Strategies to Reduce Exam Anxiety

Before the Exam

Healthy Lifestyle/Habits:
- Exercise regularly
- Sleep 7-8 hours a night
- Choose healthy food options

Study Effectively:
- Being well prepared helps to reduce anxiety for your exam
- Prepare a study schedule and follow through as this helps to avoid cramming for an exam
- Make study goals for yourself. What do you want to achieve each day?
- Take 15-minute breaks after 30 – 50 minutes of studying

Prepare for the Exam:
- Know the location and time of your exam
- Know what the exam format is going to be
- Do something relaxing before the exam (i.e., watch Netflix, listen to music, etc.)
- Arrive early to the exam

Adjust your Attitude and Thoughts:
- Think, “I am prepared. I will do the best I can!”
- Negative thoughts can be discouraging, challenge those thoughts with positive ones

During the Exam

Use Test-Taking Strategies:
- Memory dump onto the back of your exam sheet if you are worried about forgetting any information
- Read the exam from beginning to end before answering questions
- Start with the ones you know

If Anxiety Occurs during the Exam:
- Slow down, pause and take a moment to breathe three deep breaths
- Use other relaxation and visualization methods
- Ask to go to the washroom; a change in environment may help calm you down
- Focus on an inanimate, calming object until anxiety lessens and you can refocus on your exam
- Use mantras, positive and affirmative self-talk (i.e., it is okay to feel anxious, I can do this, etc.)

After the Exam
- Reward yourself for completing the exam!
- Relax for the rest of the day if possible
- Review the exam, consider what went well and what you will do differently next time

The Centre for Student Academic Support at Carleton University
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