

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

In each part of the following sequence Mike is doing something that is getting in the way of his performance. Can you tell what it is? As you read the unfolding story in the left column, cover up the right column until you can answer "What's wrong with this picture?" Then look to see if you figured it out.

The scenario

What's wrong with this picture?

<p>1. Mike is in class, at his desk, listening to the teacher. The teacher announces "We're going to have a test next Friday." Mike thinks, <i>Oh my God, there is no way I'll be ready by then.</i></p>	<p>1. Mike is sinking into negative thinking. Negative thinking will set in motion a self-fulfilling prophecy. Mike probably won't be ready by test time.</p>
<p>2. Mike is in the library. His books and notes are all spread out in a mess; he's on his cell phone, talking away to a buddy. "I got wasted last night. Did you see that girl who wanted my phone number?"</p>	<p>2. Mike is not focused. He should be studying, but he ends up distracting himself by talking on the phone (and thinking about last night).</p>
<p>3. It's the middle of the night. Mike is at home drinking a carafe of coffee. There are big dark circles under his eyes; his books and papers are scattered all over the place. <i>I should have eaten dinner. No time for that. Gotta get more coffee and stay alert. Where are my cigarettes?</i></p>	<p>3. Mike is not taking care of his body so that it will support him. He's drinking too much coffee and not getting enough sleep. He's not physically rested enough to study well and to take the test. His habits are wearing him down.</p>
<p>4. It's still the middle of the night. Mike is slumped over his desk. He's despairing. <i>I can't remember a thing I've studied. I'm no good at this.</i></p>	<p>4. Mike's confidence is slipping by the minute. His negative thinking is causing low self-esteem and is becoming a distraction.</p>
<p>5. Now Mike is sitting in the exam room. The test is in front of him, but he's looking at the ceiling. <i>As soon as school is out, I'm heading for the beach. The surf should be great today.</i></p>	<p>5. Mike's mind is littered with diversions. He's not keeping his attention on the questions. Instead, he's thinking about things that have nothing to do with the test. He's not being present to the task at hand: the test.</p>
<p>6. Mike is sitting with the pencil poised in his hand to mark off a multiple choice answer, but inside he's imagining that he's standing on the ledge of a tall building ready to jump. <i>My life is over. I'll never get into law school now. I'll end up flipping burgers and my girlfriend will leave me.</i></p>	<p>6. Mike's panic is exploding into catastrophic thinking. Negative thought patterns are taking over. He is paralyzed. Test over; low score.</p>