

## The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns

### Helping Your Kids Survive End Of Year Testing

from the American Counseling Association

Today's students are facing more tests than ever. While taking course exams, or state-mandated standardized tests, may never be fun, there are many things every student can do to minimize the stress and maximize test performance. The following advice can help any student:

- **Plan ahead:** Last minute cramming seldom improves test grades, but does raise test anxiety. Instead, start your studying early and spread it over a number of days.

- **Anticipate:** No test covers everything about a subject. Look for areas that are most important and most likely to be covered on a test as you review your notes or text book. Think about what the teacher has emphasized. If you've been given a study guide, use it. Pay attention when a teacher reviews material – those are the things most likely to be tested.

- **Be rested.** It's just common sense. Getting enough rest lets you feel better and will help your mind do a much better job of pulling up those obscure facts you forgot were even there.

- **Eat healthy.** Your brain requires good nutrition to do its job. Skipping breakfast impairs brain function. Eating a healthy breakfast improves it. Avoid junk food and foods loaded with sugar. Crashing from a sugar high during a test won't help your grades. And limit caffeine. Coffee, caffeinated soda and energy drinks may make you feel alert, but can also leave you jittery and nervous, and make concentrating more difficult.

- **Stay focused.** Taking a test is rarely enjoyable. Your mind wants to wander. Don't let it. Keep your eyes on your paper, ignore classroom distractions and pay attention to the test material.

- **Relax.** In the days before a test, practice relaxing by closing your eyes, taking a deep breath and thinking positive thoughts about how well you're going to do. Do the same thing at test time. If you get nervous during the test, take a few deep breaths and actually think about that air flowing into and out of your lungs. Then focus calmly back on the test. Remind yourself it's only a test, not life or death.

Doing well on tests isn't magic. It takes planning, studying and relaxing. But if doing all that doesn't help, the student may suffer from severe test anxiety. In such cases, the school counselor, or an outside professional counselor, can provide help in overcoming the

problem.

*"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcornet@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcornet@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org).*

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