

## WHAT DO YOU TELL YOURSELF WHILE TAKING AN EXAM?

Let's look at some types of self-talk and some good and bad examples...

<i>Type</i>	<i>Eecch!</i>	<i>Helpful</i>
1. Worrying about your performance, including how well others are doing compared with you.	“He’s not through yet—good! She finished 20 minutes early. Damn! I hope I’m not the last one to finish.”	“They finished early, I wonder ... there’s no way I can know what’s going on ... forget them.”
2. Ruminating too long and fruitlessly over alternative answers or responses.	“If I miss two more, it’s all over... I just have to <i>know</i> the rest. Why is this question taking me <i>so long</i> ? I studied so hard.	“Now don’t look for tricks, just what does it say? What’s the basic question. Oh, I can obviously eliminate that alternative. Good. That’s a start.”
3. Being preoccupied with bodily reactions associated with anxiety.	“Now calm down and stop that shaking ... crazy shaking, stop it! What’s happening to me, it won’t stop, what’s happening to me!”	“My hands are shaking... Okay. I’m tense, stop a moment. Deep breath ... calm ... relax, that’s better, it won’t kill me. Good.”
4. Ruminating about the possible consequences of doing poorly on the test.	“Oh Lord, I can’t do this problem, I’ll <i>never</i> make it into grad school. I should be able to do this one, and now I’ll blow grad school because I can’t remember this stuff.”	“I don’t remember, how to do this! Hmm, better move on... I can get more points for my energy a few points ahead.”
5. Thoughts and feelings of inadequacy—this may include active self-criticism or self-condemnation, calling yourself “stupid” etc.	“Hell! That’s two in a row I didn’t get! <i>Why</i> didn’t I review that? God I’m so dumb. I’ll never make it through this.”	“I should know that ... Okay, just let it go now, no need to get uptight. Just take them one at a time.”

Now it’s your turn. Over the next week we monitor your self and see what unhelpful types you engage in, Record some sentences on the back of this sheet, and more importantly, *generate some helpful self-talk replacements!*

Adapted from *Coping with Test Anxiety*, Frank Richardson  
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