

3 Keys to Overcoming Anxiety

I was sitting in the center of the long room, at one of the fancy new electric typewriters. It was a timed typing test in my first semester of typing class. She said go, and I could not keep up.

In one of my finest moments, I ripped the paper out of the machine, crumpled it in a ball, and threw it on the floor. "I cannot do this!" I yelled.

The teacher was chagrined and quite speechless.

I practiced and practiced and one day beat that typing teacher in a test of speed and accuracy. Then I grew up and worked 10 years as a medical transcriptionist, typing an average of 80-90 words per minute.

Now I'm in my place as teacher, and I see frustration every day. Students try to do something new, and they don't get it. Reactions vary from apathy and giving up, to tears and arms crossed in anger.

I've decided frustration is good.

Frustration means you've come to something new that you don't understand or can't master immediately. It means **you're about to grow** and cross into something you've never understood or accomplished before. Frustration means a teacher is stretching you.

My favorite reaction to frustration is questions. The best students start asking "*Why?*" and "*How?*" They keep asking until you've given them a satisfactory explanation or until they can do what you've asked them to do.

Rule No. 2 in my class:

Be an Aggressive Learner. Ask Your Questions.

Paul says:

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God” (Phil. 4:6).

See the frustration Paul is addressing? He gives us no options for going to either extreme of giving up or of freaking out.

“Start asking your questions,” Paul says. Pray. Ask.

Keep asking. Keep asking. Keep asking. That’s what good students do. They push the teacher until they get the *why* or the *how* figured out, and a good teacher can’t wait to help them push through the frustration to a place of new understanding or new mastery of a skill.

No doubt you have some new hard thing in front of you right now. How are you responding to it?