

Test Taking Strategies for Kids With ADHD

By

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Taking tests isn't much fun for many of us. The mere mention of the word can bring about stress, fear, even panic attacks for some. Our stress may be due to poor teachers, either in the past or present; poor test scores and a fear of repeating those; or simply the pressure we put on ourselves.

And to top it off, the only thing I have found worse than the anxiety a test can cause you is the pain it causes to watch your child go through that anxiety. I would do anything to help my daughters to not have to go through that.

So, as we head into the holiday season, which for some reason seems to bring out the testing in our schools, I thought I would put together this brief report discussing some of the more effective strategies to offer your child that will help them perform better on tests, and most importantly, help them reduce their anxiety level.

Below you will find a list of some very useful test taking strategies that will prove very beneficial to you and your children. I found that if you did not suffer test anxiety yourself, it can be hard to understand how they must feel. And even worse, you may not know the things to teach your children that will help them navigate their tests in the future.

Breathe Properly

Teach your children to breathe correctly, in through their nose and out through their mouth. Now, this may sound very simple, and it is. It is also very helpful. Our bodies react to the slightest inputs from the world, and from ourselves. When we take the time to breathe slowly and deliberately, we slow down our heart rate.

By slowing down our heart rate we force our bodies to behave calmer. Our breathing slows and our anxiety lessens. This exercise can be done anytime they are feeling anxious (while studying, before a test or during a test).

Count to 5

Counting to 5 is a very simple thing that will force our minds to stop the cycle they tend to get into. Oftentimes we get caught in a cycle of worrying about our answer, is it correct, what about the other choice, etc.

Kids with ADHD can be such perfectionists that they actually become paralyzed at the thought of not being perfect. Counting to 5 can force them to stop listening to the thoughts about perfection and get them back into the present.

Look up towards the ceiling

One of the more challenging things for kids with ADHD (or adults for that matter) is the stress of sitting still. Sitting in the same chair, in the same room, without talking, for however long a test takes can feel

excruciating! But if you glance up to look around the room, trying to get some visual stimulation, you can get accused of cheating.

The answer: looking up. If you look up at the ceiling you will not be accused of cheating, at least hopefully not. It will not only allow them the chance to look at a different scene, but it can also help them access their visual memory, where much of their information is stored.

Use their own logic

Encourage them to use their own logic. If the question is multiple choice, teach them to rule out the answers they know don't work first. Then look at the remaining answers and go from there. This will not only help them to get more answers correct (hopefully) but will also encourage them to rely on themselves more, raising their own self esteem.

It's only a test

This is not to say that tests aren't important, or that your children shouldn't study their hardest and take them seriously. It's just meant as a reminder that it is one of many tests they will take during their school career.

With all the pressure ADHD kids tend to put on themselves, it is important not be added to the list of people and things that stress them out. They, perhaps more than other kids, need an ally they can count on, and when you make yourself another source of anxiety, they lose you as an ally.

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