

Expressive Writing as a Manipulation to Reduce Test Anxiety

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Students of all ages struggle with test anxiety. Not only does this anxiety affect the mental well-being of a student but it can also impair test performance. Previous research has found that expressive writing about the feelings a student may have before an exam can significantly reduce test anxiety. Prior experiments were carried out in a laboratory setting and without serious consequences for participants. These conditions do not clarify whether the results found could be helpful for a typical university exam. The goal of this study is to determine whether this manipulation can help students at Valparaiso University. Before exam day, chemistry students were asked to fill out questionnaires about their anxiety. On the day of the exam, students were randomly assigned to either write expressively about their feelings regarding the exam or write factually about the previous day's events for ten minutes. After the writing manipulation, all students took the chemistry exam. We predict that test scores will be higher for students in the expressive writing group than students in the control group. Furthermore, we predict that the manipulation will be more effective for students who experience higher test anxiety than for students who experience lower anxiety.

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