

Teacher Guide: Emotion Reappraisal

Time: 10 minutes

Audience: Teachers of secondary students

Research citation

Jamieson J. P., Peters B. J., Greenwood E. J. & Altose A. J. (2016). Re-appraising stress arousal improves performance and reduces evaluation anxiety in classroom exam situations. *Social Psychological Personality Science*, 7, 579–587.

Research background

- The exercise provided in this guide helps students regulate their anxiety prior to taking a test in math or other subjects.
- This exercise targets the physiological component of anxiety and asks students to reinterpret signals of arousal as a resource that can improve their performance on the test. Instead of interpreting their physiological sensations (such as a racing pulse) as a sign of anxiety, the exercise guides students to reinterpret these sensations as a beneficial and energizing force.
- Researchers found that students who completed this type of exercise 10 minutes before taking an exam improved their performance compared to student who did not complete the exercise, and this was especially true for students from lower-income backgrounds.

Timing	Topic/Steps/Activities	Teacher Notes
1 minute	<p>Transition into activity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Prior to taking a math test or other test, ask students to turn their attention to you. They can remain at their desks. 	
8 minutes	<p>Emotion reappraisal exercise</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Share the following information about test anxiety. <p><i>Suggested script</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In stressful situations, like taking a math test, our bodies react in very specific ways. The increase in sensations you may feel during stress is not harmful. Instead, these responses evolved to help our ancestors survive by delivering oxygen to where it is needed in the body. We encourage you to re-interpret your bodily signals during your math test as beneficial. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Guide students through a focused reflection on the feelings they are experiencing using the following prompts. <p><i>Suggested script</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What thoughts do you have about the test you are about to take? What concerns do you have? (Pause for students to think and write, respond or discuss.) What do you notice about how your body feels right now? For example, is your heart beating faster than usual? (Pause for students to think and write, respond or discuss.) How could these feelings be helpful when you're taking the math test? (Pause for students to think and write, respond or discuss.) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Affirm for students that anxiety can be used as a beneficial and energizing force to help them perform better on the test. 	<p><i>You can have students write individual responses to these prompts, discuss them with a partner, or ask volunteers to share with the large group.</i></p>
1 minute	<p>Transition out of activity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Allow students to transition into taking their test calmly without having to hurry. 	