



## TIP SHEET

### Managing NCLEX Test Anxiety

If you are overwhelmed by test anxiety while you are in nursing school you are not alone. Whether or not you struggled with test anxiety previously, nursing school can bring test anxiety to a whole new level and become a significant obstacle to your nursing school and NCLEX success.

#### Understanding Test Anxiety:

Test anxiety isn't just about feeling nervous on the day of the exam; it's a cumulative stress that builds over time. Factors like performance pressure, peer pressure, time pressure, and high stakes testing all contribute to test anxiety for nursing students.

Now you have the ultimate of all high stakes tests - NCLEX.

You've been preparing for this throughout your entire nursing school journey, and your transition to the next step hinges on this ONE TEST. No wonder you are anxious.

If you have already taken NCLEX and not passed, now the stakes are higher.

Nearly every client I have worked with in my career as an NCLEX coach has reported NCLEX test anxiety. Many researchers report that test anxiety is a result of not being adequately prepared for the test, but I have found in my work many students who were fully prepared and still struggled because of test day anxiety.

Let's look at how you can manage test anxiety and be successful.

## Improve your Knowledge Base

You can be fully prepared for your test and still have test anxiety, however, the first, and MOST IMPORTANT step to take to overcome your test anxiety is to be ready.

Do you really know your stuff or do you get the gist of a topic and struggle with the details?

You may have gotten through nursing school with this learning style of knowing the basics of content but not understanding details. NCLEX questions are written to decipher between knowing the gist and understanding the details. There is no way around it. Unless you are solid on your NCLEX need to know content, you can't overcome your NCLEX test anxiety.

## Develop a Habit of Using Positive Self-talk

What messages scroll through your head? Does this sound familiar?

“I hope I pass.”

“I don't know this.”

“I always blow the test”

Negative self-talk sabotages your success. Improving your self-talk will help you manage test anxiety.

Positive self-talk won't overcome not being prepared, but it will decrease your anxiety as you prepare and on test day.

Tune into your self-talk. When you hear negative thoughts, STOP them and replace with positive thoughts.

## Use Mindful Deep Breathing

When you are anxious, you activate your sympathetic nervous system. Your heart is racing, your breathing increases, you're sweating. When you do focused breathing you activate your parasympathetic nervous system, which basically dials down your sympathetic response. Because you can't activate both systems at the same time, deep breathing is an effective way to STOP anxiety.

## Decrease Baseline Stress

Preparing for NCLEX is a phase in time in your life, and success hinges on being able to downregulate your stress. You can't quit your job and get rid of your family, but now is the time to take inventory of your lifestyle habits and address stress factors that can be managed at this point in time. You will find in my book; [Overcoming NCLEX Failure: A Guide to Retest Success](#), an entire chapter devoted to stress management for NCLEX.

Managing test anxiety is a journey that requires commitment and self-awareness. By addressing underlying stressors, implementing lifestyle changes, and adopting effective coping strategies, you can alleviate anxiety and perform at your best.

If you are ready to dive deeper into managing test anxiety for NCLEX, consider scheduling a [coaching session](#) to explore tools that will help you.