HOW TO PREVENT MATH ANXIETY

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Tobias (2014) defines Mathematics anxiety as feelings of tension and anxiety that interfere with the manipulation of numbers and the solving of mathematical problems in a wide variety of ordinary life and academic situations. Such anxiety can affect a person’s self-confidence and makes him forget math lessons learned.

Causes of math anxiety includes pressure of timed tests, imposed authority, and risk of public embarrassment. These practices that are regular parts of the traditional mathematics classroom can cause great anxiety in many students. Thus, teaching methods must be revisited. There should be more emphasis on teaching methods that uses less lecture, more student directed classes, and more discussion.

Math teachers should design classrooms that are less provocative for students. This can help to make them feel more successful or that which failure is tolerable for them. Students must have a high level of success or a level of failure that they can tolerate. Teachers must handle incorrect responses in a positive way to inspire student participation and develop student confidence.

Researches show that students learn best when they are active rather than passive learners. This may be attributed to the Theory of Multiple Intelligences that addresses the different learning styles of people. Everyone is capable of learning but they learn more effectively in different ways. As such, lessons must be presented in a various techniques.

In mathematics, for example, different ways to teach a new concept can be done through role playing, cooperative groups, visual aids, hands on activities, and technology. Many years back, learners did not bother to ask the reasons for math concepts. They just memorize and mechanically perform the mathematical operations needed. Today, the leaners ask why, why not, and how math concepts are done.
Learners today need practical math where are relevant to their everyday lives. They enjoy experimenting, exploring, thinking, and conjecturing instead of just being engaged to the usual learning of rules and procedures.

Thus, providing many cooperative learning activities where they can exchange ideas, ask questions freely, explain to their peers, clarify ideas in meaningful ways, and to express their feelings are helpful in alleviating math anxiety problems among them. These skills attained at an early age will be significantly beneficial throughout their adult working life.

References:

