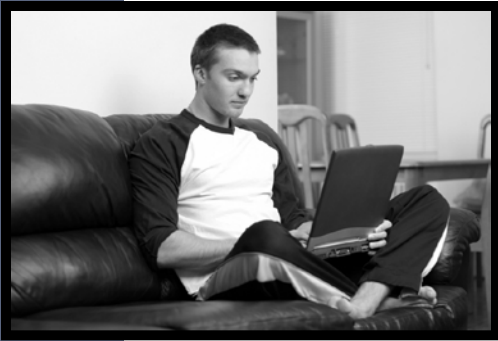
The background of the slide is a clear blue sky filled with soft, white, wispy clouds. On the left side, three autumn leaves are shown in a vertical line, appearing to fall from top to bottom. The top leaf is a mix of brown and orange, the middle one is a vibrant red-orange, and the bottom one is a deep, bright red. Each leaf has a visible stem and vein structure.

# Managing Your Test Anxiety



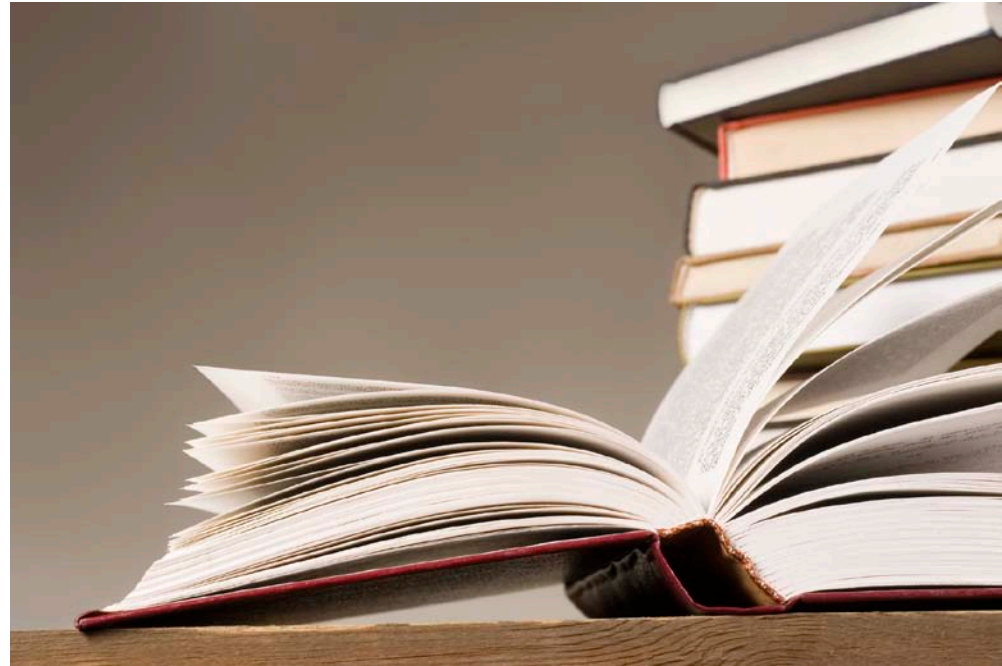
## Separate **lack of preparation with test anxiety.**

- If you spent the previous night cramming material, or even started studying the day before, you are NOT prepared.
- When you study like that, you are creating a short-term memory, not storing the material.
- **It is very difficult retrieve material you haven't stored.**
- You should study at least a week in advance of the exam!

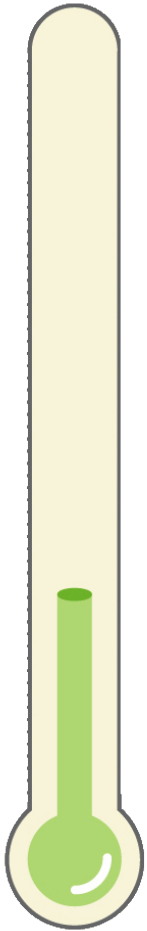
# The most important Test Taking strategy is:

## Preparation

- Psychological
- Emotional
- Informational



# Take a moment now, and think of your stress temperature.

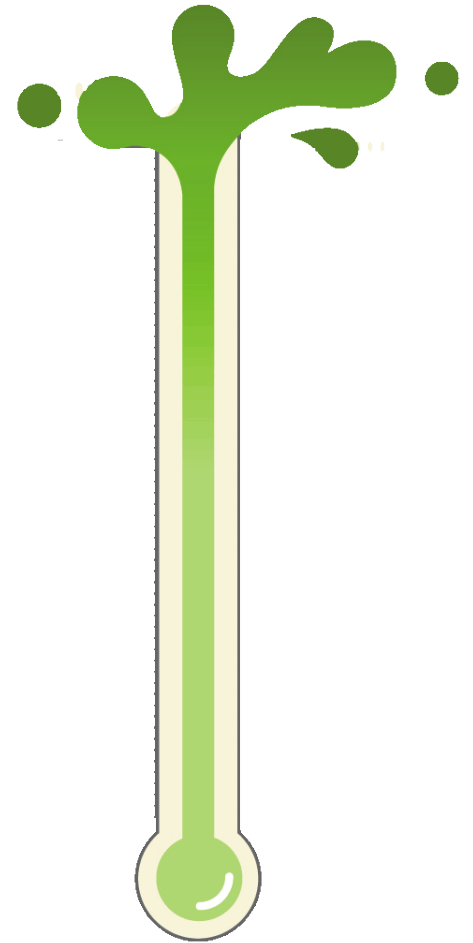


**On a scale from 1-10, what is your current stress level?**

- 1: sitting on a beach with your toes in the sand
- 10: sheer panic

**Now take yourself into the future, sitting in front of a test.**

- **What is your stress temperature now? Did it go up?**
- **We are able to move up our anxiety level simply by thinking about events that make us anxious.**



# What can you do about test anxiety?

- **Learn to understand the stress response**
- **Learn to recognize and monitor your symptoms of stress**
- **Learn to reduce (not remove) your stress**



# Understanding Stress

- Stress is a response to any physical, emotional, psychological, or intellectual demand that requires a readjustment of the individual in some way.
- Stress is not something we can avoid



**Stress is a fact of life.**



- **When you're in a situation that you perceive to be stressful your brain will switch to a fight or flight mode.**
- **It releases adrenaline and noradrenaline, the Hormonal system releases.**
- **The response is both physical and emotional**



# The Stress Response

Say you encounter a bear in the forest...



YOU



SITUATION  
(stressor)



PERCEPTION

SO



RUN  
(stress)

# The Stress Response

As a result of seeing this bear, your body prepares for fleeing from it:

- your heart rate goes up,
- your lungs start breathing faster,
- you are (understandably) very nervous
- you have drymouth.

**Your brain stops working**, because its already told your body to RUN and now it can turn itself off in preparation for flight.





# Physical Reactions

- Muscle tension
- Digestive Upsets
- Dry Mouth
- Headaches
- Pounding or Racing Heart
- Shortness of Breath
- Sweating



# Emotional Reactions

- Anxiety
- Frustration
- Discouragement
- Self-Doubt
- The “blues”
- Apathy

# The Stress Response

These days, we don't run into many bears, but other common stressors are:

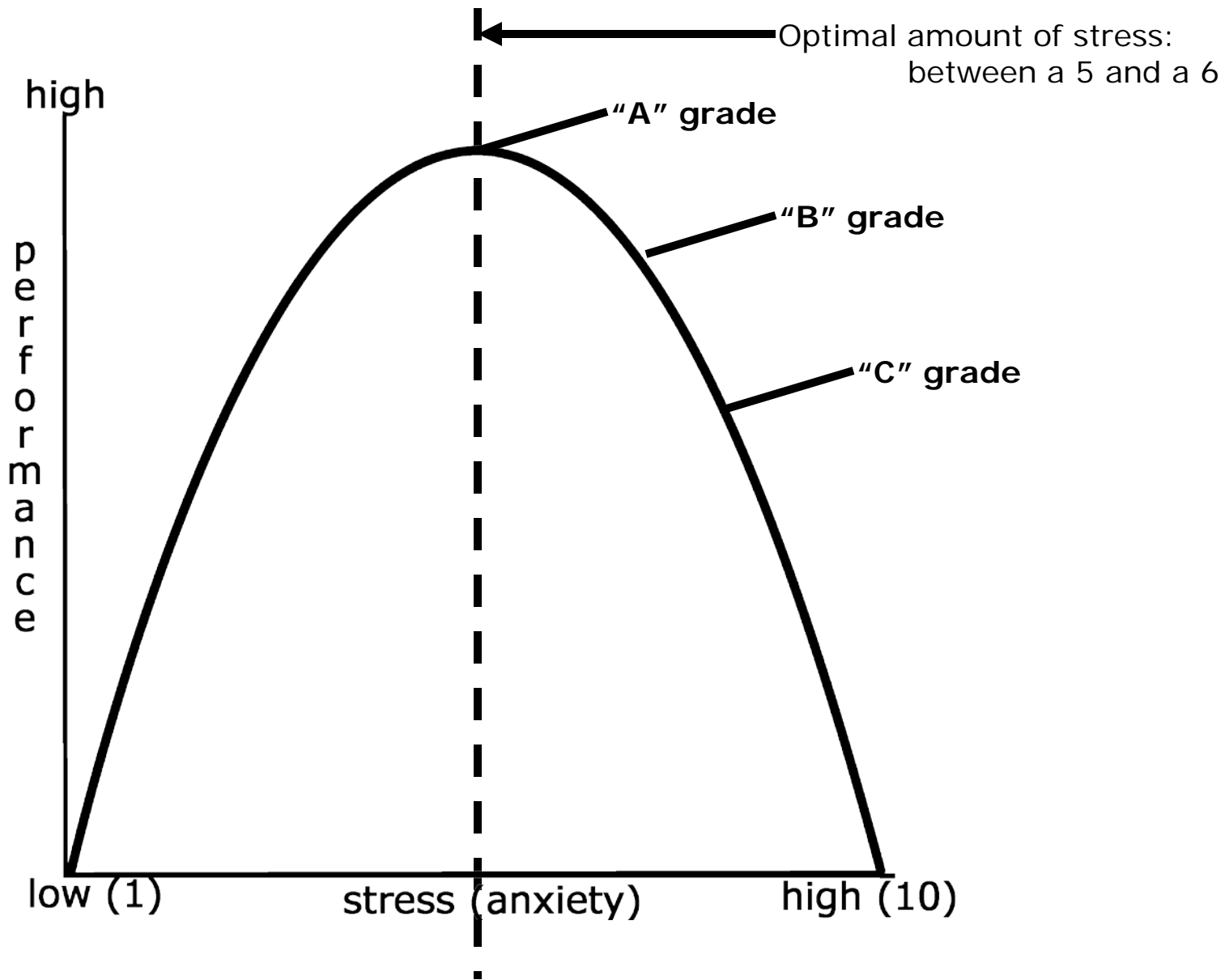
- Traffic
- Long lines
- Significant Other
- **TESTS**



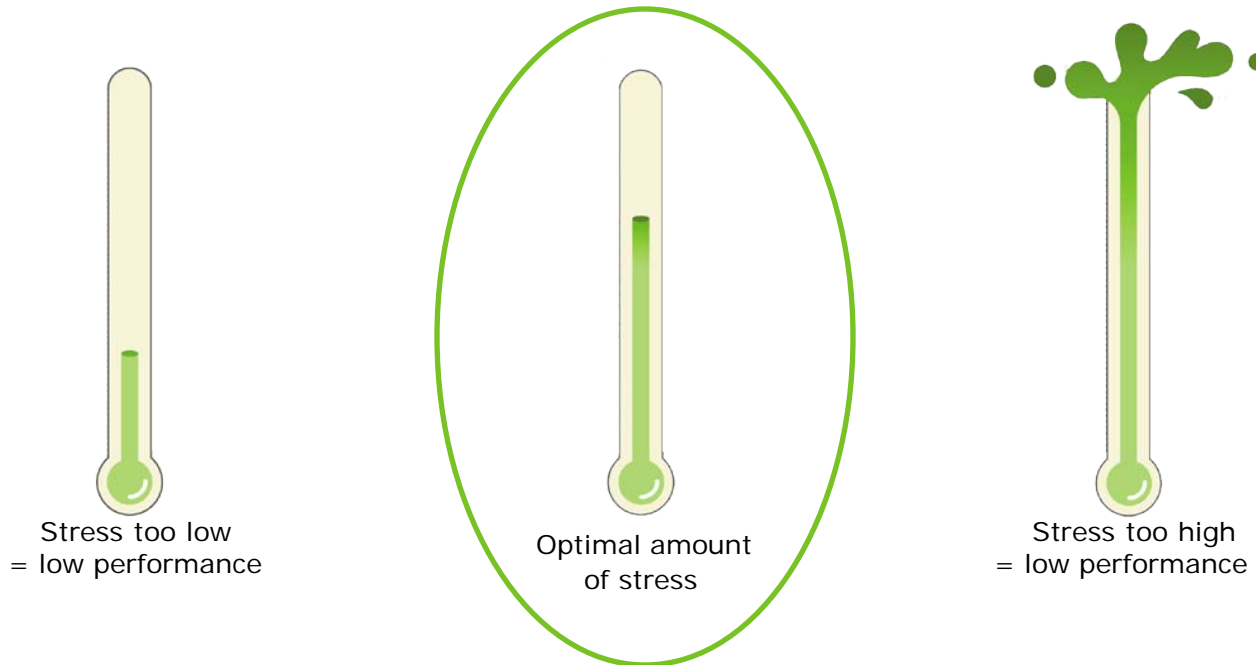


**Remember how we said that  
“Stress is a fact of life?”**

**Stress can be a *good* thing...in  
fact, some stress is a *necessary*  
thing for success.**



# What does *that* mean?



- You need some stress in order to have the optimal amount of performance
- In order to keep yourself at the optimal level (between a 5 and a 6), you have to learn to control the triggering of your stress response.



# Learning your ABC's

- A = **Activating Event** (your exam)
- B = **Belief** (what you think about the exam: I'm going to fail!)
- C = **Consequence** (of your belief about the exam: you do poorly)
- D = **Dispute** (dispute the ineffective thought: I *know* I can do this! I *know* I'll do well)
- E = **Effect** (when you change the belief the effect is different: you do well!)

# Common thoughts that occur with test anxiety.

- I always panic and my mind goes blank
- When I can't answer the first question, I panic
- If I don't pass this test, it means I'm stupid
- If I don't pass this test, I'll flunk the class
- If I flunk the class, I'll flunk out of college.



# Considering what you say to yourself: Thinking patterns and “self-talk”

- Catastrophizing
  - “If I fail this test I won’t get into business school”
- Maximize the bad and minimize the good
  - “I got an A- but I can’t believe I missed #10!”
- Shoulds and Musts
  - “I should have known better...”
- Mindreading
  - “The professor will think I’m stupid if I can’t answer this question.”



So, it's important to ask yourself,  
"Are my habitual, automatic  
thoughts...."

- Negative
  - Extreme
  - Rigid
  - Alarming
- or**
- Realistic
  - Moderate
  - Flexible
  - Reassuring





# Prescribed Breathing

1. Sit comfortably with feet planted firmly on the floor, body weight resting evenly on the spinal column. Hands resting on lap, eyes closed, and garments appropriately loosened.
2. Before beginning the prescribed breathing, take your pulse. Count the beats for 30 seconds and double. After the breathing exercise, take your pulse once again. If you had an elevated pulse before beginning, the breathing exercise will often lower it a bit.



# Prescribed Breathing

3. Inhale for 3 seconds  
Hold for 12 seconds  
Exhale for 6 seconds

**Repeat this 5 times.**

4. On the 6<sup>th</sup> cycle, breath in fully and quickly, and hold your breath for 20 seconds. Then exhale explosively. Afterwards sit quietly for a moment while allowing your breath to reach its normal rate and level
5. Take your pulse for a second time while sitting quietly. If you were nervous to begin with, you will often show a lowered pulse afterwards.



# Prescribed Breathing

- Practice this exercise frequently until you can visualize the resulting relaxation before you begin.
- The more you practice prescribed breathing, the better the results. (that means you have to practice for it to work)
- You might wish to use the experience to prepare yourself for those situations which are likely to make you anxious or angry.
- The entire experience usually takes approximately 2½ minutes.



## *Learning to Reduce Stress*

- *CALM breathing*
- *Healthy thinking*
- *Visualization*
- *Focus*





## *Calm Breathing*

Use 5-8 times per day for 2-3 months until this skill becomes a habit.



## *Healthy Thinking*

Challenge and replace alarming thoughts with reassuring thoughts.



# *Visualization*

Imagine walking toward a classroom on exam day. As you get closer and closer, pay attention to your stress level. When it begins to rise, stop and engage in CALM breathing. After you lower your stress level, continue walking toward your classroom. Continue practicing this visualization until you are able to visualize yourself working productively on an exam and experience a decrease in your test anxiety symptoms.



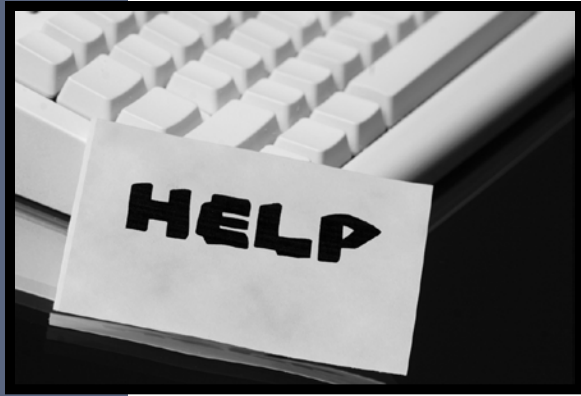
# *Focus*

- Anticipate some anxiety, but remember to keep it manageable
- Remember that the stress response provides us with a healthy reminder not to panic, but to cope.
- Relax. Remain in control. Take slow, deep breaths (CALM)
- Don't think about the fear. Just focus on what you have to do. Take one question at a time.
- Do not make negative self-statements or predictions.

# Stress Minimization/ Wellness

- **Stress Minimization** = self care is a priority
- **BALANCE**
  - School vs. work vs. YOU time
  - Time management, to-do lists
  - Prioritize
  - Recognize your limits
  - Exercise
  - Talk about stressors
  - Hobbies and relaxing activities





# Getting More Assistance

- Talk to your advisor
- Consult with your instructor
- Make an appointment at the University Counseling Center



# *References*

Cozzens, Dave. Managing Your Test Anxiety. A UW University Counseling Center production in collaboration with Student Support Services. 11/30/2005.

Matheny, Kenneth B., Ph.D (1985). Printed course materials, CPS 736: Psychological change strategies. Department of Counseling and Psychological Services, Georgia State University

University Counseling Center

766-2187, 341 Knight Hall