

## Exam Preparation and Exam Day Anxiety Management

**Exercise:** physical activity helps manage stress by releasing tension, increasing energy and stamina, and releasing beneficial neurotransmitters that can reduce anxiety.

**Social Support:** Research finds interacting with other people as the best way to manage mood and emotions during a stressful time. Reach out to friends, family, teachers, and counselors for support, suggestions, and advice.

**Positive self-talk:** Address self-defeating and negative thoughts by repeating positive statements to yourself. Practice modifying negative statements such as “I’m going to fail this test” into positive statements such as “I can learn the information”, “I have done well on other tests, why would this one be different”, “Even if I don’t do as well as I would like, it is not the end of the world and I am still a good student.” Remind yourself of your past success and the likelihood that your ‘worst-case-scenario’ will come true.

**Visualize Success:** visualizing yourself succeeding on a test can increase efficacy: the belief that one can be successful. Picture yourself taking the test as a prepared, cool, and confident student. Picture yourself correctly answering the questions and successfully completing the test. Picture yourself feeling confident and satisfied with your performance.

**Mindful breathing to promote relaxation:** sit or lie in a comfortable position with your eyes closed or slightly open. Take slow, deep breaths, counting the breaths to yourself, gently inhaling and exhaling. Connect your breath to any tension you feel in your body, on the exhale picture the tension melting away. Let your thoughts come and go freely. If you find yourself having anxious thoughts don’t judge yourself for these thoughts but observe them and let them wash over you like water washing over a rock. Continue to focus on your breathing for as long as you can, even if it is just for one minute. When you are finished gently open your eyes. You can come back to this peaceful place whenever you are feeling anxious. Try to practice this exercise just before the exam. If you find yourself feeling anxious during an exam, pause for a moment to take a few deep mindful breaths to push out the anxiety and get yourself balanced again so you can correctly answer the questions.

Adapted from: Pauk, W. (2005). *How to Study in College* (8th Ed.), Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.