

# PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

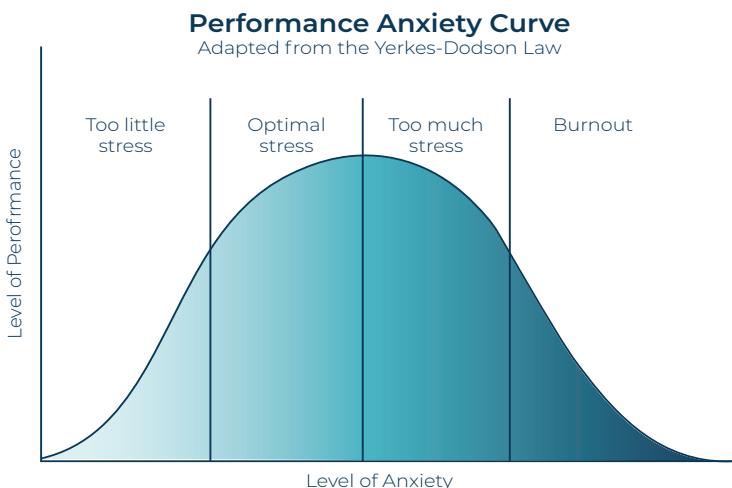
## WHAT IS PERFORMANCE ANXIETY?

Performance anxiety is a type of anxiety, or strong, excessive feeling of fear or worry, that is related to being able to accomplish something specific, or a fear of consequences of not being able to perform well. A person might experience extreme nervousness before or during participation in an activity taking place in front of an audience.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?

- Behavior Changes
- Chills
- Cold Hands or Feet
- Decision Not to Complete the Task
- Difficulty Controlling Bladder
- Difficulty Being Open to Different Thoughts
- Dizziness, Lightheadedness, or Vision Changes
- Dry Mouth
- Fast or Shallow Breathing
- Feeling of Loss of Control
- Headache
- Increased Alertness
- Increased Blood Pressure and Heart Rate
- Pale or Flushed Skin
- Sweating
- Thoughts of Fear of Failure
- Thoughts of Negative Outcomes of Perceived Failure
- Tremors
- Unsettled Stomach

## HOW DOES PERFORMANCE ANXIETY IMPACT THE ABILITY TO PLAY A SPORT?



The coordinated movement required by athletic events becomes increasingly difficult when your body is in a tense state. While a certain level of physical arousal is helpful and prepares us for competition, when the physical symptoms of anxiety are too great, they may seriously interfere with your ability to compete.

A certain amount of worry about how you perform can be helpful in competition. At the same time, negative thought patterns and expectations of failure can bring about a self-fulfilling prophecy.

# WAYS TO HELP PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

1

**Prepare before an event or task.** Practicing, training, rehearsing skills required to perform well, such as athletic team practice and cross-training, music, and dance lessons and rehearsals, memorizing and learning information, practicing speeches and presentations with notes can all help reduce anxiety and increase confidence.

2

**Get at least 8-10 hours of sleep.** Not only does consistently getting enough sleep help to process new information, but it will also allow you to consolidate this information into memories, allowing you to store them in your brain!

3

**Diet and nutrition** influence anxiety through the microbiome. What you eat and drink can correlate with your performance. Limit caffeine and sugar intake the day of the performance. A low-fat meal including complex carbohydrates such as whole-grain pasta, lentil soup, yogurt, or a bean and rice burrito are some good choices. *Fun fact!* Musicians have been known to eat bananas approximately 60 minutes prior to a performance to conquer performance anxiety! Bananas contain tryptophan, which promotes a relaxed state of mind by stimulating serotonin production, and magnesium, which contributes to lower stress levels. In addition, bananas contain potassium, which lowers blood pressure.

4

**Practice regular stress-relieving activities** such as reading, yoga, meditation, controlled breathing, walking, self-care routines, playing with a pet, listening to music, taking a nap, arts and crafts, and so many other ways to reset and reduce stress.

5

**Talking with a trusted adult or seeking professional support** can be a helpful way to talk through your anxiety and identify your triggers in order to find the appropriate coping strategies for you and your personal needs.

6

**Visualization techniques** can be a successful way to get over the hurdle of anxiety. Dancers will play the music, eyes closed, completely still, and visualize themselves completing the routine, over and over again prior to a performance. Also, closing your eyes and imagining the audience or stands laughing and/or cheering, and you feeling good can be another strategy! Focus on the positive and visualize your success!

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