

Advanced Placement Psychology - Summer 2022 Assignment

I hope that all of you are enjoying the summer and recharging yourself for your upcoming senior year. I am so happy that you are enrolled in Advanced Placement Psychology and my hope for all of you, over and above earning college credit, is that you will find the subject an indispensable tool for self-discovery and personal growth. Maybe you will decide to major in Psychology! (you will have a lot of company since psychology is one of the most popular major areas of study)

Instructions - Read the two articles, take notes and prepare to discuss all this on the first day of class.

1.) Nature and Nurture

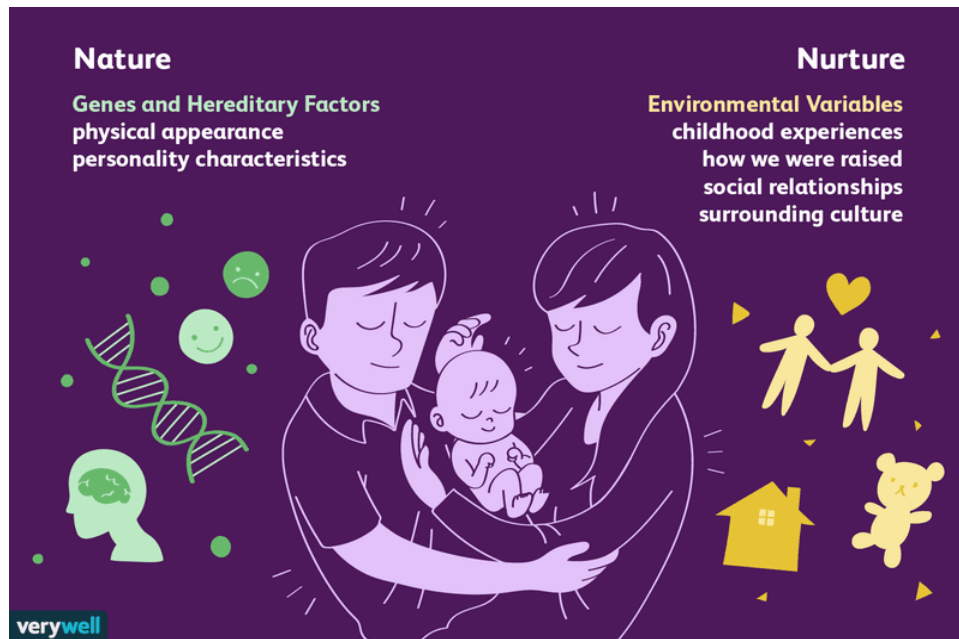
- **Read the article, *The Age Old Debate of Nature Versus Nurture*.**
- Take notes on the article and reflect on your own personal experience.
- Ask yourself these questions: “Who am I” How much of my personality, physical characteristics, behaviors, thought processes and emotional responses are the result of nature? How much are the result of nurture? To what extent are those characteristics the result of the interaction of both?
- If you are a twin, describe how you are similar and different from your twin. (I do not believe that we have any identical twins in class this year - that is a whole different case!)
- Prepare to discuss all of these questions and any other responses to this article on the first day of class.

2.) How Anxiety Can Benefit Us

- Read, ***How Anxiety Can Benefit Us***. (I have provided the link and pasted the article in case you cannot open the New York Times article.)
- Take notes on the article and prepare to discuss all of this on the first day of class.
- Reflect on your own personal experience of anxiety.
- What is the **Yerkes Dodson Law**?
- What is your *optimal (best) level of physiological arousal (arousal - how “amped” or “wired” you feel)* when you are in school?
- Are you experiencing too much or too little right now?
- Discuss other non-school situations where a different level of arousal leads to improved or worse performance on whatever you are doing.
- How do you “tame” your anxiety?
- What are some of the good sides of the “right amount of anxiety”? (don’t just repeat what the article says; reflect on your own experience!

Nature and Nurture

The Age Old Debate of Nature vs. Nurture



Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal emotion. It's your brain's way of reacting to stress and alerting you of potential danger ahead. Everyone feels anxious now and then. For example, you may worry when faced with a problem at work, before taking a test, or before making an important decision. Occasional anxiety is OK. Anxiety is only an indicator of underlying disease when feelings become excessive, all-consuming, and interfere with daily living.



[How Anxiety Can Benefit Us - The New York Times](#)

(Excerpts pasted below)

For the entirety of my adult life I have tried to avoid driving. I could claim all sorts of noble reasons for this: concern about the environment, a desire to save money, the health benefits gained from walking or biking.

But the main reason is that I'm anxious.

What if I did something stupid and accidentally pressed the gas pedal instead of the brake? What if a small child suddenly darted into the middle of the road? What if another driver was distracted or full of rage? By 2020 I had managed to avoid driving for eight years, even though I'd gotten my license in high school.

Then came the pandemic. After more than a year of hunkering down in our Manhattan neighborhood, my little family of three was yearning for new surroundings. So, I booked lodging in the Adirondacks, about a three-hour drive from New York City, and — for the first time in my life — signed up for formal driving lessons.

On that first day, I arrived queasy and full of impending doom, muscles tensed and brain on high alert. But my instructor assured me that we would not meet our demise — we wouldn't be driving fast enough for that, he explained — and then he told me something that nobody ever had: "The fear never leaves you." You have to learn to harness it, he said. Have just enough fear to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings, but not so much that it is making you overly hesitant.

The idea that I didn't need to completely erase my anxiety was freeing.

Having some anxiety — especially when faced with a stressful situation — isn't necessarily bad and can actually be helpful, experts say. Here's why:

The right amount of anxiety can improve performance.

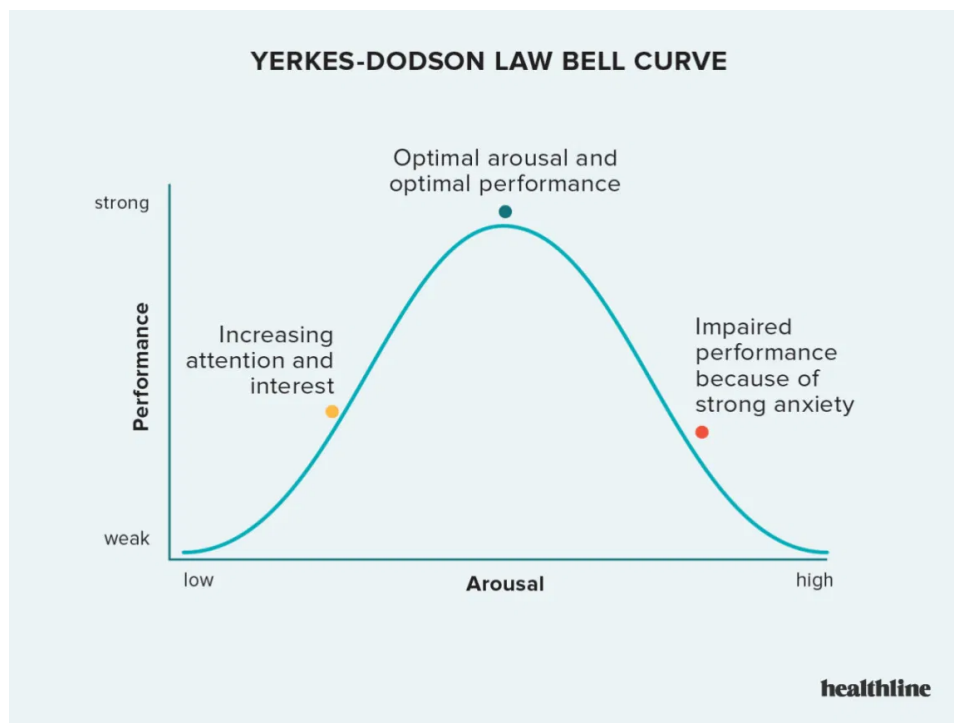
Anxiety is an uncomfortable emotion, often fueled by uncertainty. It can create intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear, not just about stressful events but also about everyday situations. There are usually physical symptoms too, like fast heart rate, muscle tension, rapid breathing, sweating and fatigue.

Too much anxiety can be debilitating. But a normal amount is meant to help keep us safe, experts say. "The emotion of anxiety and the underlying physiological stress response evolved to protect us," Wendy Suzuki, a neuroscientist and the author of "Good Anxiety," said.

In her book, Dr. Suzuki explains that managing stress may be more useful than banishing it. According to the **Yerkes-Dodson Law**, a theory that originated in the early 20th century from experiments on mice, increasing amounts of cognitive arousal, or stress, can improve performance — but only up to a certain point. The theory, represented by a curve shaped like a mountain, shows that after the curve peaks, greater levels of stress cause performance to suffer.

*The **Yerkes-Dodson law** is a model of the relationship between stress and task performance. It proposes that you reach your peak level of performance with an intermediate level of stress, or arousal. Too little or too much arousal results in poorer performance. This is also known as the inverted-U model of arousal. (Healthline)*

[Yerkes-Dodson Law: How It Correlates to Stress, Anxiety, Performance](#)



When anxiety is turned up too high, Dr. Suzuki added, it tends to become less useful. The first step in taming anxiety that holds you back is to recognize when you're feeling overly anxious and try to dial it down.

Tips for Taming Anxiety

“My No. 1 tip is to *activate the parasympathetic nervous system* — the neurons that can slow heart rate and help people feel more calm — by deep breathing,” she said. “It’s a very powerful tool to have in your back pocket.”

Deep breathing can take place anytime or anywhere, she said, whether standing in a line, sitting in class, or, in my case, driving.

In addition, *physical activity* — even something as simple as walking outside — can increase the level of serotonin and dopamine in your brain, which may also help lower anxiety to a more manageable level, she said.

A certain degree of anxiety can help people anticipate obstacles, remain cautious and stay organized, said Ellen Hendriksen, a clinical psychologist in Boston and the author of “How to Be Yourself: Quiet Your Inner Critic and Rise Above Social Anxiety.”

But if anxiety is making you “uncomfortable more often than not” or interfering with day-to-day functioning and preventing you from living the life you want to live, Dr. Hendriksen added, that signals the need for *additional support, ideally from a mental health professional*.

Accepting anxiety can help you face your fears.

If you find yourself overestimating the risk of something terrible happening, start by acknowledging your anxiety and looking at it objectively, said Joel Minden, a clinical psychologist at the Chico Center for Cognitive Behavior Therapy in Chico, Calif., and the author of “Show Your Anxiety Who’s Boss.”

Remind yourself that this is the emotional reaction that occurs when you anticipate bad things will happen, he said, an inconvenient annoyance, “almost like my brain is a child throwing a tantrum right now.” Be patient and kind with yourself, he said, the way you would be with a friend, as you take small, manageable steps to confront your fears. “This is an opportunity to learn how to accept and tolerate anxiety,” he added.

Todd B. Kashdan, a professor of psychology and director of the Well-Being Lab at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., was working up the courage to finally try outdoor rock climbing in Arizona; he started small by scaling the rock climbing wall at his gym.

During his first attempt outdoors, his hands were sweating so much the chalk wouldn’t stay on. One of the guides gave him a choice: You can stay on the ground — alone, in the middle of the desert — or you can climb, and take your anxiety with you. “My heart was exploding,” said Dr. Kashdan, co-author of “The Upside of Your Dark Side,” a book that explores the usefulness of anger, anxiety and doubt. “But I had a very clear task and I knew that I could do it with the anxiety because this expert guide told me he’s done it, people do it, you’re going to do it.”

Anxiety can breed conscientiousness.

Anxious people tend to be careful and cautious, and they can channel those tendencies into conscientiousness, Alice Boyes, author of “The Anxiety Toolkit,” said. “I’m someone who’s always been anxious,” Dr. Boyes said. “I was the kind of kid who refused to go to school camp or refused to stay at other people’s houses. I was always getting sore tummies and that kind of thing before sports events at school.”

As she grew up, she continued to worry about things going wrong, but she also started making contingency plans, which helped to calm her fears and reduce the likelihood of any worst-case scenarios. When traveling, for example, she scopes out her destination in advance, studying the surrounding streets to avoid getting lost. The goal is to create a plan that will help reduce your worries, and then follow through.

In my case, preparing ahead of time was what eventually gave me the confidence to drive upstate. It took eight driving lessons, a nervous last-minute text to my instructor and a rental car with advanced safety features. Finally, my family packed up and set off. “Mama is a driver!” my 4-year-old daughter said from the back seat. “That’s right!” I replied, starting to feel a glimmer of pride. “I am.”