

A black and tan dog is running across a sandy beach, kicking up a cloud of dust. The dog is looking towards the camera. In the background, there are green trees and a clear sky. A yellow ball is visible in the bottom left corner of the image.

EAT MY DUST, TEST ANXIETY

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Stress is the perception that
DEMANDS > RESOURCES.

Test anxiety = performance anxiety
(just like stage fright)





TRUE OR FALSE?

College students are
(sometimes)

STRESSED OUT.



TRUE OR FALSE?

College students around
the world experience
test anxiety.



TRUE

(surprise!)

20-40% of students experience test anxiety.

AND stress is the most commonly reported barrier to academic performance.
(American College Health Association)

WHY YOU???

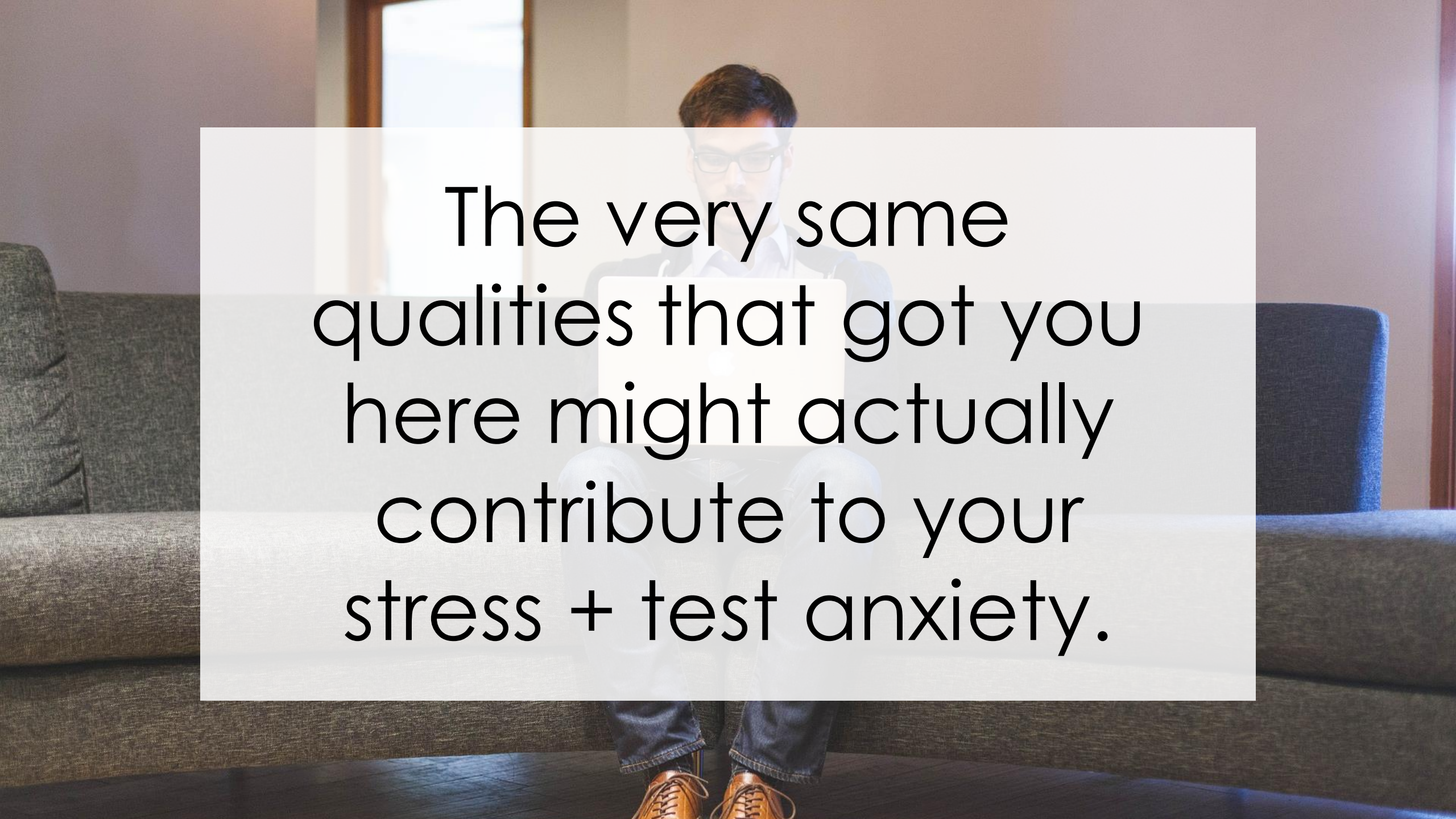




AFTER ALL, YOU'RE:

DRIVEN
AMBITIOUS
INTELLIGENT
MOTIVATED
(YOU'RE KIND OF A BIG DEAL)

anything else?

A man with glasses and a beard is sitting on a grey couch in a living room. He is wearing a dark shirt and jeans. The background shows a window and a wall. A large white text box is overlaid on the image, containing the text: "The very same qualities that got you here might actually contribute to your stress + test anxiety."

The very same
qualities that got you
here might actually
contribute to your
stress + test anxiety.



BONUS FUN FACT:

Social psychologists use academic exams as their model for short term stress.

Test anxiety is a problem in (at least) two ways:

Procrastination + avoidance.

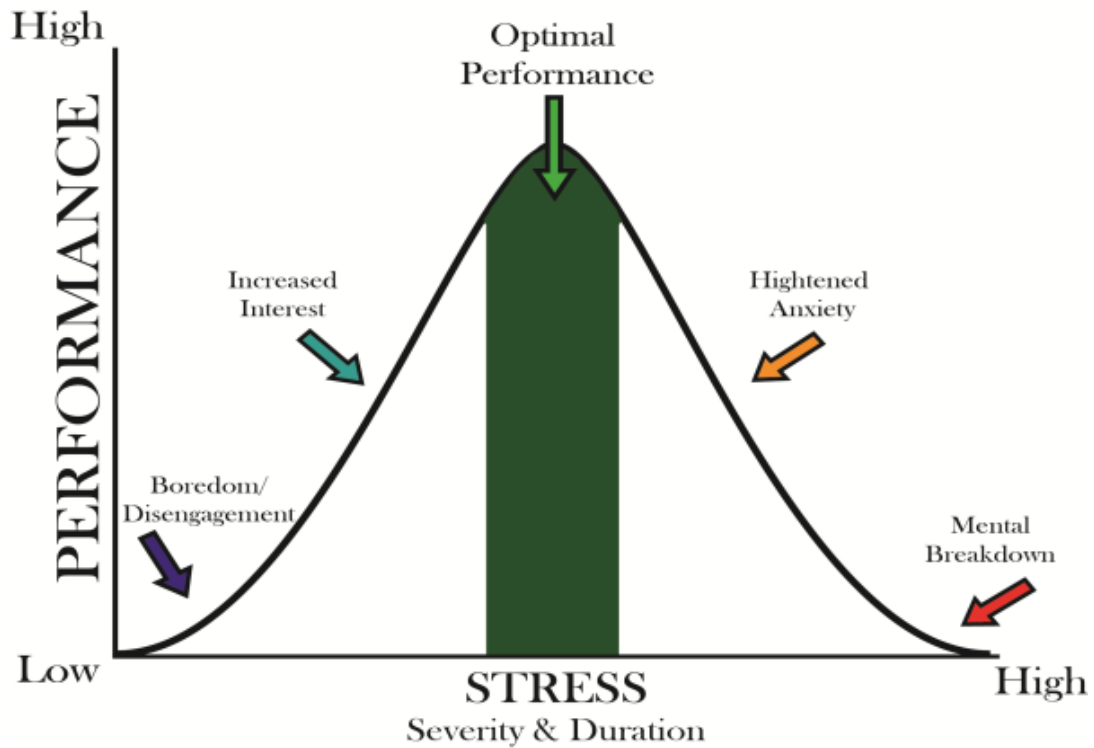
Impaired attention and memory (due to physical + psych/mental effects).

You can change
whether this is a vicious
cycle or an upward
spiral.

“but I work best under pressure.”



YERKES-DODDSON LAW



Yes...and no.
Your performance peaks with moderate stress, but you have to stay in the green zone.

**MANAGING STRESS AND
ANXIETY IS A **CRITICAL**
COMPONENT OF SUCCESS.**

STEP 1: KNOW WHEN ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.



KNOW WHEN TO CALM DOWN + SLOW DOWN

the 7 S's

Sun: Sleeping at night, waking in the morning, getting some sunlight.

Sleep: Getting consistent, high quality sleep.

Social: Positive and meaningful social relationships.

Starving: Are you eating nourishing foods?

Slipping: The feeling that you're falling behind, making mistakes.

Sitting: Moving your body, resting your body.

Substances: Are you abusing/relying on medication to relax, concentrate, stay alert?



STEP 2: TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF.



SLEEP...

Q: How much are you supposed to get? (A: 7-9 hours)

And how much do you get?

What gets in the way of sleep?

SLEEP DEPRIVATION EFFECTS

Your brain works a LOT harder but still can't keep up.

With just one night of lost sleep, say goodbye to flexible thinking and using new information.

Memory? What memory?

...sorry, could you repeat that? I wasn't paying attention.

You become a creature of habit (and impulse).
Especially with eating habits.

You might as well be drunk – **REALLY** drunk.
Except you don't even know it.

FEED YOUR BRAIN + BODY

Mood

Hangry is a real thing.

Harder to regulate emotions when you've skipped a meal.

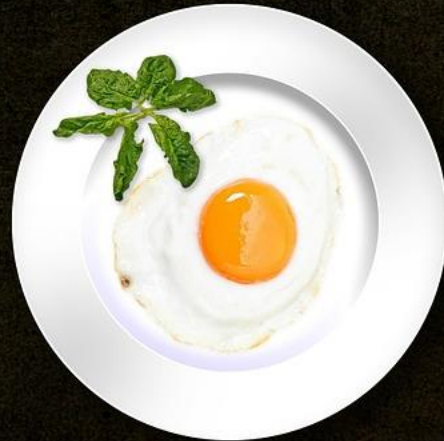
Thinking

Veggies are especially good for memory.

Habitual late-night snacking might hurt your learning and memory (at least if you're a mouse).

Eating habits

Skipping meals now contributes to overeating later.



TWO MORE SELF-CARE TIPS:

Meditate:

Formal or informal, the key is consistency.

Exercise (CDC recommendations):

2 hours of moderate (or 75 minutes of vigorous) activity every week + muscle-strengthening on 2 days per week

10 minutes at a time counts!



STEP 3: LEARN HOW YOU RELAX BEST IN AND OUT OF AN EXAM.



Be sure to choose and practice a few relaxation strategies that you can use during an exam.

BREATHE (repeat)

diaphragmatic breathing

4-7-8 breathing: inhale for 4 counts, hold breath 7, exhale 8.

slow + controlled

exhale > inhale

yoga breathing

STOP-LIGHT MEDITATION

What do you normally do when you're stopped in traffic?

Use time waiting at a red light (or any natural waiting time) to breathe and take in what's around you.

Ask yourself: Where's my mind, how does my body feel? What do I need today?

A top-down view of a watercolor palette with numerous circular wells containing various colors of paint, including red, purple, yellow, orange, blue, green, pink, and black. The paint is slightly mixed and textured.

PLAYTIME

Laugh

Create – research shows coloring books work!

Move



CALLING THE PARTY- PLANNING COMMITTEE:

Socializing → life satisfaction → SUCCESS (even in college)!

Do something social with only three rules:

Something positive/productive/creative.

NO SCHOOL TALK!

With the people who support you.

STEP 4: THINK LIKE A CHEF



GET YOUR TIME IN ORDER

Work in batches: Group like tasks together rather than switching between tasks for more efficiency.

Pomodoro technique: 25 minutes of focused attention, 5 minute break, repeat for 4 cycles, then take a 15-30 minute break.

Plan according to both urgency and importance. Some tasks are urgent but not important (i.e., a phone call), important but not urgent (i.e., a long-term project), both urgent and important (i.e., studying for an exam coming up in a few days), or neither (i.e., absentmindedly reading a blog post).

THINK CONCRETE STEPS

- Think like everything can be figured out.
- Focus on questions with answers and solutions to your problems.

BE PREPARED

- Have a plan B for exam prep.
- Be prepared to use short breaks in the day effectively.
- Have study materials (i.e., notecards) prepared **before** a study session.
- Always have a snack + water handy.

STEP 5: GET YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME.





JUST DON'T THINK OF THIS

PICTURE. Doesn't work, does it?

Thought suppression, or "just don't think about it" doesn't work and can actually backfire.

Instead, think about what you want to **create/transform** in a situation rather than what you want to avoid.

THE MARY POPPINS REMEDY

Spoonful of sugar: Make the situation a little better and give yourself a little something positive.

Practically perfect: Be PRACTICAL about expectations, goals, and interpretation.

PLUS: Quick boosts in your mood have been found to also boost cognitive skills.



ZOOM IN OR OUT

Zoomed in too close = obsession, dwelling, taking things out of context.

Zoomed out too far = getting WAY ahead of yourself, trying to please everyone, trying to do too many things at once.

Bring it back into focus for the “perfect” picture.

FLIP THE RECORD

Know your greatest hits playlist of worries and anxiety words, and flip them.

Should → Want/What makes most sense?

What if → What now?

Perfect → Good enough/done/started

It doesn't count → Yes, it does!

Yes, but → Yes, and or simply, YES.

SUPER QUICK AFFIRMATION EXERCISE:

Spend a few minutes answering these questions:

What's the first defining moment or big accomplishment that comes to mind?

What is it about you that made that possible?

Do you see that anywhere else in your life?

Can you use those strengths now?

STEP 6: DON'T FORGET TO LIVE.



WHAT YOU DO MATTERS!

Happiness =
50% genes +
10% life circumstances +
40% what you do



DOES THIS FILL ME UP?

Does this fill me up or does this drain me?

Try taking an inventory for a week:

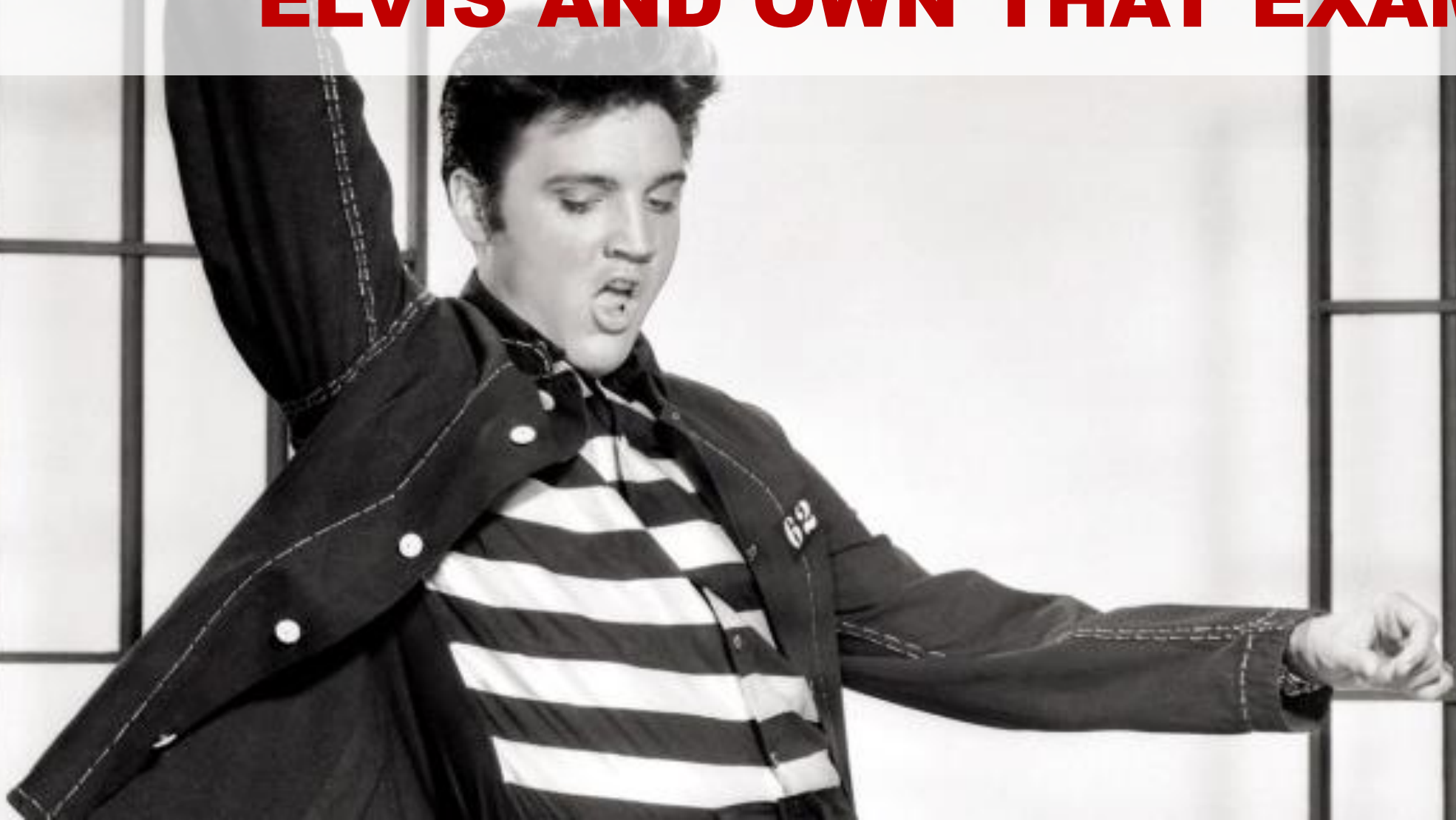
+ for fills me up, - for drains me

What kinds of days are you having?

Raise awareness of the things that do fill you up and when you might need some more of them.

Raise awareness of the things that drain you that are in your power to change.

**STEP 7: CHANNEL YOUR INNER
ELVIS AND OWN THAT EXAM.**



THE DAY BEFORE = THE DRESS REHEARSAL

No cramming.

Do a COMPLETE run-through of an exam.

Simulate test-day and testing-room as much as you can.

Practice coping skills as part of your study and test prep.



PERFORMANCE DAY PRESCRIPTION

- Get into character or an "alter ego" (what would your best possible self do or say on test day?).
- Listen to your favorite songs. Have a playlist ready to go.
- Move your body, but resist fidgeting.
- Laugh.

A group of people in graduation gowns and caps are shown in profile, singing into vintage microphones. The scene is dimly lit, with the focus on the performers. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box in the center of the image.

PERFORMANCE DAY PRESCRIPTION

No pre-exam commentary. Asking clarifying questions is fine, but resist the temptation to complain, worry, or compare.

Resist the sea of nerves around you. Nerves are normal and "contagious." Be prepared with earplugs, find a quiet place, center yourself.



GO-TIME

BREATHE, just like you practiced. Feel grounded before you begin.

Use positive imagery and the coping skills you practiced.

Use a worry stone or stress ball.

Skip to a question you're confident about if you can.

Use simple distractions if you become worried or panicked.

Focus on the task, not yourself, not your classmates, not the physical/emotional symptoms of anxiety.

HERE'S YOUR RECAP.

(#NOSTRESS)

Step 1: Know when enough is enough.

Step 2: Take good care of yourself.

Step 3: Learn how you relax best.

Step 4: Think like a chef.

Step 5: Get your head in the game.

Step 6: Don't forget to live.

Step 7: Channel your inner Elvis and OWN that exam.

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