

Overcome Math Anxiety With These Techniques

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Math anxiety can make you choke on tests or get nervous doing any task that involves numbers. These are suggestions for dealing with those feelings in general and in relation to a little-known condition called dyscalculia.

When you think about all the ways you use math in everyday life, you'll want to feel more at ease with it.

General Suggestions For Dealing With Math Anxiety

- 1. Acknowledge your emotions.** The first step is to be honest about how you really feel. Ignoring your emotions or trying to suppress them usually backfires. Bring them out into the open and find constructive solutions.
- 2. Plan ahead.** Be proactive. Spot the first signs of distress and look for ways to calm down. If you get nervous just thinking about preparing your department budget, get an early start so you'll have more time. Review last year's figures so you're better prepared and know how to get started.
- 3. Think rationally.** Regard every test or task as a chance to improve and learn from mistakes.
- 4. Focus your attention.** *Keep your mind on what you're doing rather than how well you're performing.* Give yourself permission to worry later if that helps.
- 5. Start with your strongest areas.** *For tests, it's a good idea to scan everything and*

then start with the questions you know you can answer. It will help you feel more confident and use your time productively. You can also adapt this strategy for other tasks.

Specific Suggestions For Dealing With Dyscalculia

- 1. Recognize the signs.** Dyscalculia is a learning disorder that makes it difficult to understand numbers and how they relate to each other. Doctors estimate that about 5% of the population may be affected. In general, you'll find that you are slow and prone to errors in basic arithmetic. It's natural to feel anxious about numbers if you struggle with this condition.
- 2. Take a look at your family.** There appears to be some genetic basis for dyscalculia. If your mother counts on her fingers, you may too. Having dyslexia also increases the risk.
- 3. Train with concrete materials.** Educators are starting to find that extensive use of concrete materials like blocks may help. The same is true for computer games full of visual aids.
- 4. Develop different strategies. *There are many ways of coping.*** In addition to counting on your fingers, you may want to use a calculator or count by tens.
- 5. Feel good about yourself.** Like any learning disorder, dyscalculia is unrelated to intelligence. You can still be successful in life.

Everyday Math That Improves Your Life

- 1. Make a safe bet.** Probabilities are a form of math. They help you understand

your chances of winning a lottery or needing an umbrella on a cloudy day.

2. **Earn more investment income.** Reading an investment prospectus takes math skills. You can make sounder investment decisions when you figure out the equations involved.
3. **Spend your money more wisely.** Maybe you're trying to decide whether to buy or lease your next car. ***A facility for numbers will make it easier to spot the best deal on major purchases or weekly groceries.***
4. **Improve your housekeeping.** We often use math without even being aware of it. Tripling a recipe for a family dinner is a matter of ratios and proportions. Buying carpet requires measuring a room correctly.

Even if you've been nervous around numbers all your life, there are ways to reduce your anxiety and become more proficient at everyday math. Focus on making gradual improvements and remind yourself of all the things you do well.