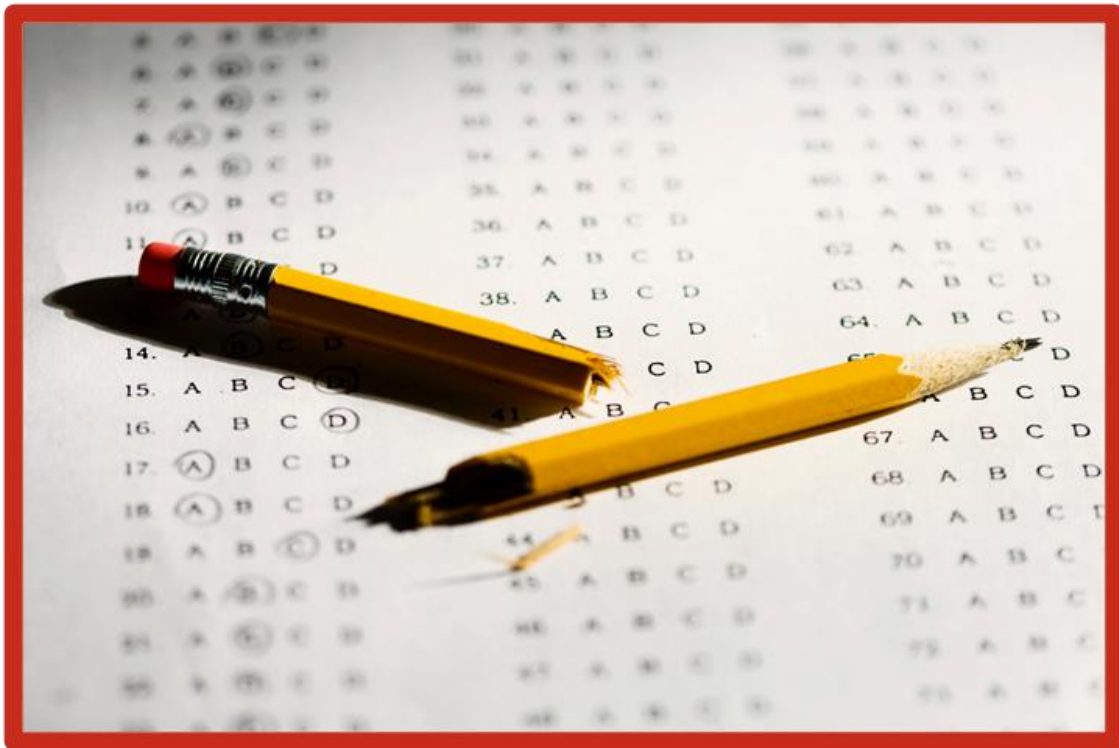


# NEW MEXICO 4-H

## Aggie Next Step

### Managing Stress

### Test Anxiety



## Post Secondary Pathways



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# Managing Stress: Test Anxiety

## LESSON FOCUS

Almost everyone feels nervous before a test or exam, but when anxiety becomes intense, it's called test anxiety. This type of anxiety can affect students physically, emotionally, behaviorally, and cognitively. In this lesson, participants will explore the causes and effects of test anxiety, learn strategies to manage it, and create a personal action plan to perform at their best.

## PREPARATION

Review lesson materials and determine which worksheets and handouts you will use for the lesson. Print enough pre/post assessments, worksheets, and handouts for each participant.

## ACTIVITIES

### 1. Have participants complete the *Pre-Assessment*.

2. Begin with a "Quick Write" activity. Give 2-3 sticky notes to each participant. Say: *Write down 2-3 words or short phrases that describe how you usually feel right before or during a test (1 per sticky note). Don't overthink it – just the first words that come to mind.*

Participants then place their sticky notes on the board. As they post, encourage them to read what others have written, identify patterns, and organize sticky notes together.

3. Reflect as a whole group by pointing out patterns. Example: *I see a lot of words like nervous, blank, sweaty, stress – these are all signs of test anxiety. Some of you even wrote "confident" – and that's great too. Everyone experiences tests differently. Now, let's look at what test anxiety really is, what causes it, and how it affects the body and brain.*

## Supplies

- Worksheets
- Handouts
- Pens/Pencils
- Sticky notes

## OBJECTIVES

### Students will be able to:

- **Reflect** on personal feelings and experiences related to tests.
- **Recognize** common causes and effects of test anxiety.
- **Practice** reframing negative thoughts into more positive or helpful thinking.
- **Identify** strategies for managing test anxiety.
- **Create** a personal action plan for managing stress before, during, and after tests.



# Managing Stress: Test Anxiety

4. Distribute **Stress & Test Anxiety: Causes and Effects**. Review the causes and effects as a group. Provide examples or ask participants to share situations they've experienced that match the causes or effects. Ask students to circle any causes or effects they personally notice/experience.
5. Distribute the **Managing Test Anxiety** handout. Review the tips as a whole class or in small groups. Then, each participant will write their own "Action Plan." If time allows, have participants pair up to share their action plans and commit to checking in with each other before the next test. This encourages ownership rather than passive receipt of information.
6. Guide participants in the **Thought Swap – Reframing Test Anxiety** activity. Introduce the concept: *Sometimes the biggest obstacle on a test isn't the material – it's what we tell ourselves. These thoughts can make our anxiety worse. The good news is we can train our brains to talk back to those thoughts with facts and confidence.* Then follow the teacher instructions on the activity sheet to complete.
7. After the activity, debrief:  
*Q: How did changing the wording make it feel different?*  
*Q: Which types of reframed thoughts might help during a test?*
8. **Exit Ticket** – depending on time, this can be done as a class discussion, or students can complete the worksheet in class, as homework, or in the following class.
9. **Have participants complete the Post-Assessment.**

## REFLECTION

By recognizing your anxiety and using practical strategies, you can reduce stress and improve test performance. Applying these techniques consistently helps not just with exams, but with managing challenges in everyday life.



# Managing Stress: Test Anxiety

## EXTENSIONS

Distribute the *Tips for Reducing Test Anxiety* handout for additional practice and home reinforcement.

Challenge participants to design a peer support resource (poster, infographic) to display in the classroom or around school to help other students manage test anxiety.

Practice mindfulness or breathing exercises as a class. Here are some ideas to help you start: <https://plt4m.com/blog/mindfulness-breathing-exercises-for-students/>

## DIFFERENTIATION

**Content Support:** Break each worksheet into smaller parts and require students to check in before continuing.

Allow participants to respond verbally, write privately, or complete activities with a partner, counselor, or teacher.

**English Language Learners:** Pair students with a supportive peer for discussion.

Pre-teach key vocabulary: test anxiety, stress, cause, effect, reframing, self-talk, etc.

Provide sentence starters for reflection:

- "Before a test, I usually feel..."
- "A strategy that helps me stay calm is..."
- "I can remind myself that..."

**Visual Supports:** Display examples of negative thoughts and positive reframed thoughts during the *Thought Swap* activity.

**Advanced or Early Finishers:** Have participants create a motivational poster, infographic, or short presentation about managing test anxiety.



# Managing Stress: Test Anxiety

## RESOURCES

### Optional Videos:

Note: Please preview all videos before showing them to students to ensure they are age-appropriate, relevant, and aligned with your classroom needs.

*Exam Anxiety: The Science of Learning and Fear*

<https://youtu.be/D64TZ-wcLCY?si=bTz1jFnrkX6j2NDH>

*Test Anxiety*

<https://youtu.be/4FsgwLWdSS8?si=uQvURoEvb6BEBDrM>

*5 Tips for Coping with Test Anxiety (for kids!)*

[https://youtu.be/sDYx9qM\\_ygg?si=5LxvEX\\_QV6PJxTER](https://youtu.be/sDYx9qM_ygg?si=5LxvEX_QV6PJxTER)

*Conquering Exam Stress: Lessons from our Bodies*

<https://youtu.be/-RZ86OB9hw4?si=YRFohUwVYAlK94Ra>

### NM Standards:

NM PED Standards: Career and Technical Education (CTE):

CTE 2.1.1: Select and employ appropriate reading strategies

CTE 2.1.9: Listen to and speak with diverse individuals to enhance communication skills

CTE 3.1.1: Employ critical thinking skills to solve problems

CTE 3.1.2: Employ critical thinking and interpersonal skills to resolve conflicts

CTE 6.2.1: Understand health and safety standards and concepts

Common Career Technical Core (CCTC) Standards: Career Ready Practices (CRP):

CRP-3: Attend to personal health and financial well-being

Optional ELA Alignment (Grades 6-12):

SL1: Participate in a range of conversations