

Coaching Your Child Through Test Anxiety

1. Help them prepare:

- Make sure they have a quiet, undisturbed place to study.
- Encourage (don't nag) regular homework and review.
- Encourage use of study guides provided by the teacher.
- Convey positive expectation that preparation helps on tests (Please do NOT warn/threaten a worrier, "The test is coming! The test is coming!" That's akin to telling them the sky is falling.)
- Encourage adequate sleep before the test.
- Ask them, in an interested way, to tell you what they talked about in class surrounding the topic, what things the teacher asked, etc. (This sharpens recall and retention and gives clues as to what might be on the test.)
- Ask them what part is hardest for them and why this might be so.

2. Help them learn positive attitude:

- Help them think and speak good thoughts to themselves, i.e., positive **self talk**: "I have studied. I know lots about this."
 "What if I remember more than I think I can?"
 "I know that I can calm myself down and then I'll think better."
 "I might not know everything, but I know a lot, and that will help me figure out other problems that seem hard at first."
- Show your calm, confidence - Convey that a test helps us learn what else we might need to know. Compliment them (if deserved) for the work they have put in.

3. Help them learn self-calming techniques:

- Adopt positive self-talk of your own and let them hear you use it.
- Teach them deep breathing - three long, slow breaths to the belly, not the chest, each followed by a long, slow exhale, gently blowing onto the palm of the hand.
- Help them with positive visualizations: encourage them to visualize receiving their test and calmly reminding themselves they have studied, they know lots, etc. (all the positive self-talk above); help them visualize themselves reading a hard question, maybe about that hardest part, and then calmly rethinking all the facts they know about the subject.