

Overcoming the Fear of the Mathematical Realm

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What is Math Anxiety? Do I suffer from Math Anxiety? What can I do to reduce or even get rid of my Math Anxiety? These are just a few questions that many people, especially students, ask themselves before or even while taking a math class.

Many people suffer from some degree of Math Anxiety. It is actually a very common response to Math in the United States, but what is it exactly? Here are a few responses from people who are suffering with Math Anxiety.

“When I look at a math problem, my mind goes completely blank. I feel stupid, and I can’t remember how to do even the simplest things.”

“Math exams terrify me. My palms get sweaty, I breathe too fast, and often I can’t even make my eyes focus on the paper. It’s worse if I look around, because I’d see everybody else working, and know that I’m the only one who can’t do it.”

So Math Anxiety is the feeling of intense frustration or helplessness about one's ability to do math.

Some people’s minds go blank and some people even get physically ill, but Math Anxiety is not the end of the world. There are many people out in the world today who have held themselves back because they have Math Anxiety. All is not lost.

There are many ways to reduce or possibly get rid of Math Anxiety, but lets go with ten helpful hints.

1. Overcome negative self-talk. “If you say you can’t than you can’t, but if you say you can you can.”
Negative talk makes you want to study less and try less. This is not a way to help you achieve your goals.
2. Ask questions. “No question is a dumb question.” Professors like when students ask questions. It lets them know that a student is interested in learning.
3. Consider math a foreign language -- it must be practiced. Remember some things come easier for people than others. Don’t compare your progress to your friends or classmates.
4. Don't rely on memorization to study mathematics. Taking good notes is a great way to learn math. As a professor is explaining a new topic, write down examples and then review them, especially at least one half-hour after learning the new concept, this helps you retain what you have just learned.
5. READ your math text. No one can help you learn if you aren’t making an effort. This should be one of the first steps taken by a student. Some read the chapter prior to going to class so they already know some of the information, while others read it after, almost like a review, but the reading MUST be done.
6. Study math according to YOUR LEARNING STYLE. Know if you are an audio learner and can listen to lectures, a visual learner where you have to see something done in front of you, or a kinesthetic learner where you are hands on. This will help you to know how to study, how to takes notes, or even if you should record lectures to play them back to you. The more Learning Styles you apply the better you will remember.
7. Get help the same day you don't understand, either from a professor, or from a group of friends or classmates. Don’t let yourself get frustrated and more confused by not getting help. Most people

give up if they don't understand, but go and look for someone to help you. Sometimes just taking a break will let your mind rest so you can think clearly again.

8. Be relaxed and comfortable while studying math, but don't over do it. Make sure you are setting a realistic amount of time to study. This may take some time to figure out. It may need to be thirty minutes a day every other day, but don't give up on yourself.
9. Put math into perspective. If you do get a bad grade on a test don't think it is the end of the world, work a little harder next time. "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."
10. Search out tutoring or study groups on campus. This is a great way to have a continual learning of math. This helps reduce some of the stress because you don't end up cramming the night before a test or quiz.

Like previously mentioned, no one can help yourself more than you. So don't give up so easily if you do have Math Anxiety. There are strategies, organizations, and classes that can help give you a better understanding and a better chance at succeeding in the Mathematical Realm.