

Learning to Face Fear: Anxiety and the Adolescent Student
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“Quick tips:”

1. Talk to your symptoms
2. Take a deep breath
3. “Quick Fix” PMR
4. “Wonder Woman” pose
5. “Trigger words”
6. Catastrophe scale

“In vivo” (live) desensitization

- ❖ Gradual exposure to fear stimulus: performing for gradually larger audiences and in more stressful situations (after video recordings and stuffed animals)

Symptoms of anxiety: Physiological, Emotional, Behavioral, and Cognitive

- ❖ Sympathetic activation (fight-or-flight; the “gas”)
- ❖ Parasympathetic activation (rest and digest; the “brake”)

✓**Quick Tip #1:** Talk to your symptoms

Yerkes-Dodson Law: Optimal performance is achieved with an optimal level of activation.

- ❖ *Positive aspects of adrenaline:*
 - Increased energy and concentration
 - Heightened musical awareness

Characteristics of flow (STER)

- ❖ Selflessness, timelessness, effortless, richness¹

Relaxation techniques

- ❖ *Muscle to Mind:* Deep breathing, mindful movement, progressive relaxation
- ❖ *Mind to Muscle:* Meditation, prayer, imagery, affirmations/self-talk

Breath work for relaxation

✓**Quick Tip #2:** Take a deep breath

- ❖ Counting
- ❖ “Boxed breathing”
- ❖ Extended exhalation (working toward 2:1 ratio)
- ❖ Left uninostril breathing
- ❖ Alternate nostril breathing (in right, out left, in left, out right)

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR): Tense and release each muscle group in sequential order.

¹ Kotler, Stephen and Jamie Wheel. *Stealing Fire: How Silicon Valley, Navy SEALs, and Maverick Scientists are Revolutionizing the Way we Live and Work*. New York: Harper Collins, 2017.

✓**Quick Tip #3:** “Quick Fix” PMR

Mindful movement

- ❖ Relaxation
 - Forward folds, inversions, and lateral bends
 - Hold in stillness and move slowly
- ❖ Confidence/energy
 - Backbends and standing poses
 - Flow movement with the breath

✓**Quick Tip #4:** “Wonder Woman” pose

Imagery

- ❖ Successful past performance imagery and future performance imagery
- ❖ Positive, use all the senses, and keep an internal perspective

Self-talk

- ❖ Affirmations, Intentions, and sound/process cues
- ✓**Quick Tip #5:** Use “trigger words” often and immediately before performance

Mind maps

- ❖ Draw a picture that emphasizes large-scale form, character, and imagery

Catastrophe Scale

✓**Quick Tip #6:** Label the “worst thing that could happen” from 1-10

Takeaways

- ❖ Performance journal
- ❖ Practice relaxation often
- ❖ Incorporate self-talk into daily routine
- ❖ Plan out pre-performance routines
 - Unite breath and movement, use imagery, and end with an affirmation
- ❖ Apps: Headspace; Stop, Breathe, and Think; Calm; Pacifica (among others)

Resources:

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