Coping with Test Anxiety

What is test anxiety?
Test anxiety is a sense of worry or fear that you may feel during or before an exam. This anxiety can affect your performance. While it can be caused by lack of preparation, even well-prepared students can experience test anxiety. Keep reading to learn ways to prepare for exams and reduce anxiety.

How to Take a Test:
- Skim the entire test before beginning:
  - See how the test is organized (multiple choice, essay, etc.)
  - Budget your time according to the point value
- Read directions and questions carefully
- Do easy items first; save harder items for later
- Guess if you aren’t sure, unless there is a penalty for incorrect answers
- Ask the instructor for clarification if a question is unclear
- Review the test when you are done:
  - Make sure you answered all questions completely.
  - Only change answers if you are certain your original answer was wrong.
  See hints for specific types of exams/questions (on the back of this page)

General Tips for Test Day:
- Make a to-do list the night before – list everything you need to bring with you
- Don’t stay up too late studying; it is better to get more sleep!
- Arrive early to the test
- Eat a snack before the test
- Wear a watch if there is no clock visible in the classroom
- Be prepared for a cold or warm room

Stress Reduction Techniques:
- **Breathing Exercise**: Can be done anytime, anywhere – even during a test!
  - Slowly inhale through nose, hold your breath for three seconds, and slowly exhale through mouth. Repeat.

- **5-4-3-2-1 Technique**: Grounding exercise to help you get out of a negative spiral. In your immediate surroundings, think of...
  - 5 things you can see
  - 4 things you can feel
  - 3 things you can hear
  - 2 things you can smell
  - 1 think you can taste

- **Meditation**: Clears your mind and calms your thoughts. Good for general stress/anxiety.
Test-Taking Tips

Multiple Choice
- Pay attention to words like “not” or other negatives.
- Think of your own answer before looking at the choices; this helps prevent you from getting distracted by wrong answers that appear right.
- Read each answer in case there is a better choice.
- The correct answer should be grammatically correct.
- If you need to guess, use process of elimination to narrow down the possible answers.
- Look for hints in other questions on the exam.

True/False Questions
- Be wary of absolute words like “never,” “always,” or “all.” These are often false.
- Pay attention to words like “sometimes” or “often.” These are often true.
- Don’t look too hard for patterns – there probably won’t be an even mix of True and False answers.

Matching
- Match the items you know first; you don’t have to go in order.
- Mark out answers that you have already used.
- Find out if items will be matched exactly once, or multiple times.

Short Answer
- Keep it brief – usually one or two complete sentences is sufficient.
- Make sure you fully answer all parts of the question.
- Don’t leave it blank; at least try. You might get partial credit.

Essay Exams
- Make an outline!!! Even a quick outline will make the essay much easier to write.
- Make your essay organized: include a thesis/introduction, supporting paragraphs, and conclusion.
- Use complete sentences and proper grammar.
- Make sure you fully answer or explain the essay question. Be detailed.
- Leave enough time to review and edit your essay.

More Help:
- The LSTC offers free tutoring to SCC students! Also: Writing Center, RISE, Math Lab, etc.
- Attend workshops at the LSTC (Test Strategies, Stress Management, Study Skills and many more)
- Counseling is available at the Counseling Center (Rodda Hall North 147)