The exam period is a time when stress levels are higher than usual. Stress can be positive; helping you to stay motivated and focused. However, too much stress can be unhelpful; it can make you feel overwhelmed, confused, exhausted and edgy.

**Exam Anxiety can be viewed in two different ways:**

- Ineffective coping with the inevitable stress of an exam BEFORE the exam; and/or
- A strong emotional reaction of fear that interferes with thinking clearly DURING the exam.

**The most commonly reported symptoms are:** - Memory blocks or “blanking out” on things that you have studied; - Fear of failing before the exam is even written; - Physical symptoms such as rapid heart rate, shortness of breath, sweating, etc.; - Lower reading comprehension; and - Poor attention and inability to concentrate

**Exam Anxiety Tips Be Prepared Early** - The most common cause of exam anxiety is lack of preparation for the exam. Set up a study schedule at least three weeks before your first exam. You may find that you actually need to start studying very early due to other commitments. Planning ahead also assists you to avoid cramming which can be a major cause of exam anxiety.

**Sleep Well** - Regular sleep is one of the best ways to control stress. Getting up and going to bed each day at the same times ensures that your body and brain are getting the rest they need for optimal functioning. Students who follow a regular sleeping pattern have been shown to perform 30% better than students who stay up late or get up early to study.

**Same Caffeine & Sugar Intake** - Keep caffeine and sugar intake the same during exam time. Don’t increase or decrease the amount of coffee, tea, energy drinks or cola that you normally drink as your body and brain are accustomed to getting a certain amount.

**Learned Relaxed Breathing** - When you display any symptoms of anxiety during studying or during the exam, use relaxed breathing to calm yourself. Take your attention away from the
task and take a few slow breaths. Say to yourself, “calm and relaxed” as you exhale. Practice relaxed breathing before exams.

**Don’t Study the Night Before** - Studying the night before an exam causes your anxiety level to increase. Unfortunately, it doesn’t decrease when you go to sleep. Reduce anxiety by taking the evening off to relax – watch TV, read a novel, etc.

**Review Main Themes** - If it causes you anxiety NOT to study the night before an exam, review the main themes of the course earlier in the day. Of course, that implies that you should have already studied well.

**Find out Exactly What is Going to be on the Exam** - A good class syllabus will identify that for you – check it out and note the readings that go along with the exam topics. Gather all pertinent information and materials.

**Have a Plan before the Exam** - As part of your studying, think about how you will approach the exam, and what you will do when you run into trouble. Having a plan in place will assist you to worry less about failing, and help you to concentrate more on passing. A plan may include; read and understand the instructions before you start the exam, budget your time according to the questions, write something for every question even when stuck, review and make corrections and stay until the end.

**Aim to Do Your Best** - Often, students start thinking negatively when things aren’t going well on an exam. This can lead to lower self-confidence and increased self-doubt. Recognize and turn off your negative internal dialogue. Focus on the task instead of on yourself. Do not try for perfection – aim to do your very best.

**Look After Yourself** - Regular exercise and a healthy diet (plenty of fruit and vegetables) reduces your stress levels and improve concentration. Time you invest in these activities will result in better quality study.