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Is test anxiety reducing your test scores?

BY NICOL MERLINE

SPECIAL TO THE SPINAL COLUMN



Nicol Merline is a board certified hypnotherapist.

Rayanne studied long and hard for her nursing exam. She knew she was smart.

She started studying early. She comprehended what she was studying. She even took a class that would help her learn how to better prepare for and take exams. Yet – after seeing her test score she felt dismayed. She wondered if she would ever get a nursing position with her lousy test scores and became more and more depressed and stressed.

She knew she worried about taking tests and the more she took tests – the worse her scores were.

What Rayanne did not know was that “worry” was actually making her performance on exams worse.

Simply put worry and stress is really all about “fear.” Fear causes biological effects on the body, such as high blood pressure, as well as hormonal and chemical changes which affect mental function. Test taking fear, or pressure, makes it harder to remember and recall information.

A 2013 study of 325 students found that teens who stress about doing well on their exams are likely to get lower results than peers who remain calmer. The more we worry, the harder it is to perform well on a test.

This “worry-fear” habit not only affects test taking, it affects us in all areas of life such as sports, public speaking, confidence, learning, focus, concentration, etc. Fear is also the driver behind many bad habits.

Have you ever tried to remember something under pressure, like a name, and found you are at a total loss? Likewise, sometime later and after the fact when you are not really trying to remember the name easily pops up in your mind? That happens because when we relax and we are not fearful our mind works much more optimally. Blood flows normally to all the parts of the brain to nourish and supply electromagnetic energy to our brain cells. Hence the mental file cabinets open up easily and information flows. While under pressure those files remain shut or blocked and the information is locked inside. At my office I often hear clients say, “But I have to worry.” This belief that worrying somehow fixes the problem is blatantly false. Taking action, planning ahead and most importantly learning how to break the worry habit is the solution to better and better test scores and a calmer, healthier, and more productive life.

Numerous individuals have found it is quite easy to overcome the worry cycle via hypnotherapy. Protocols are built to help individuals overcome their most pressing problems and breaking bad habits like worry through the powerful use of their own subconscious minds. Removing habits, melting fears and phobias remains the general focus of hypnotherapy. This translates into many beneficial changes for the individual – improved performance, confidence, and expanded options.

Schools, universities, and hospitals invite me into their classrooms to teach my approach to managing stress and worry in order to develop a student’s mental skills for success. This month I am offering a complementary session to the first school or university that contacts me ready to help interested students improve their test scores.

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