

Guided Imagery Script: Managing Math Anxiety

[Adapted from materials from *Conquering Math Anxiety* by Cynthia Arem, Union County College Academic Learning Centers, Mission College Math Learning Center, and Inner Health Studio]

Many people experience anxiety associated with studying math. This guided imagery will help you relax and visualize the process of working with math effectively and successfully. Visualizing success can promote increased confidence. Relaxation can help you manage the anxiety so that you can do the best you can while working with math.

Begin by becoming very relaxed. Make yourself comfortable in a setting free of distractions for the next few minutes. Find a naturally relaxed sitting position and open posture, your hands resting in your lap or at your sides, your legs uncrossed, and your head balanced in a neutral position.

Start to relax your body. Take a deep breath in through your nose...hold it gently...and let it out through your mouth....

Breathe in again...pause...and exhale fully....

Breathe in...pause... and out....

In.... Out....

In.... Out....

Keep breathing naturally. With each breath out, you become more and more relaxed.

If any anxious thoughts linger, leave them where they are for the moment. You can tend to them later.

[Pause.]

Pick a spot in the room for your eyes to comfortably focus on. Hold the focus briefly, and then let that focus go soft. If you choose, you can let your eyes close anytime you like.

Notice some areas in your body where tension tends to linger: your shoulders, jaws, neck, back, chest, stomach, and hands.

Focus first on your shoulders. See how your shoulders relax as your attention is focused on them. Feel the muscles as they loosen and your shoulders as they ease off....

Allow your jaws to relax. Let your lower jaw drop slightly, allowing a slight space between your upper and lower teeth. Feel the muscles of your face become smooth, loose, and relaxed.

Turn your attention to your neck. See how you can let the tension go as you relax the muscles of your neck. Let the relaxation flow down the length of your spine, relaxing all the muscles along the way. Feel the relaxation in your neck and back.

As you become aware of the rhythm of your breathing, let the tension in your chest dissipate with each breath and feel your stomach muscles smooth themselves out and the calm settle in.

Now focus on your hands. Open and close your hands a few times...wiggle your fingers... and then relax. Let your hands be limp and loose.

Scan your body now for any other areas that might be tense. For each area, imagine directing your breath to that area. Imagine breathing in relaxation....and breathing out tension. Breathing in a feeling of relaxation, and exhaling all the tension. Feel your muscles more relaxed with each breath.

Continue to scan your body, relaxing each area.

[Pause.]

Now you are feeling calm and relaxed. Your whole body feels heavy, and you feel grounded, centered, and peaceful.

[Pause.]

Begin to visualize now the process of working with math successfully as you keep these thoughts in mind:

I am an intelligent, talented person.

I can eliminate all distracting and disturbing thoughts.

I have confidence in myself.

I see myself accomplishing my goals.

Math is just one of the things I do on the way to accomplishing my goals.

Many capable people get anxious about math. I am not alone.

I have learned to be anxious about math over time. I can also learn to feel okay about math.

Mathematicians work hard to make doing math look easy. I am willing to work hard to master my math material.

It's natural to want to avoid studying for math as I start to get anxious. I can dial down that anxiety and keep some of it to drive my work.

I will continue to read the math material even if I don't understand all of it yet.

Sometimes I don't understand the teacher's or the textbook's explanation. But I am resourceful; I can find another source to help me understand.

Like many things, there is often more than one right way to do math. And I don't have to do math perfectly every time.

I want to understand math thoroughly rather than trying to memorize everything.

I can learn through picturing the material. I will learn enough to put things in my own words

I find that I already know something about math. I can remember something I learned before that is related to the new material. I find connections between new concepts and things I already know.

As long as I take my time, I will understand what every word and symbol means.

I enjoy learning by doing.

I know solving problems is important; I don't have to wait till I understand everything before I start trying to solve problems.

Homework is not the enemy but an opportunity to work on a new concept and master it.

Math used to be mysterious to me. I can take the mystery out of math.

Math is learning a new language, one concept at a time. I will take the time to work many problems for each new concept until I feel a sense of accomplishment.

I'll practice just as I practice to drive a car or play a musical instrument.

I get frustrated. But I have worked through other frustrating things. I am persistent. I can stick with this.

Mistakes are good for me to learn different ways of doing things. They provide materials for me to learn.

I don't have to do math perfectly.

I can be competent in math on the way to achieving my big goals in life. Competency comes through patience, steadfastness, and diligence. I will take the time needed to achieve it.

I am bright and resourceful and can learn anything I choose to.

I am an intelligent and capable person. I've succeeded in a lot of things in my life; I can succeed in math, too.

I see myself succeeding in math.

I now say to myself, over and over, these positive affirmations and visualization are true for me.

[Pause.]

Now you have completed this visualization experience, you are feeling more mentally prepared for the process of studying for math. You may even find that completing this guided imagery exercise helps you feel motivated, helps you feel calm, confident, and in control.

Begin to wake up your mind and body.... returning your awareness to the present.

Wiggle your fingers. Feel your hands and arms reawakening.

Wake up your feet and legs by wiggling your toes.

Shrug your shoulders.... Turn your head from side to side.... Feel your body waking up.

When you are feeling awake and alert, you can return to your usual activities, feeling calm, refreshed, energized, motivated, and confident.