Test-Taking Personalities

“The Rusher”
- Hurries through the exam in order to remember essential facts.
- Is tense and anxious.
- First to finish the exam.

Consequences: Misreads, misinterprets questions. Quickly chooses guessed responses to continue moving through the exam.

Suggestions:
1. Practice progressive relaxation exercises during test preparation and just prior to the exam.
2. Allow ample study time, 4 to 5 days prior to the test to avoid cramming which increases anxiety.
3. Practice with sample tests at home to slow down the pace of the reading and answering questions.

“The Turtle”
- Moves slowly and methodically through each question.
- Reads, rereads and underlines.
- Last to finish the exam, if it gets finished at all.

Consequences: Scores well on the first section of the exam but poorly on the last half due to rushing at the end. Has insufficient time to complete the exam.

Suggestions:
1. Take practice tests at home, focusing on the time spent on each item.
2. Place large face watch directly in front of the test paper on your desk.
3. Compare the number of test items with the total exam time; then mark on the exam where to be at one-quarter, one-half, and three quarters through the test period.

“The Personalizer”
- Relies on past observation and life experiences to determine the norm, the standard, or the expected.
- Stereotypes a large population based on experience with a small population.

Consequences: Easily errs in testing situations because personal beliefs and experiences may not be the expected standard.
Suggestions:
1. In reviewing, focus on broad principles and standards presented and choose answers on exams accordingly.

2. Avoid connecting a hypothetical situation on an exam with actual individual experience. Try to focus on generalities to formulate decisions in a testing situation.

“The Squisher”
- Preoccupied with grades.
- No plan of ongoing study and preparation for exams; instead says, “I’ll worry about it tomorrow.”
- Avoids studying or preparing for an exam.

Consequences: “Squishing” or cramming increases anxiety and decreases ability to learn, perform, and succeed.

Suggestions: Formulate a specific progressive plan of study with defined time frames for completion of various units of study.

“The Philosopher”
- Reads into questions
- Feels they never know enough about the subject even after persistent, disciplined, and well-structured study.
- Cautious, seeks “trick” questions.

Consequences: Develops misconceptions about the intent of the question; therefore answers incorrectly. Inevitably ends up with greater anxiety when studying for and taking the next exam.

Suggestions:
1. Learn to focus on items as they are written.

2. Avoid rereading test items and adding meanings unintended by the authors.

3. Enhance self-esteem and self-confidence to decrease the tendency to question initial responses to test questions.

“The Second Guesser”
- Plays the role of both the student and the teacher by grading the test when taking the test by taking a second look and changing answers.

Consequences: Realizing that you had the question right, but you went back later and changed the answer.
Suggestions:
1. Reread only items you are very unsure of.

2. Avoid changing any initial responses unless it is absolutely necessary.

3. Move through the exam progressively and carefully; avoid leaving too much time at the end of the exam for rereading and second guessing behaviors.

“The Lawyer”
- Responds with words or ideas that were not really intended by the question.

Consequences: Provides their own view of reality rather than what the question implied.

Suggestions:
1. Focus on active listening when receiving information to be sure implied information is understood.

2. Remember good communication techniques: reflecting remarks, sharing observations, open-ended questions, etc, when answering test questions or communication situations.

If one or more of the test-taking personalities applies to you, try practicing the more successful or appropriate testing behaviors suggested in this handout. The result may be better performance on exams. Try it and see.