



# *The Nurse's Corner*

**Mental Health Awareness 2026 theme: "More Good Days"**



## **TEST ANXIETY**

Test anxiety is a type of performance anxiety that many students of all ages experience. This happens when students worry they will not perform well on something they deem as important. It is the top learning challenge that students face and can be mild, moderate, or severe. A small amount of the natural stress response can be helpful. However, in large amounts, it can become debilitating to students and to their performance. Tests are a necessary part of education and today, the amount of standardized testing is increasing. It is important that we recognize when a child is experiencing more than a healthy amount of worry when it comes to tests so that we can find help and teach proper coping strategies.

The first step towards dealing with this challenge is asking your child specific questions about his or her nerves and what is causing them.

### **TIPS FOR REDUCING TEST ANXIETY**

#### **Leading up to the test**

1. Ask your child what's making him nervous.
2. Help him prepare little by little; create a study schedule.
3. Find study methods that are comfortable for him; flashcards, reciting facts, rereading, completing a study guide.
4. Boost confidence: give honest and specific praise, point out small successes.
5. Ensure that your child gets enough sleep and eats a good breakfast before the test.

#### **During the test**

- 1) Work on positive self-talk: replace anxious thoughts with encouraging thoughts.
- 2) Teach calming techniques: Breathe deeply from the belly. Tighten various muscles then relax them. Close your eyes and count to 10.
- 3) Focus on the present moment, on what the 5 senses are experiencing.
- 4) Help your child accept that he might not know something and need to move on.
- 5) Break up complicated questions into smaller parts.

#### **After the test**

- 1) Debrief the test with your child and after he receives his grade.
- 2) Ask how he felt and what he could do differently next time leading up to the test.

If you have any questions, please contact the school nurses:

Katy Stokke, RN, Elementary - [kstokke@spirit-lake.k12.ia.us](mailto:kstokke@spirit-lake.k12.ia.us) - 712-336-2822 ext 4383

Macy Cornwall, RN, Middle & High School - [mcornwall@spirit-lake.k12.ia.us](mailto:mcornwall@spirit-lake.k12.ia.us) 712-336-1370 ext 4380