



# Conquer Mathematics anxiety

**M**any learners develop a negative attitude towards mathematics. This fear of mathematics is often referred to as mathematics anxiety. Prof Kobus Maree, a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria and a specialist in the psychological aspects of mathematics, has advice on overcoming mathematics anxiety.

## Role of the maths teacher

A learner who is afraid of a teacher will probably be too afraid to ask questions if he/she does not understand the work. Some learners are so scared of an angry, impatient or unapproachable teacher that they practically freeze when they see a sum.

A teacher who allows his/her class to ask the 'dumbest' questions (and who never makes his/her students feel stupid), employs a powerful strategy against mathematics anxiety. It is of the greatest importance that you should have so much self-confidence and such a good self-image in mathematics that you have the courage to ask questions about aspects of mathematics that bother you, at any time, in any place, of anybody.

Maths teachers are not always aware of the fact that mathematics can evoke such profound emotions in you. Despite the fact that students sometimes experience their teachers as severe, aggressive or unfriendly, it appears from research that this subjective

perception is unfounded in the vast majority of cases. You need to see to it that you do your part to the best of your ability at all times.

## The link between maths anxiety and achievement in mathematics

Remember that a measure of anxiety is desirable when you are writing any test or examination. This not only increases your preparedness, but also leads to higher achievement. Research has confirmed that a healthy degree of anxiety, especially when this anxiety is linked to the ability to stay focused, indicates that students take their work seriously and is a good predictor of success.