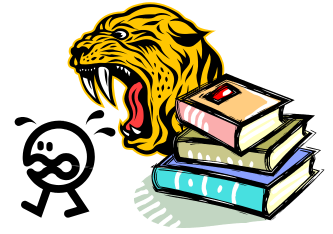


Stress-Buster Strategies: Talk Back to Academic Anxiety!

What is Anxiety?

- ◆ Natural human response to threat
- ◆ Invokes physiological “fight “or flight” response
 - increased heart rate; adrenaline flow; rapid, shallow breathing
 - decreased access to cognitive
- ◆ Survival value, if threat is real (e.g. a predator) and life-threatening



The Problem of Anxiety

- ◆ Most of what we perceive as threatening in modern life is **not** a life-or-death threat requiring “fight” or “flight”
- ◆ In these cases, the anxiety response is not helpful in coping with the perceived threat. Instead, the anxiety itself adds to, or even becomes, the problem
- ◆ This happens when:
 - 1. We overestimate the threat**
 - 2. We underestimate our resources to deal with it**

How to Talk Back to Academic Anxiety

- ◆ “Talk down” the threat! Look it squarely in the face. Is it really as terrifying as you think it is? Assess the situation realistically and rationally. A test is just a test. Your whole future is never at stake
- ◆ Breathe! Practice simple, deep breathing exercises regularly so when anxiety hits, you can regain control over your body's automatic stress response. (See www.yorku.ca/cds/pcs/resources.html for relaxation exercises)
- ◆ Practice good self-care no matter how stressed you are, with proper rest and food, regular exercise and/or a stress-reducing routine like yoga or meditation
- ◆ Recognize and strengthen your resources to deal with the perceived threat
 - You are *not* helpless! You are more resourceful than you think!
 - Use positive self-talk. Shift focus away from “worst-case” thinking into more realistic thoughts (“*It’s just a test. I’ve passed lots of tests before. I can do it again.*”)
 - Access your resources (eg Learning Skills Services; The Writing Department). Build your academic skills. Learn from everything—both good experiences and bad
 - Remind yourself of past successes and identify the skills and strengths you can bring forward from those accomplishments, to help you now
- ◆ If stress-reducing strategies don’t help and your anxiety interferes with your ability to function, get help: see your doctor and/or seek counselling

