

# Reducing Test Anxiety and Improving Test Performance by Increasing Perceived Attainability in Emotion Regulation

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## Summary Report 2018-2019

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### **Abstract**

Test anxiety can impair test performance. However, anxiety can be controlled by emotion regulation. To date, research on test anxiety has focused exclusively on how people regulate their anxiety. In the present investigation, we propose that it is also important to focus on factors determining whether people try to regulate their anxiety, such as their belief that changing anxiety is attainable. In Study 1, we hypothesized that people who believe that reducing test anxiety is attainable, would report lower test anxiety, and better test performance. We found that the more people believed that test anxiety can be reduced, the less test anxiety they experienced and the more satisfied they were with their test performance. In Study 2, we tested whether perceived attainability causally contributes to test anxiety, and whether this effect depends on using an effective regulation strategy. We also tested whether attainability influenced test performance. We found that leading people to believe that reducing test anxiety is more (vs. less) attainable led them to feel less anxious about an upcoming test. This effect did not depend on using an effective regulation strategy, although people did not use the strategy effectively in this particular study. Although beliefs about attainability were unrelated to self-reported (Study 1) or objective (Study 2) test performance, test performance was negatively linked to test anxiety (at least in Study 1). To the extent that beliefs about attainability of reducing test anxiety influence test anxiety, such effect may have downstream implications for test performance. These preliminary findings motivate further research on the potential impact of beliefs about attainability on test anxiety and performance.