



Presented by Stephanie Kinnare, Ph.D.

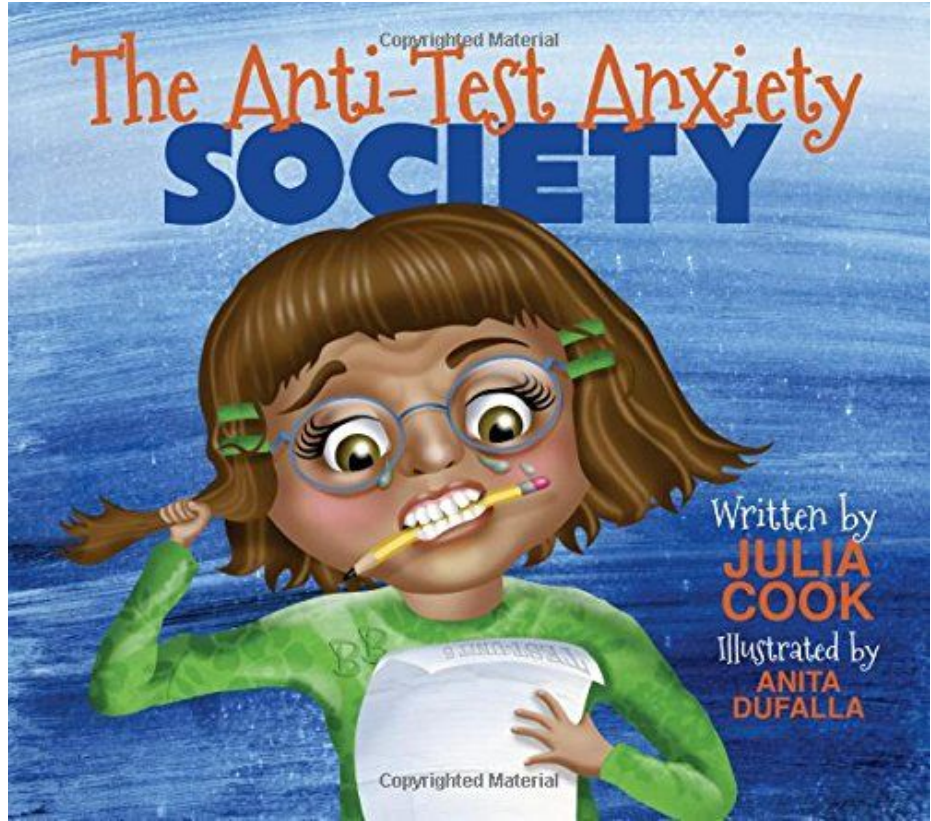
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# Objectives

- Explore test anxiety
- Address test anxiety

# Exploring Test Anxiety



# What is Test Anxiety?



Test Anxiety is...

*“....a specific form of anxiety, comprising a combination of cognitive and physiological responses (worry and emotionality), and aroused in testing situations or similar situations involving personal evaluation.”*

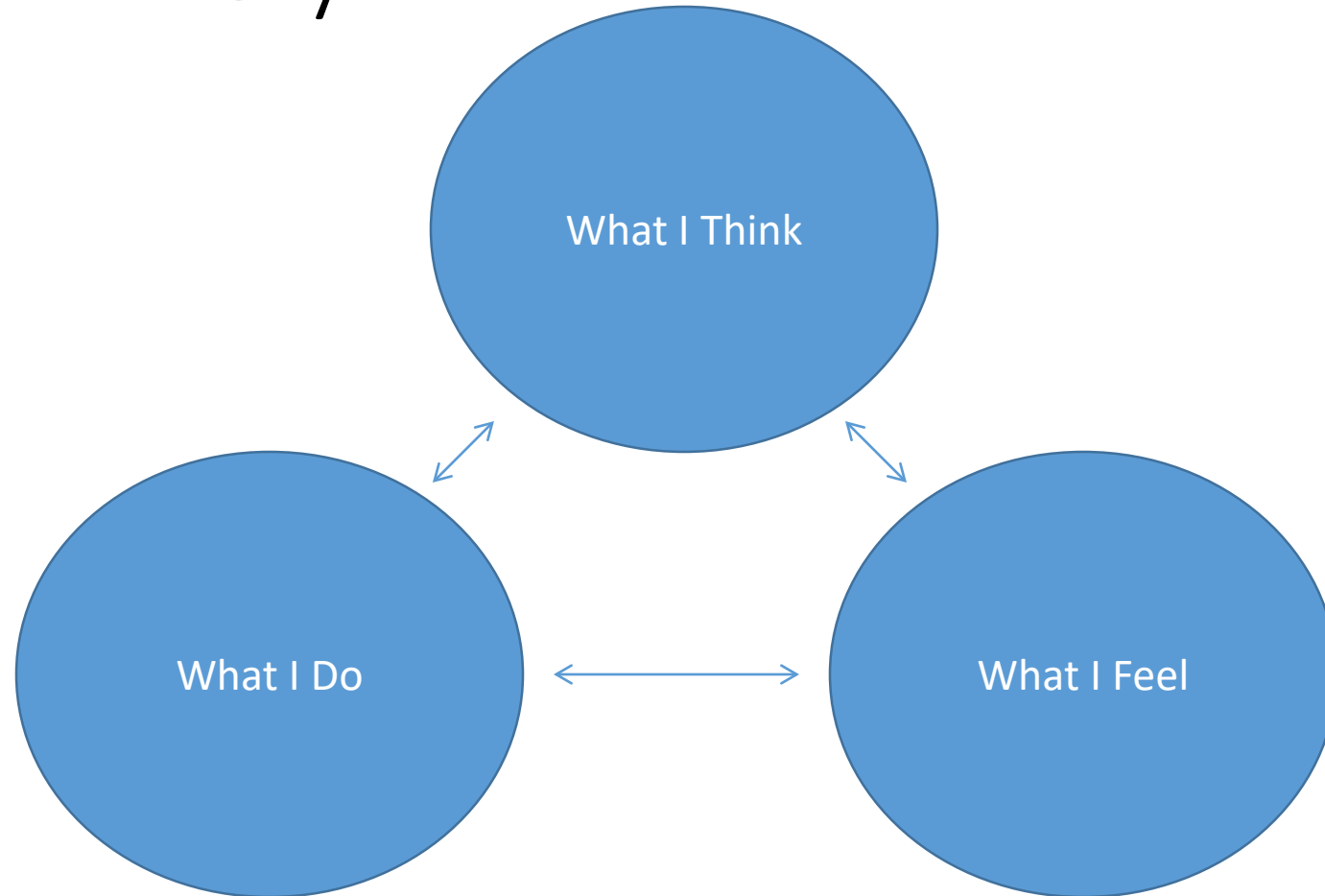
*Reference: Cizek and Burg (2006, p. 129)*



*“We are more often frightened than hurt;  
and we suffer more from imagination than from reality.”*

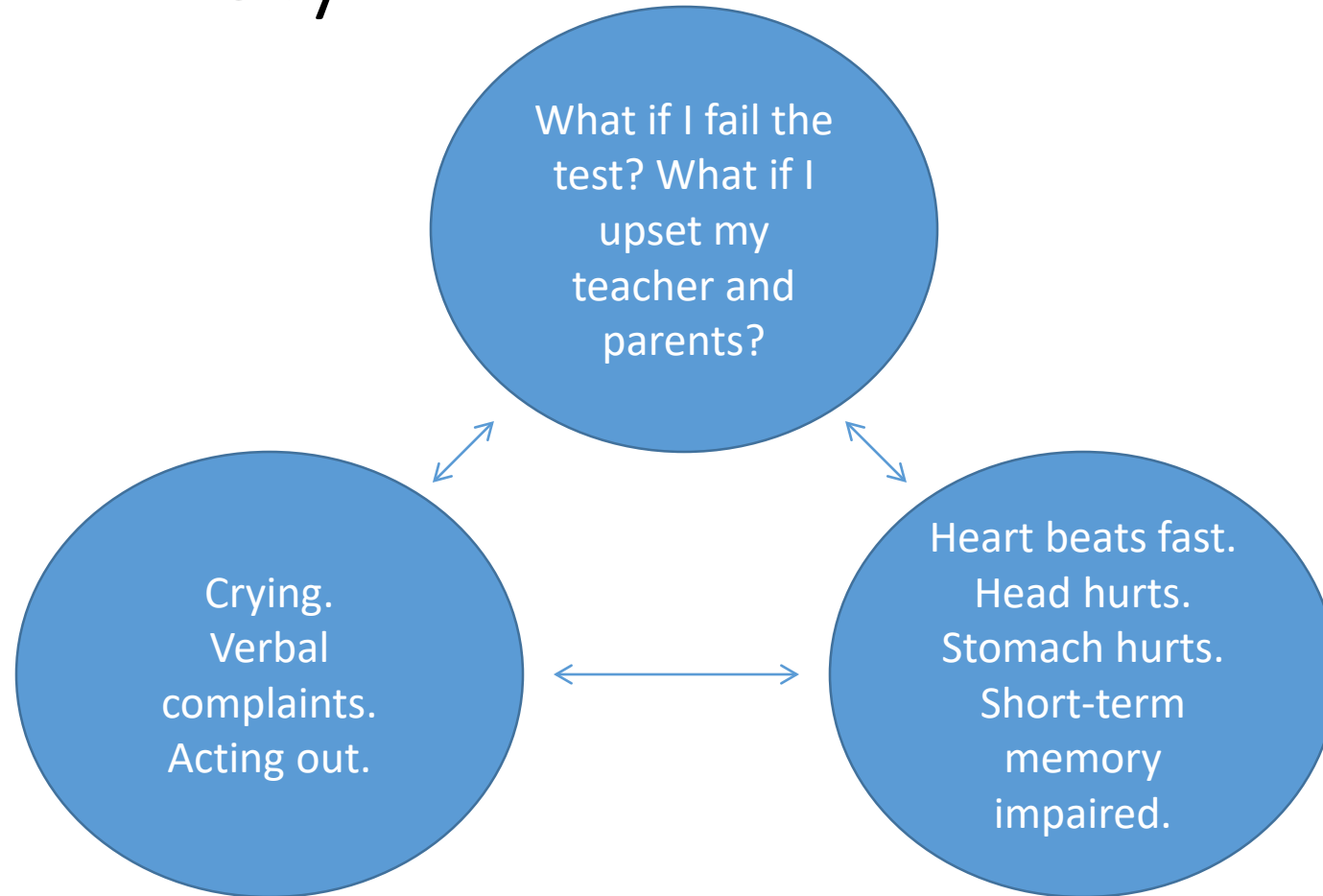
*--Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Roman Senator, 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D.*

# Cycle of Anxiety





# Cycle of Anxiety



# General Effects of Test Anxiety on Students

Effect	Relationship
Stress	E.g., crying, acting out, verbalizations
Attitude toward tests/testing	Diminished effort or increased apathy toward testing
Attitude towards self	Poor self-esteem (e.g., “I can’t do anything,” “I’m so stupid”)
Test behavior	Can prompt cheating
Academic motivation	Decreased motivation to learn in general
Motivation (future)	Dropping out of school, grade retention

*Reference: Donegan and Trepanier-Street (1998)*

# Symptoms of Test Anxiety Observed by Teachers and Parents

Symptom	Teachers	Parents
Eating disturbance	5%	3%
<b>Sleep disturbance</b>	16%	6%
Toileting accidents	3%	0%
<b>Crying</b>	26%	7%
<b>Illness</b>	21%	3%
<b>Resistance to attending school</b>	16%	6%
<b>Acting out</b>	22%	4%
Withdrawal (at home)	3%	0%
Withdrawal (at school)	10%	3%
<b>Verbal expressions of concern</b>	61%	34%
Other	9%	4%

*Reference: Donegan and Trepanier-Street (1998)*

Students aren't the only ones who experience the effects of testing and test anxiety...

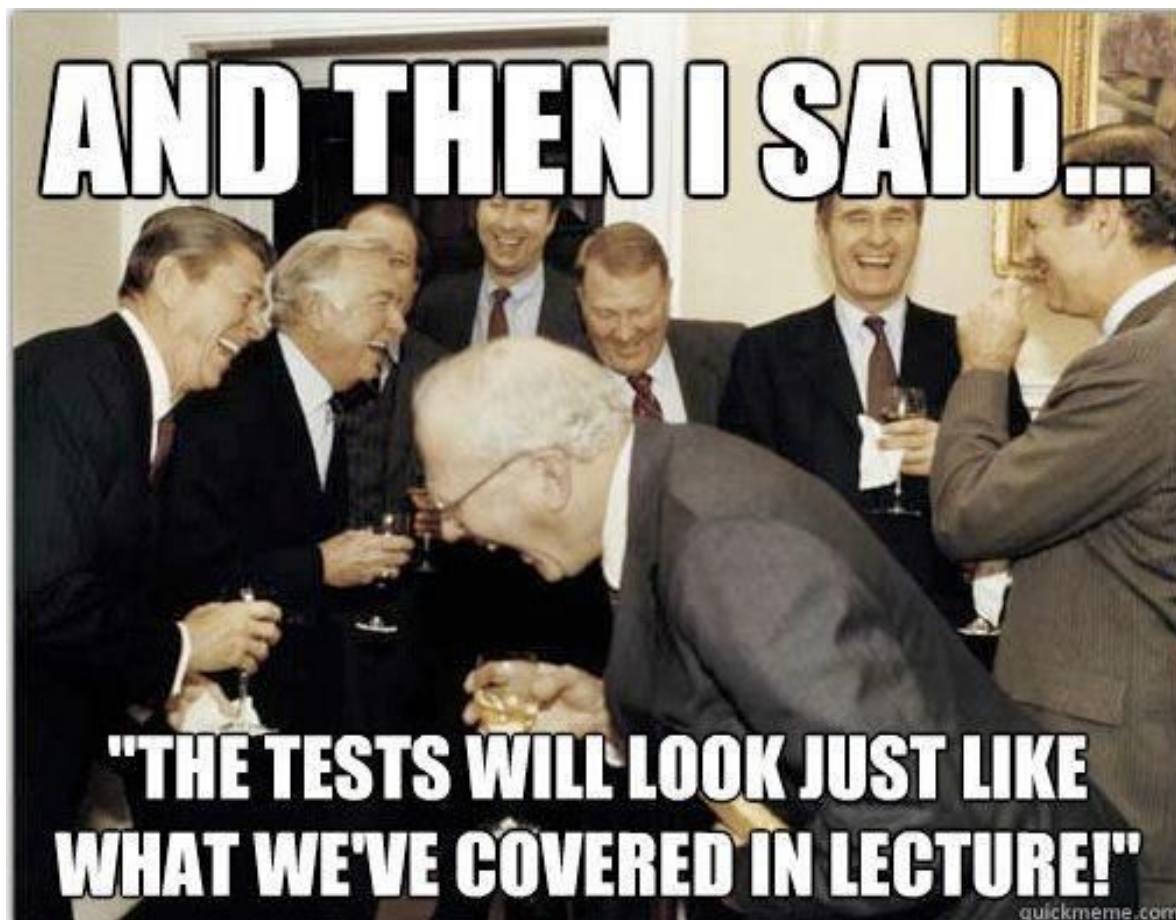




# General Effects of Test Anxiety on Teachers

Effect	Relationship
Systematic stress	Pressure from administrators and parents; demands for higher test scores
Personal stress	Personal worry about student performance & professional standing
Morale (low)	Public dissemination/comparison of test scores; blame
Test behavior (inappropriate)	Altering students' answer sheets; allowing extended time on a timed test; other inappropriate derivations from standardization procedures; giving hints to students
Classroom and teaching methods	Teaching to the test (i.e., narrowing of curriculum to only cover what is on the test)

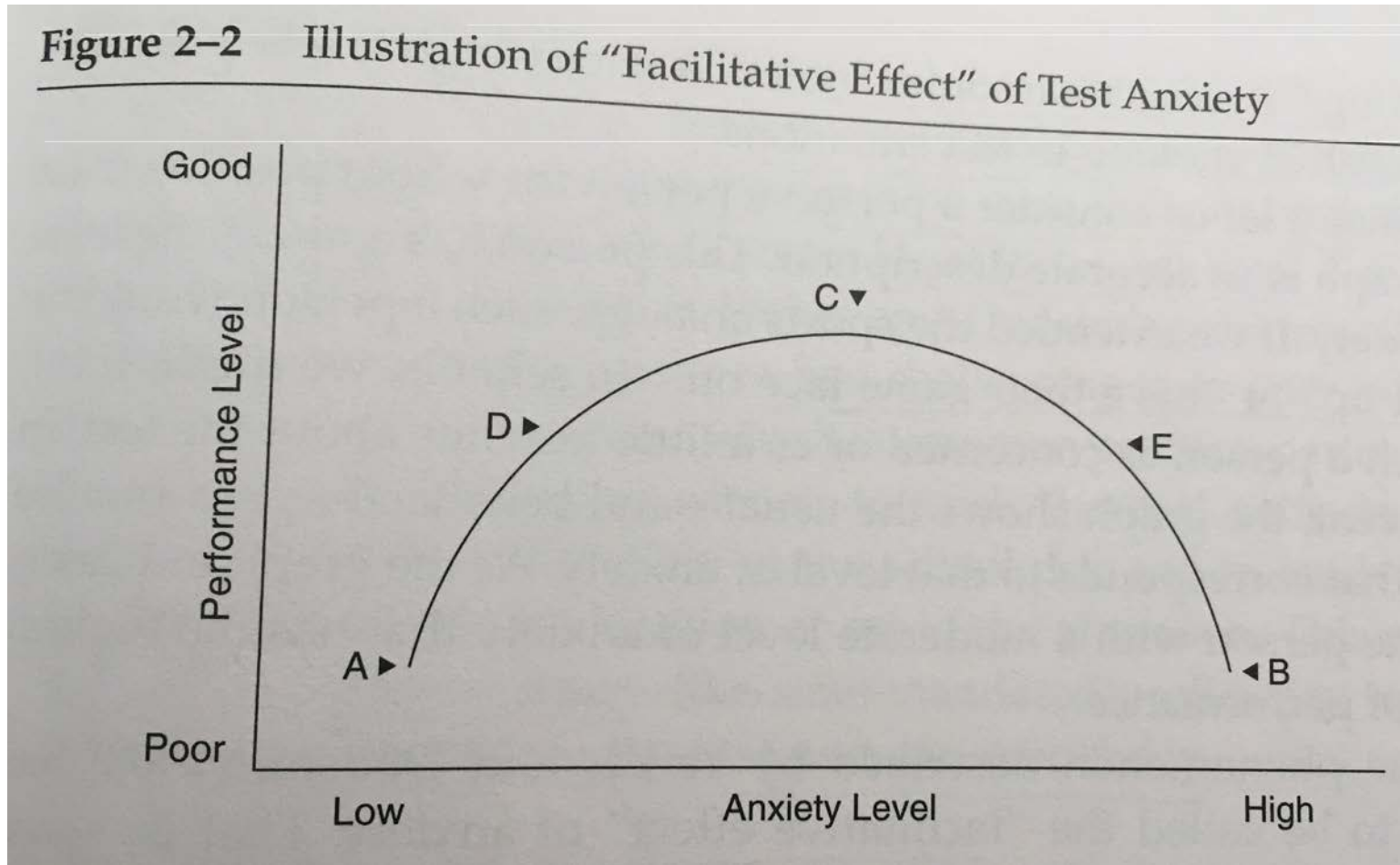
*Reference: Donegan and Trepanier-Street (1998)*



# Affects Students Who:

- Female
- African American or Hispanic
- Average IQ
- Low GPA
- Generally anxious
- Poor study skills
- Low self-esteem
- Perceive that a test will be hard
- Have just moved into a new school
- Have teachers who are anxious about testing

# Some Anxiety is Good...



Reference: Yerkes and Dodson (1908) as described in Cizek and Berg (2006)





# To Summarize....

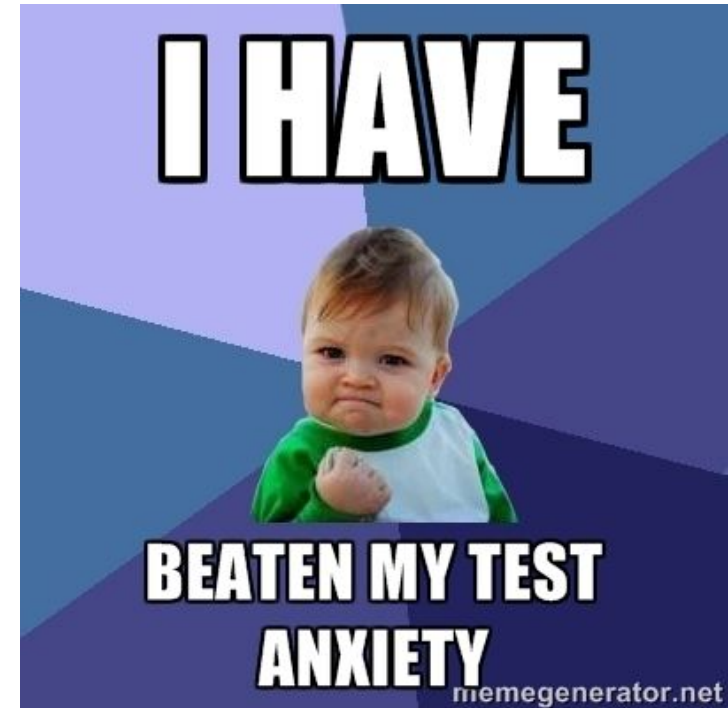
- When task is moderate, a moderate level of anxiety is best for optimal test performance.
- When task is easy, a higher level of anxiety is best for optimal test performance
- When task is difficult, lower level of anxiety is best for optimal test performance.

A green horizontal banner with rounded corners and a scroll-like effect on the left and right sides. The text "Addressing Test Anxiety" is centered within the banner.

# Addressing Test Anxiety

# Strategies for Reducing Test Anxiety

1. Student-Centered Approaches
2. Family Life Factors
3. Classrooms and Schools
4. Communication Patterns



# “Rock This Test”

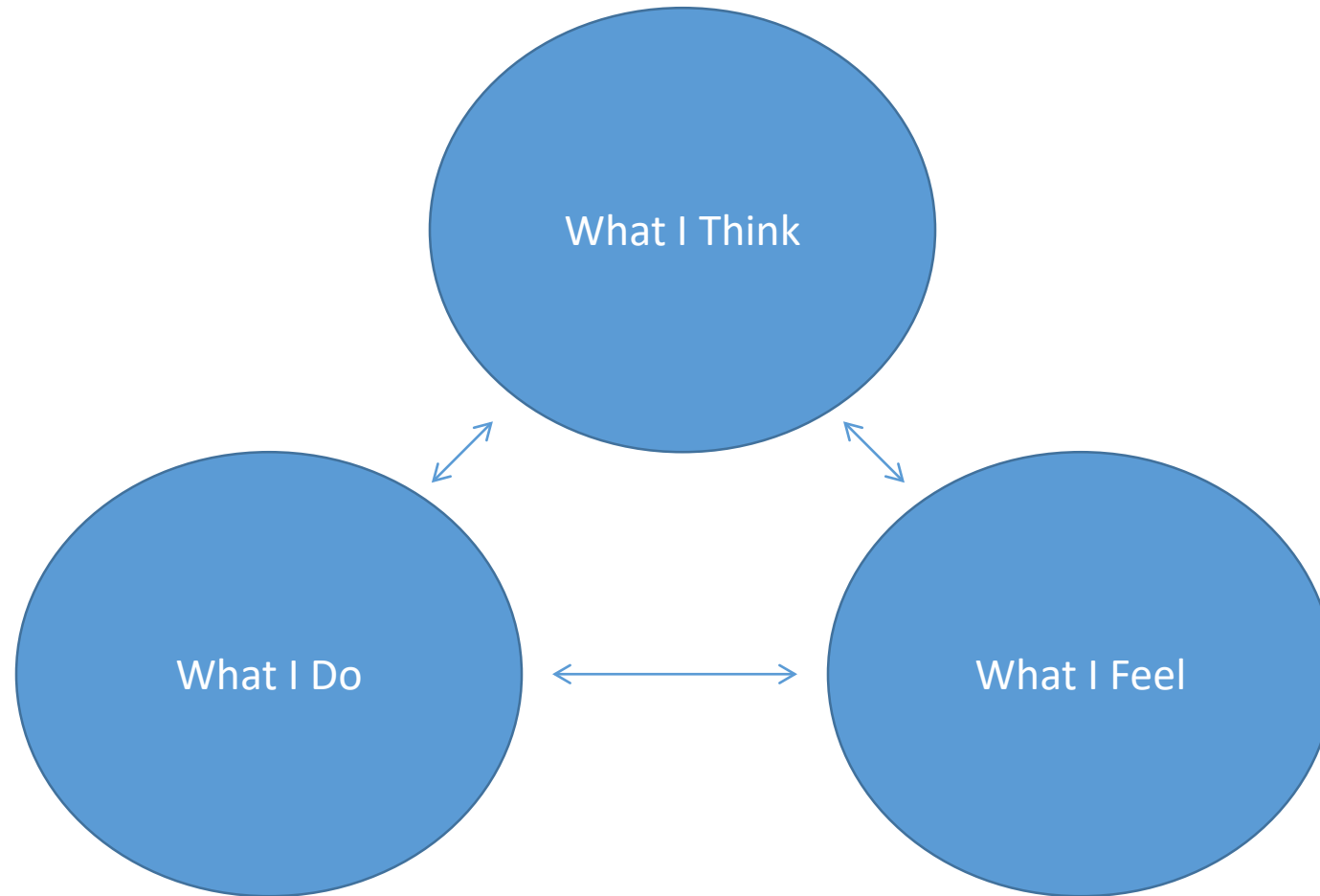
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mldhw1R4xys&list=RDQb16D43FCWQ&index=2>

# 1. Student-Centered Approaches

Specific Technique	Person(s) Involved
Self-talk	Students
Relaxation techniques	Students
Study skills	Students, Parents, School Personnel



# Remember these components?



# Self-Talk

Cognitive Error	Example
Probability Overestimation	Something bad is definitely going to happen
Catastrophizing	When it happens it will be disastrous and I won't be able to cope
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mind Reading</li></ul>	Assuming to know what other people are thinking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fortune-Telling</li></ul>	Predicting what's going to happen & that it will lead to the end of the world.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Black-and-White Thinking</li></ul>	All-or-nothing or dichotomous thinking.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Magical Thinking</li></ul>	Belief that thinking about an action is the same as doing it.

# Restructuring Thoughts

Anxious Thought	Evidence that thought is TRUE	Evidence that thought is FALSE	New Thought
If I don't do well on this test, I will fail 6 <sup>th</sup> grade.	This test counts toward my overall grade.	<p>I studied the material well. Chances are that I won't fail the test.</p> <p>I usually make good grades on tests. Why not this one?</p> <p>It's just 1 test. Worst case scenario, if I fail, I will still survive. My teacher and family will still love me, and help me.</p>	There's a good chance I may do well; even if I don't, it doesn't mean my life is over. My teacher and parents will help me learn the material better.



# To elicit 'evidence that thought is FALSE' ...

- Do I know for sure that \_\_\_\_\_ will happen?
- What evidence do I have that \_\_\_\_\_ will happen?
- How likely is it really?
- Has \_\_\_\_\_ ever happened before?
- Am I absolutely certain of these awful consequences?
- Do I have a crystal ball?
- Even if \_\_\_\_\_ happens, can I live through it?
- What is the worst possible outcome? How bad is that? Could I cope?
- Do I know anyone else who has been in this situation? What did they do?
- Have I been able to cope with \_\_\_\_\_ in the past?
- Is it really so terrible?

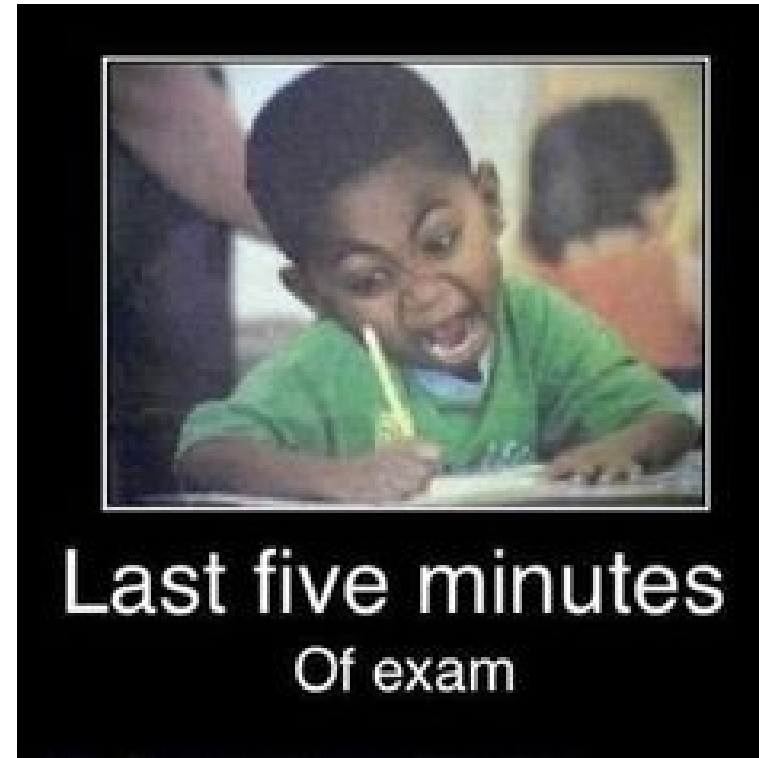
# Self-Talk

- Teachers and Parents can facilitate positive self-talk
  - Question students about worst-case scenarios
  - E.g., *“Suppose that you do get an F on this test; what would be the worst thing that would result from that?”*

# Relaxation Techniques

- a) Deep breathing
- b) Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- c) Let Go Completely
- d) Visualizing

*“An anxious mind cannot exist within a relaxed body...a state of reciprocal influence exists between the brain and body.” –Dr. Edmond Jacobson, as quoted in Newman (1996)*





# Study Skills

- 1) Get an early start on studying
- 2) Preview material to be presented in class
- 3) Read in the most effective manner
- 4) Take effective notes
- 5) Study when you're at your highest energy level

# Strategies for Reducing Test Anxiety

1. Student-Centered Approaches
2. **Family Life Factors**
3. Communication Patterns
4. Classrooms and Schools



## 2. Family Life Factors

Specific Technique	Person(s) Involved
Home Environment	Parents
Parental Expectations	Parents

# Home Environment

- Presence of positive parent-child relationships increases probability of successful academic performance and reduced test anxiety

*“Failure of a parent to provide emotional support to a child while in a problem-solving situation and the failure to reinforce an internal locus of evaluation can result in lower achievement scores and a child who is not task-oriented. If this cycle continues, as a child gets older, there is a greater reliance on external evaluation of one’s performance. This leads to greater levels of anxiety and stress.”* –Dusek (1980), cited in Sapp (1999, p. 272)



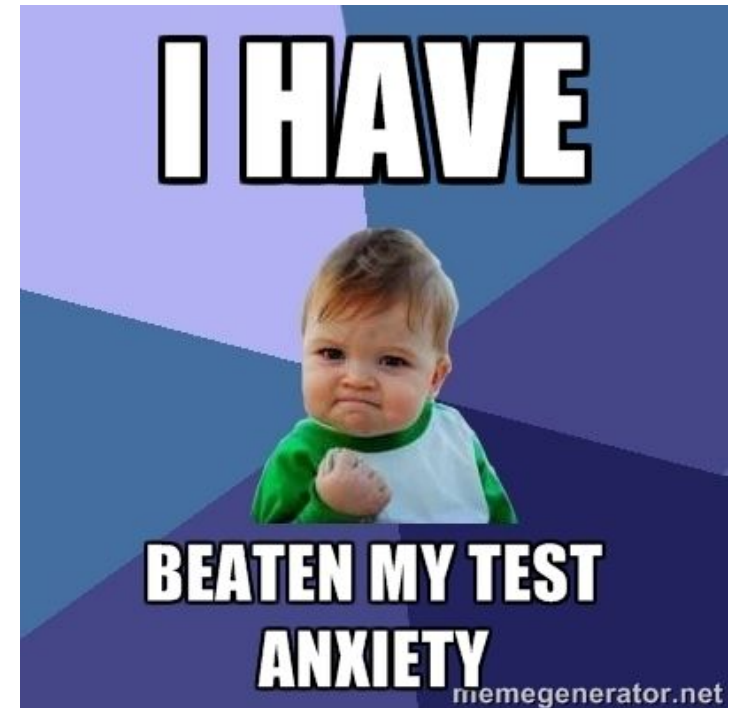
# Parental Expectations

- Overly high or unrealistic parental expectations of children's performance may increase test anxiety in children.
- Focus on developing a child's healthy sense of self-esteem, self-concept, and self-worth by encouraging children, establishing rigorous but reasonable standards and reachable expectations.



# Strategies for Reducing Test Anxiety

1. Student-Centered Approaches
2. Family Life Factors
3. **Communication Patterns**
4. Classrooms and Schools



# 3. Communication Patterns

Specific Technique	Person(s) Involved
Attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions	School Personnel, Parents, Students
Use of competition	School Personnel, Parents
Praise construction	School Personnel, Parents
Assessment literacy	School Personnel, Parents
Review scores, tests, and work	School Personnel, Parents, Students



# Attitudes, Beliefs, and Perceptions

*“If a parent or teacher is anxious about tests, is openly critical of testing, or lacks confidence in his or her assessment acumen, those attitudes and dispositions can affect students’ perceptions.”*

*–Cizek and Burg (2006, p. 105)*

# Use of Competition

- Balance the removal of competition and overreliance on competitive motivation.
- How? Avoid having students grade each others' papers/tests. Encourage best effort. Emphasize learning, not the grade.



**VS.**



# Praise Construction

- Praise **effort**, not ability



Continuous effort - not strength or intelligence -  
is the key to unlocking our potential.

(Winston Churchill)



# Assessment Literacy

- Obtain as much information about large-scale norm-referenced tests as possible.
- Teachers to provide students and parents with as much information about a test or graded assignment as possible.

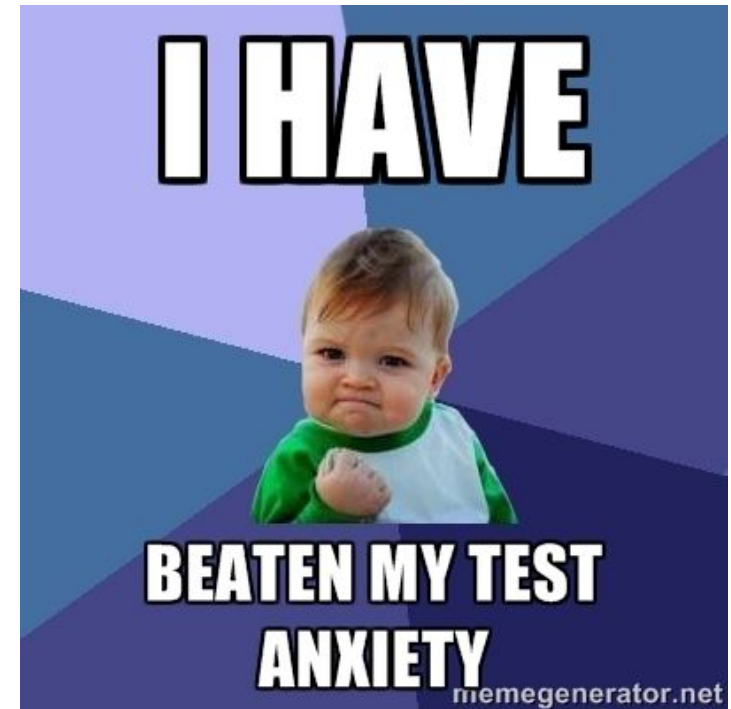


# Review Scores, Tests, and Work

- Test results valuable in that they inform instruction
- Test results illuminate for student what he/she needs to work on, any misunderstandings he/she has
- Test results illuminate for parents where there are gaps in their child's knowledge

# Strategies for Reducing Test Anxiety

1. Student-Centered Approaches
2. Family Life Factors
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4. **Classrooms and Schools**





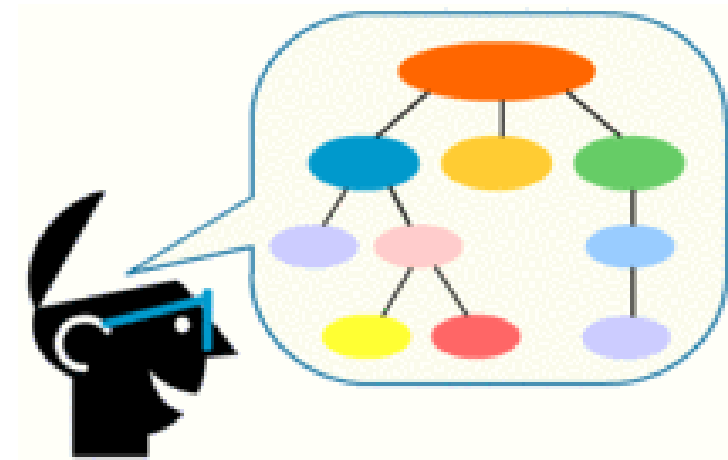
# 4. Classrooms and Schools

Specific Technique	Person(s) Involved
Structure of lessons	School Personnel
Classroom atmosphere	School Personnel
Assessment environment	School Personnel, Parents
Assessment techniques	School Personnel
Assessment setting	School Personnel
Test preparation	School Personnel, Parents, Students



# Structure of Lessons

- Help students create a bigger picture of what they are learning and how it fits together.
- Take advantage of opportunities to review, rather than setting aside separate time to review.
- Balance need to cover new curriculum with need to dive deep into learned curriculum





# Classroom Atmosphere

- Communicate that testing is important, but do not put undue pressure on students to perform well.
- School personnel to create a culture where emphasis is on learning, rather than test results or grades.



# Assessment Environment

- 1) Provide basic info about evaluations
- 2) Be fair and open about testing
- 3) Be fair and open about graded assignments
- 4) Consider other pressures on students
- 5) Limit the number of tests and assignments that count toward a grade
- 6) Teachers: don't assess what you don't intend to assess
- 7) Use grades only as indicators of achievement
- 8) Foster balanced perspectives about assessment



# Assessment Techniques

- Include of a mix of assessment formats
- Avoid the “pop quiz” or “surprise test.” Instead, provide brief, frequent, announced quizzes.
- Test more frequently

*“A series of several brief, well-constructed and clearly described-in-advance tests that constitute smaller percentage of an overall grade are much more likely to be educationally effective and to produce less anxiety than a few longer, poorly constructed, surprise tests, or tests that compose a major portion of a final grade.”* –Cizek & Burg (2006, p. 93)



# Assessment Setting

- Adequate space for working
- Well-lighted
- Appropriate temperature control
- Free from distractions
- Appropriate seating
- Classical music?



# Test Preparation

- Student's high confidence that he/she has, prior to testing, achieved mastery of content being tested. Overlearning reduces anxiety.
- Student to become familiar with parameters of test.
- Student learns general test-taking skills

# In Sum...

Checklist of Intervention Strategies – Educators

Checklist of Intervention Strategies – Parents

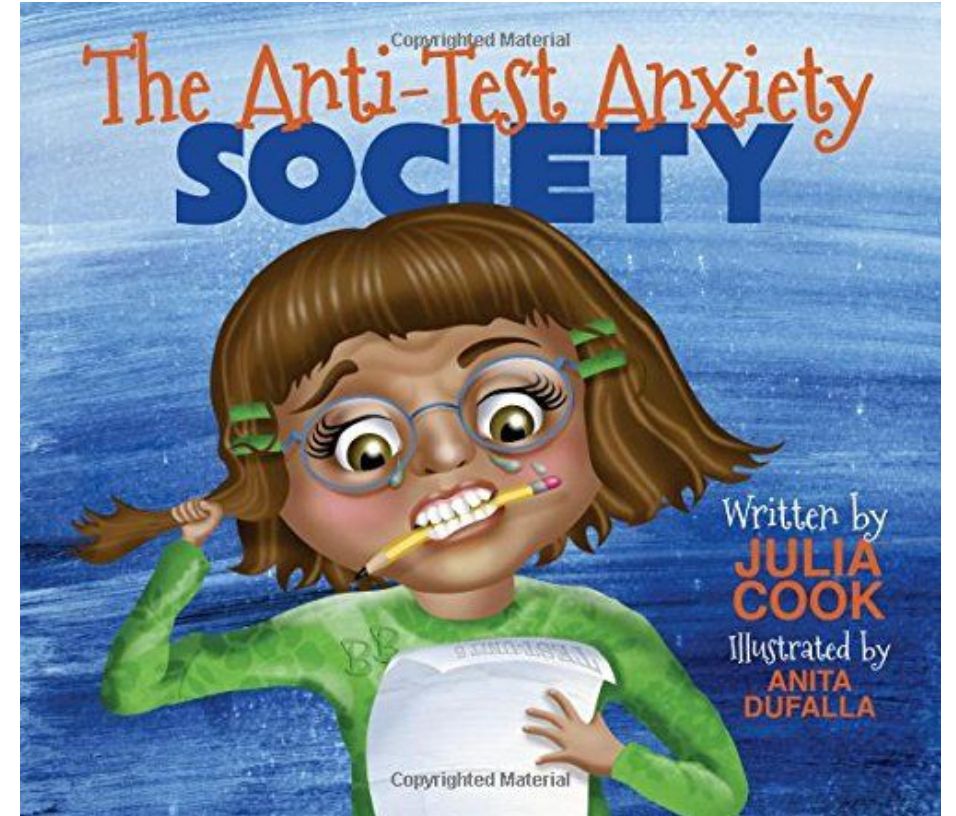
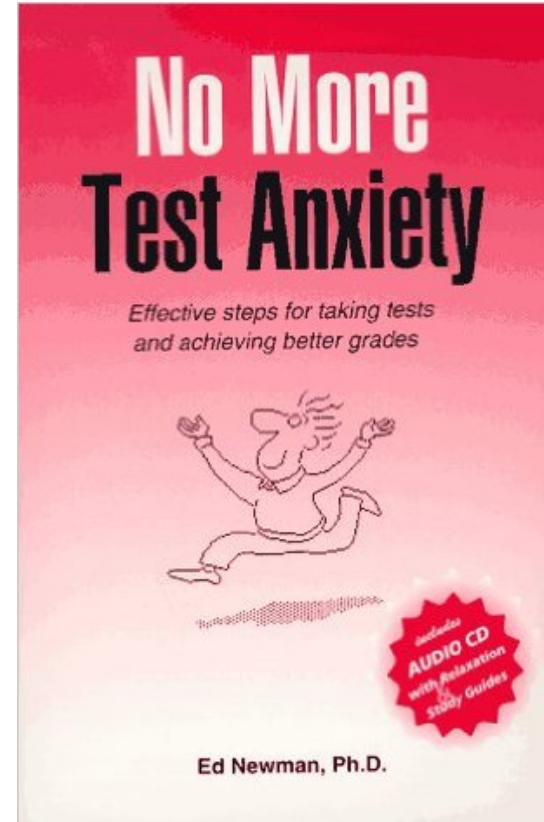
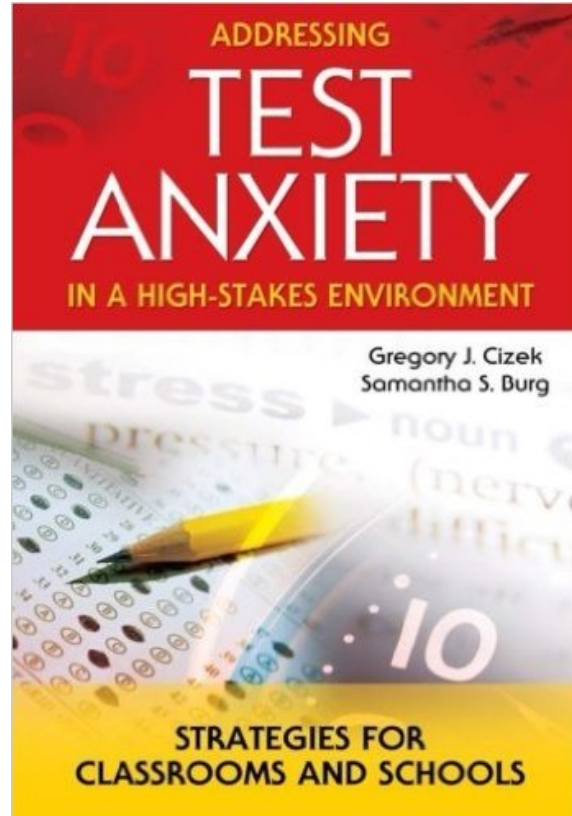




# “Let It Go”

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qb16D43FCWQ>

# References



# Of Possible Interest

- <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7690/urlt/statewideeassessmentaccommodations.pdf>

## Accommodations for Florida's Statewide Student Assessments



Florida Department of Education  
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services  
2015