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ABSTRACT

School psychologists face the challenge of completing standardized, multiple choice tests for professional development in order to meet the competency standards set by organizations and regulatory agencies. Research has indicted that adequate preparation in test-taking skills can significantly improve attitudes toward test taking and actual performance in many populations. This document includes a discussion on test-taking skills such as familiarity with the characteristics and content of tests, test preparation, test wiseness, and management of test anxiety. Strategies are described on how to develop test taking skills. School psychologists who understand the characteristics of the test and thoroughly learn test content; utilize test preparation strategies; become test wise; and work on ways to manage test anxiety are more likely to improve their chances of doing well, and in so doing, reach their professional goals. (Contains 31 references.) (JDM)

Test-Taking Skills for Multiple-Choice Formats: Implications for School Psychologists[1]

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Abstract

School psychologists today face the challenge of completing standardized, multiple-choice tests for professional development and to meet standards of competence set by learned organizations and regulatory agencies. Research has indicated that adequate preparation in test-taking skills can significantly improve attitudes toward test-taking as well as actual test performance in a variety of populations. This paper includes a discussion of test-taking skills such as a) familiarity with the characteristics and content of tests, b) test preparation, c) test wiseness, and d) the management of test anxiety. Strategies for developing test-taking skills are included and implications for school psychologists are addressed.

Introduction

School psychologists face increasing demands to engage in professional development, to advance their knowledge and skills in school psychology (Reschly, 2000), and to be recognized for their competence by learned organizations and by regulatory agencies. One challenge that all school psychologists must encounter, is the taking of standardized, multiple-choice tests, either for certification/licensure purposes or to meet program requirements in advanced courses of study. Given that successful performance on tests is foundational to goal attainment, it is critical that school psychologists do everything possible to enhance the likelihood of success on these tests.

The research in educational psychology, in general, and assessment, memory, and learning, in particular (Ormrod, 1998; Slavin, 2000), indicates that chances of test success are greatly improved if test-takers invest both time and effort in developing and refining their skills in test-taking. There are four types of test-taking skills, working in combination with each other, that have been identified by various researchers (e.g., LeFrancois, 2000; Oakland, Gulek, & Glutting, 1996; Slavin, 2000) as critical determinants of test success; in fact, on some tests of intelligence, it has been estimated that 20% of the variance in IQ scores is due to test-taking behaviors (Oakland et al, 1996). These skills include, familiarity with the characteristics and content of tests, test preparation, test wiseness, and management of test anxiety. This paper addresses each of these skills in turn and discusses their implications for school psychologists.

Familiarity with Characteristics and Content of Tests

All preparation for specific tests is predicated upon the assumption that potential test-takers are aware of the purpose of the test itself (e.g., to assess core areas in school psychology) as well as the purpose for which it is being administered (e.g., to determine minimum levels of competency for

school psychologists). It is also assumed that test-takers have identified the areas to be covered on the test (e.g., assessment, consultation, professional roles) and have thoroughly learned the material that will be tested; test-takers who have not, are unlikely to encounter success, regardless of the degree to which they are otherwise prepared (Loulou, 1995).

It is equally important for test-takers to know the format of the test, since preparing for a multiple-choice exam is very different than preparing for an essay exam. Indeed, this kind of knowledge may have cultural implications; Forster and Karn (1998), for example, worked with students whose second language was English, to help them prepare for standardized, multiple-choice tests of English usage such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), and found that they benefited from early exposure to unfamiliar test formats. In another study, Pommerich and Burden (2000) found that 36 examinees reacted to test features, such as spacing and placement of items, that were independent of test content and did not seem to be related to their ability to be test wise. Test-takers also benefit from gathering as much information as they can about the duration of testing (e.g., three 40-minute sessions) and the number of questions they can expect (e.g.,75 questions per session).

Many individuals preparing to take a test, for example the PRAXIS School Psychology test, rely on information from peers and other professionals who may be familiar with the test or have taken it themselves. While there are few, if any, commercially produced books on preparation for tests in school psychology, there is no dearth of them for tests like the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and the Miller Analogies Test. The purchase of such books, preferably those with sample tests and software, may be a worthwhile investment; indeed, children as young as elementary school-age have been successfully taught how to take tests by first taking practice tests

(Calkins, Montgomery, & Santman, 1999). The quality of test preparation materials varies significantly and caution must be exercised as to their use. Test review courses offered by commercial organizations often address issues of test content and characteristics but may be prohibitively expensive or of questionable quality.

Test Preparation

There are numerous test preparation courses available and most of them promise large gains in test scores on standardized, multiple-choice tests such as the GRE. There is, unfortunately, relatively little research to support these claims (Robb & Ercanbrack, 1999), and what there is, appears to be controversial and limited to certain populations. For example, Scruggs, Mastropieri, and Pressley (1992) claimed that their Cognitive Strategy Training program could help students gain as many as 10-15 percentile points or 4-6 months of academic achievement without directly being taught test content and Moss (1995) noted gains in test scores among individuals who were formally prepared for tests. On the other hand, Powers (1993) stated that simply repeating the SAT could lead to gains of between 12 and 15 points and that even the best-known commercial test preparation companies produced very small score gains of 15-25 points on the SAT. Johnson (1985) found that gains were more likely to be related to the fact that students completed a greater number of items after coaching than before and Rainey (1996) noted that there were no significant differences in test scores between a group of students who had taken an ACT coaching course and one who had not. Robb and Ercanbrack (1999) and Scholes and Lain (1997) also found no significant differences between groups of students who had been coached and those who had not. Despite these mixed results, most sources (e.g., Rogers & Yang, 1999) agree that enrolling in test preparation courses will not harm, and in most cases, even helps, potential test-takers. At the very

least, such participation may help test-takers improve the sense of control over their own behavior, which in turn, can lead to a corresponding improvement in performance.

Some of the most common topics covered in test preparation courses are metacognitive skills, time management skills, study strategies, and mnemonics (Scholes & Lain, 1997). A brief description of each is provided below:

Metacognitive skills: Arguably the most important aspect of test preparation is helping individuals use metacognitive skills, that is, skills that build upon what they know about their own thinking. Students can be taught ways to assess their own understanding of material, to consider ways in which they think, and to choose a plan of attack based on what they know about their own thinking. Effective test-takers appear to be advanced thinkers who use metacognitive skills purposefully and consistently (Ormrod, 1998).

Time Management Skills: The first step toward effective time management for potential test-takers, is to record test dates, develop a study schedule that is posted in a prominent location, and then prioritize activities within that schedule. It is often a good idea to outline study goals, making sure that goals that are too ambitious are broken down into several smaller, more manageable ones, and that these are monitored and adjusted as necessary. It is also important for test-takers to identify the time of day during which they are most alert and then use that time to study for the test.

Study Strategies: There is a large body of literature on study strategies and their contribution to effective test preparation (e.g., LeFrancois, 2000; Loulou, 19951; Slavin, 2000). In general, study strategies are designed to allow test-takers to approach the task of studying test content in the most efficient way possible. Inefficient test-takers often spend vast amounts of time studying for

a test because they do not have adequate study skills and do not recognize that the quantity of time one spends on a study session is less important than the quality of that session.

One study strategy that has been in existence for a number of years (Thomas & Robinson, 1972) and is now known as the PQ4R technique, is particularly useful for helping learners understand what they read and to remember what they have read. The original technique has spawned a number of variations (e.g., SQ3R, SQ4R) but the components of these approaches are essentially similar. The steps followed are: a) Preview the chapter by skimming it quickly to get a "feel" for it. b) Question actively, by asking questions such as who, what, where, when, and why, as the material is read, c) Read the chapter again, this time, looking for the answers to those questions, d) Reflect on the material and try to make it meaningful to enhance retention, e) Recite & Write by reciting the answers to the questions and then writing them out, if necessary, and finally, d) Review all material learned.

Note-taking is another important study strategy that can be taught to test-takers to enhance test success. Thorough studying for a test may require attending lectures or reading books, and then taking notes on what is heard or read. Individuals with poor study skills often appear to be poor note-takers; they may write everything down, hoping that they will not miss an important point. However, the taking of useful notes is an art that must be practiced. Test-takers can be taught to take more efficient notes by jotting down key phrases, using note cards for important points, and highlighting selectively. Various colors may be used to highlight categories of information, for example, yellow for dates and blue for names of important people.

Information must be practiced if it is to be learned thoroughly. Efficient learners tend to use distributed practice, which refers to short periods of studying spread out over several days, instead of massed practice, or cramming. Research (e.g., Slavin, 2000) has shown that while

massed practice may be useful for faster initial learning, distributed practice is far more likely to result in retention.

Study Location: Test-takers vary in the manner with which they handle auditory and visual distractions, changes in lighting, and variations in temperature. Music, for example, can be necessary background noise for some people but might be painfully intrusive to others. Individuals can be taught to be aware of their unique study preferences and to use those preferences to help them study. One very simple but effective strategy is to select a specific place in which to study, use that place to study every time, and never use that place for non-study activities. Over a period of time, individuals begin to associate their study location with successful learning experiences, which in turn, may help them study more effectively.

Preferred Learning Styles. Individuals vary in the way they learn information best (Dunn and Stevenson, 1997). Some learners are visual, others are auditory, and yet others are tactile. Some learners may prefer to focus on the details, while others miss the big picture if they emphasize the details. The key is to be aware of one's learning style and then use that information to enhance one's learning

Study Groups: While some learners study best independently, others seem to require a group to help them study for tests. It is important to remember that a good study group does not necessarily include people who are friends, but those who are serious about doing well on tests and have something to contribute to the group.

Memory Strategies. Efficient learners often use memory strategies to help them learn information and retrieve it at the appropriate time. There is substantial evidence that supports the use of memory strategies in a range of settings with a variety of ability levels (Ormrod, 1998). An important precursor to the use of such strategies, is the use of metamemory, that is, thinking

about the ways in which information is remembered. Once again, these may be unique to a particular learner. The following memory strategies are commonly used to help individuals remember information:

- Develop an appropriate mind-set: Telling oneself that the material is important and worthwhile, and beginning the learning task with confidence and the intention to remember information, not just to read it, is likely to enhance memory.
- Anticipate questions. What questions might a test developer or a teacher ask, given a particular set of reading materials and topics?
- Simplify material as much as possible. Material that is difficult to understand is difficult to remember.
- Make material meaningful: It is easier to remember words such as dog, cat, and pig than it is to remember nonsense words such as odg, cta, and ipg.
- Use rehearsal to help learn a complex series of information. Maintenance rehearsal, that is, repeating information over and over, is best for rote memorization and enhances immediate retrieval; elaborative rehearsal, that is, repeating information over and over but expanding upon it, is best for understanding information and enhancing long- term storage (LeFrancois, 2000).
- Human short-term memory can only hold five to nine unrelated bits of information for up to 20 seconds at a time (LeFrancois, 2000). This fact can be used to maximize learning efficiency and to transfer information from short-term to long-term memory.
- Group or "chunk" related information to enhance retention. Grouped information is easier to learn than isolated bits of information. This is why it is much more difficult to learn a list of unrelated vocabulary words than it is to learn the same words in a sentence.

- Use new information as quickly as possible after learning it, and as frequently as possible. The less one uses newly acquired information, the more quickly it will be forgotten.
- Use association by relating new information to that which is already known; this will be even more effective if bits of information are related in an absurd or improbable way. Individuals may use associations that are unique to them and that will help them learn; the same associations may mean nothing to another person and therefore, will do little to enhance retention.
- Visual imagery can be a very useful way to remember information. For example, there are few people who have not been taught to see that Italy is shaped like a boot.
- Individuals forget information because of a psychological process known as interference (LeFrancois, 2000). Forgetting occurs as time passes because new, often conflicting information enters memory and interferes with original learning. The more similar the learning tasks, the greater the interference.
- Overlearning, first described by Kruger in the 1920s (Ormrod, 1998), is a method of improving retention that involves practicing new knowledge after mastery is attained. Most individuals study until they can produce one errorless repetition; however, to improve retention, it is often useful to keep track of how many times it took to reach the first errorless repetition, and then practice the material that many more times.
- The use of mnemonics is a time-tested method to help learners transform or organize information to enhance retrievability (Chittooran & Miles, 2001; Fogarty, 1999); LeFrancois (2001) describes a collection of the more popular mnemonic devices. These are: rhymes (e,g, Thirty days hath September, April, June and November, to memorize the number of days in each month), acronyms (make a word, preferably meaningful, out of the first letters in a list

of words, e.g., HOMES, to remember the Great Lakes, Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior), acrostics (make a sentence out of the first letter of each word on a list of words; e.g., Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain, to remember the colors of a rainbow), meaningful sentences (make sentences out of isolated words), the loci method (put each word to be remembered in a familiar place, such as the rooms in a house, then visualize the word in that place), the keyword method (use visual images that correspond to the sound of words, e.g., an egg bobbing on a wave for 'huevo'), and finally, the pegword method ("hang" words to be remembered on pegs).

Test Wiseness

Test wiseness refers to the ability to use the characteristics and format of a test and /or the test-taking situation to improve one's score on a test (Bachman, 1990). Individuals tend to vary in test wiseness and these variations are often reflected in test performance. The first step to taking standardized, multiple choice tests, is to remember that they are a unique form of testing. These formats test recognition of information, not recall, attempt to sample the greatest number of behaviors in the shortest space of time, often include items that evaluate knowledge, comprehension, and application, require both speed and accuracy, and finally, are generally composed of a stem and four or five options, of which three or four are intended to be distractors.

Efficient test-takers have already mastered some critical test-taking behaviors (Boyd, 1998; LeFrancois, 2000) that make the difference between an excellent score and a poor one. Many of these behaviors seem simplistic, but it is surprising how many test-takers fail to apply this information in a test-taking situation. When efficient test-takers are first given the test, they survey it quickly to plan their strategy, read the directions carefully or listen attentively as they are being read, develop a time plan to complete the test so that they do not run out of time, spend

the most time on questions with the greatest number of points, read all parts of a question and make sure they answer every part, and finally, leave time to review their completed test.

Strategies for Multiple-Choice Tests. The following strategies are especially useful for multiple-choice tests, both standardized and non-standardized. Suggestions are culled from a variety of sources including Boyd (1998), Calkins, Montgomery, and Santman (1999), Chittooran and Miles (2001), LeFrancois (2000), Loulou (1995), and Scruggs, Mastropieri, and Pressley (1992):

- Read questions carefully but answer them quickly without wasting any time.
- Look for clue words that lead to the correct answer, both within and across items. For example, the answer to one item may lead to the correct answer in another item.
- Jot time notations in margins to indicate how much time should be spent for each section and to monitor progress. Schedule five-second breaks to look up and around the room.
- If possible, complete the easiest items first and skip over difficult ones, making sure to return to them before the test is turned in. Agonizing over the difficult items will slow test-takers down, waste valuable time, and compound their frustration.
- Consider all options and eliminate incorrect options immediately. If two options out of four can be immediately eliminated, this can improve one's chances of getting the correct answer by fifty percent. If another option can be eliminated on the basis of specific knowledge or another test-taking strategy, the correct answer is guaranteed.
- Pay attention to similar options (three options that essentially mean the same thing), stem options (a word in the stem may give a clue to the right answer), absurd options (choices that clearly do not make sense or that may have been included as a joke), and specific determiners (absolutes such as always and never).
- If the answer is not apparent, look away or wait a second before looking at the options again.

- Try the SPLASHDOWN technique (LeFrancois, 2000). When the test is first distributed, jot down in the margins or on the back of the test booklet, all the little facts and details that often get overlooked or forgotten. These marks can be erased later if there are rules against writing in test booklets.
- If questions or options are unclear, try combining the question with each option, one at a time.
- Try underlining relevant details in a complex stem or in a case study, even if test directions do not permit writing in the test booklet. Light pencil marks can always be erased after the test is completed. Herman (1996) for example, found that the absence of any marks was inversely related to test performance.
- "All of the above are true" is generally a good guess, especially if two correct options can be identified. Similarly, avoid " None of the above." If even one is true, then "None of the above" cannot be true.
- Do not read too much into questions or try to find hidden meanings. Often, the brightest people fall into this trap. Similarly, do not second-guess the motivation of test-developers ("This must be a trick question") or assume anything ("No way there could be three 'b' answers in a row!").
- Do not misread or misinterpret questions, e.g., mg. for gms. and false for true.
- Look for keywords in stems: best, partial, occasionally, primarily, generally, may, rarely, seldom, usually, on the average, except, and frequently. Efficient test-takers seldom miss these keywords, inefficient test-takers often do.
- Suspend judgment until all the options have been read, because all options may be true but only one will be the best or most important.

- The most attractive distractor (i.e., an incorrect answer) is often placed first, because it is the first place people look and therefore remember, or last, because it is the last place people look and therefore remember.
- Questions may occasionally be correctly answered by placing oneself in the situation pictured in the question ("What would I do in this situation?").
- Beware of questions such as, "Which of the following is not true?" It is easy to get confused, particularly if previous items are of the format, "Which of the following is false?"
- If two options are similar, look at how they are different from each other.
- Look for an umbrella term, that is, a term that subsumes several others; for example, the term learning theorists may subsume Skinner, Thorndike, and, and Watson.
- Reason out the correct answer by rephrasing, using examples, anticipating answers, and breaking down items into their component parts.
- Do not change answers unless new information indicates they should be changed. Ineffective test-takers often impulsively change their answers at the last minute and get the question wrong.
- Guessing can be an important strategy to enhance test success, if it is used advisedly. Do not guess blindly or randomly. Educated guessing is permissible, especially if alternatives can be eliminated. If there is no penalty for guessing, do not leave an item blank. There is nothing to lose for being wrong.
- Use the SCORER technique for taking tests:

  S Schedule your time

  C Use clue words.

  O Omit difficult questions. Write + by difficult questions and answer them later.

R Read carefully. Write P beside the directions with more than one part to them.

E Estimate answers and write an E beside estimated answers. Return to them later.

R Review test, making sure no questions have been missed.

Flaws in test construction. Very occasionally, test-takers may be able to answer items correctly by taking advantage of certain flaws in test construction. These should not be relied upon, because major test development companies almost never make these errors; however, they can sometimes lead test-takers to the right answer. Small-scale test developers or classroom instructors have also been known to use these "flaws" to help test-takers select a correct answer (Chittooran and Miles, 2001). Following, are some common flaws in test construction:

- Options that do not grammatically match the stem point to the wrong answer. Conversely, agreement in tenses and number between stem and options often indicates the right answer.
- The correct choice will often be couched in familiar language or in colloquial phrasing.
- The longest option is often the right choice because it has to contain a great deal of information.
- Implausible or obviously humorous choices are often not the correct option.
- The test option that may not have been selected so far (e.g., option e) may be the correct answer.
- Exercise caution when items contain the following words: always, never, all, everyone, must, should, and only. Such absolutes rarely exist in real life.
- Detailed stems can often be matched with detailed, more specific options.
- The correct option is often a generalized or broad one to give it wider applicability than the others.

- On items containing numerical information, the options are usually placed in correct sequence (e.g., 1,3,7, 9 rather than 9,3.1,7). If they are not, focus on them. Further, on such items, the correct answer is often not one of the extremes.
- Two options that are identical (after rewording and re-reading) cannot both be right. Focus on them.
- Focus on two similar options that differ on only one point (e.g., pupils constricting or pupils dilating).
- Focus on two diametrically opposed, mutually exclusive options (e.g., life and death).
- Avoid highly emotionally charged words: nonsense, harebrained, foolhardy.
- On questions about best practices, avoid options that place the discipline (e.g., school psychology) in a bad light.
- The best answers make sense and are not flippant.

Management of Test Anxiety

Test anxiety, which is learned, includes a fear of taking tests and an expectation of poor performance that is based on difficulty of the material to be learned or difficulty of the test itself (Hong, 1999; LeFrancois, 2000; Zohar, 1998). Test anxiety manifests itself, to varying degrees, in worry (thoughts) and emotionality (physical symptoms and tension). Comprehensive research into test anxiety suggests that it negatively influences test performance and can make the difference between a high and low test score, even in the case of a test-taker who understands the test, has prepared for it, and is test wise. Test anxiety is associated with poor performance but is also related to low self-esteem. Further, highly anxious students do worse than less anxious students on tests but also do not profit from instruction as much as less anxious students. Conversely, individuals who do

not experience high levels of test anxiety tend to achieve at higher levels (Schonwetter, 1995; Tuckman and Abry, 1998).

The prevention of test anxiety is preferable to its management (LeFrancois, 2000) and test anxiety can be prevented through the use of test preparation , increasing motivation to do well, and teaching self-regulation (VanZile-Tamsen, 1998). However, most test-takers report feeling some degree of anxiety and this should be expected. Most effective efforts at managing test anxiety include changing thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes about personal competence and behavior, teaching relaxation (King 1998), and helping develop learning/thinking strategies (Oakerson, 1993). In general, effective approaches at managing anxiety involve taking active steps to help test-takers feel in control in anxiety-producing situations.

A thorough command of test content almost certainly will help reduce anxiety. The taking of practice tests, while time-consuming, is highly advantageous, particularly if the test is taken under the same conditions under which the actual test will be taken. It might serve a useful purpose for anxious test-takers to remind themselves that those who are scoring the test do not expect perfection, that indeed, in some cases, minimal levels of competence are all that is required.

The days preceding an important test can be very tense indeed. Individuals may benefit from expressing their anxiety to other people but not allowing either themselves or others to dwell on it. Anxious test-takers can sometimes talk themselves out of their anxiety by devaluing the test ("It's just a test, after all"); however, it is important that this approach not be over-used in case the test-taker loses motivation to do well. It is also recommended that anxious test-takers limit their interactions with other anxious people. Finally, it is important to treat anxiety but also do everything possible to improve the chances of doing well on the test.

During the test, it is important that anxious test-takers concentrate on their own tests and not allow themselves to get distracted by others in the room, either those who seem to be struggling themselves, or those who appear to be having no difficulty at all. There are some very anxious individuals for whom no amount of test preparation is enough to reduce their anxiety; for these people, sitting down to take the test, and finding that they are getting the easy ones right, may help them get into a test-taking mode and start feeling confident.

Reducing Anxiety: Dealing with Worry

Cognitive-behavioral approaches have been especially helpful in reducing the worry associated with test anxiety (LeFrancois, 2000). Some of these techniques include, thought-stopping, the rubber-band technique (snapping a rubber band on one's wrist when worrisome thoughts intrude), replacing irrational statements and beliefs (I'm totally ignorant") with realistic, positive self-talk and coping statements ("I don't know everything but I do know a lot"), and writing a letter that contains all one's fears and then burning it. It is also important for test-takers to view their chances of success realistically, and to consider the worst-case scenario. For example, test-takers may worry that they will fail a test; however, this may not be a realistic fear if they have never failed a test in their lives. They could also consider the test an exciting challenge that pits test-taker against test developer and gives them a chance to show their caliber. Other techniques that have worked include the use of visualization and daydreaming. Students are asked to visualize success, to see themselves holding an excellent score report, or being surrounded by admiring friends and relatives, all exclaiming over the magnificence of their performance. Other techniques that help reduce worry, include setting realistic, short-term, interim goals that are likely to be reached successfully. Setting oneself impossibly complex and

ambitious goals is likely to cause extreme anxiety and a feeling that success will never be attained. It is also important to reward or praise oneself when these interim goals are reached.

Reducing Anxiety: Dealing with Emotionality.

Some symptoms of emotionality associated with test anxiety include, "butterflies in the stomach," an upset stomach, feelings of nausea, vomiting, and a churning in the stomach. Facial and body muscles may be tense, headaches may strike without warning, and general body aches and pains are common. Several authors (e.g., Collins,1999; King, Ollendick, Murphy, and Molloy, 1998) have suggested approaches to reducing the emotionality associated with anxiety. Following, are some suggestions to manage this aspect of test anxiety:

- Relaxation approaches have been particularly helpful in the management of test anxiety. Some of the more common techniques include, deep breathing, scanning one's body and relaxing one part at a time, alternately tensing and relaxing fingers, toes, or forehead muscles, so that the difference between the tense state and the relaxed one is apparent, listening to soothing music, and using guided imagery to help individuals transport themselves to a calm, restful place where there is no fear and anxiety.
- Count backwards from 5 to 1 and visualize numbers as large, bright, and filling the mind. This technique is often very effective because it helps take one's concentration off the worry, which is often nebulous, and transfer it to something specific.
- Individuals in physical pain can often be helped by relaxation and meditation. It sometimes helps to describe one's pain in detail by concentrating on it and then focusing on how large it is and where it is located. Again, concentration on the pain prevents test-takers from concentrating on the test itself, which is the root of the pain.

- A healthy lifestyle that includes good nutrition, adequate sleep, moderate aerobic exercise, limited caffeine, and minimal life-stress is an important aspect of managing test anxiety.
- Prayer and meditation are powerful relaxers for people who believe in them but are of limited utility for those who do not .
- Finally, if anxiety is debilitating or if none of the individual's own methods work, it is important to get professional help from a counselor or a psychologist. Trained professionals may be able to assist with relaxation training, systematic desensitization of anxiety, and development of an anxiety hierarchy (Collins,1999).

A brief review and a good night's sleep are critical the day before the test . Medications should be limited, all necessary materials should be gathered, meals should be fairly light, low in fat and proteins, and high in complex carbohydrates for maximum alertness, and caffeine intake should be reduced. It is advisable that test-takers arrive early for the test, but not too early, that they dress in layers to accommodate for the vagaries of a room that does not have adequate temperature control, and to reschedule, in the event of illness.

In summary, the likelihood of test success can be greatly enhanced through the approaches described in this paper. School psychologists who understand the characteristics of the test and thoroughly learn test content, utilize test preparation strategies, become test wise, and work on ways to manage test anxiety, are more likely to improve their chances of doing well, and in so doing, to reach their personal and professional goals.

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