

STUDY AND TEST/EXAM TAKING STRATEGIES

After the test or exam

- Avoid searching back through your notes to see what you got wrong or forgot to include.
- Avoid comparing your answers with those of your classmates.
- Keep practising positive self-talk (e.g., “I did my best. I’m proud of the studying I did.”).
- Once your test or exam has been marked, look at it and reflect. What went well and what didn’t?
 - What type of question did you find easy? Why?
 - What study strategies were most effective?
 - Identify why you might have missed a question. Did you read it correctly? Did you prepare for it?
 - Did you run out of time?
 - Were there any stress management strategies you used that helped you before or during the test or exam?
- Make and implement a plan to help you do even better next time.
- Reward yourself. Do something you enjoy!

Sources:

- ▶ [Exam Anxiety Workshop \(Barbara VanIngen, Counselling Psychologist, Concordia University\)](#)
- ▶ [Test and exam study tips - UofT Student Life \(utoronto.ca\)](#)





Appendix C

Challenge Your Thinking Activity

Ask yourself...

- ▶ *How likely is this?*
- ▶ *Does my entire future really depend on _____ ?*
- ▶ *What can I control?*
- ▶ *What will I do if this happens?*
- ▶ *How have I handled challenges in the past?*
- ▶ *What would I say to a friend?*
- ▶ *Who could help me?*

INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
"I'm not smart enough."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can't know everything. No one does. But I've passed tests before and there are things that I'm good at. • There are many reasons why people don't do well on a test that have nothing to do with how smart they are.
"I don't understand anything!"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That isn't true. I'm just nervous right now. • I'll focus on what I understand instead of what I don't.
"I have to pass, or I'll never have a good career."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One test isn't going to determine my entire future or happiness in life. • Many things that make me happy have nothing to do with school.
"I'm going to get a terrible mark."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I haven't seen the test yet and I don't know what mark I'll get. I do know that I spent time carefully preparing. • I'll focus on what I will do, not on the mark I will get.



INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
"I'm bad at math. I'll never be able to do it."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Math isn't my best subject, but I've been studying consistently so I'll be able to do my best.
"I'll never pass this exam."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am well prepared. I read all the material and reviewed it carefully, and my study notes were really good.
"It's too hard. I can't do this."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have done hard things before. • I will try my best.
"If I don't pass, my family will think less of me."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My family knows how hard I prepared. • They won't decide who I am as a person based on one test.
"I'll never get into college/ university."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are many tests and assignments that go into my final grades. • If I need extra help, I know where to get it.
"I have to get an A, or I'm worthless."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One test doesn't determine what kind of person I am or my value. • I am worthwhile no matter what I get on this test.
"I'm going to fail no matter what I do, so there's no point trying."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm going to focus on the question in front of me instead of my worries. • If I don't try, it will impact my mark. I want to give myself the chance to do the best I can.
"Everyone else is going to do better than me."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm going to focus on myself. Comparing myself to others doesn't help me.





Appendix D

Practise Scenario Script and Discussion Guide

SCRIPT

You have an exam coming in a subject that you think is not your best and you're worried about doing well. You've worked hard throughout the course and your marks so far have been okay, so you don't want the exam to bring them down. Whenever you think about the exam, you get a nervous feeling in your stomach. You also keep picturing yourself doing poorly, and you know that's not going to help you do well. You decide to take charge of your worry and start using strategies to help manage it. That way, you have the best chance to prepare and show what you know during the exam. What strategies might support you?

Pause for discussion

It's the day before the exam and you're feeling pretty nervous. Your stomach is upset, you're not sure you're going to sleep well, and you keep thinking everyone else is going to do better than you, which is not helping you study. You want to learn all you can and be at your best to write the exam. What strategies might support you?

Pause for discussion

It's the morning of the exam. You feel nervous and keyed up. You prepared well, and you want to show all you know during the exam, but you keep thinking about a test you didn't do well on. What strategies might support you?

Pause for discussion

The exam is over! You still have lots of adrenaline, but you're tired, too. It's been a busy time. You want to move on from the experience and take care of yourself as best you can, but everyone keeps asking you about your answers. What strategies might support you?

Pause for discussion

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Pause 1: strategies leading up to an exam

- Invite students to consider the healthy routines and study and test-taking, thought challenging, and relaxation strategies they have learned.
- Here you might focus on strategies that would support students throughout the entire course.



DISCUSSION GUIDE

<p>Pause 1: strategies leading up to an exam (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy routines, study skills and habits might be relevant for many students, and you may wish to talk about how to build positive sustainable routines and practices. • You may also wish to discuss strategies to address specific issues. For example, relaxation strategies might help with the stomach symptoms, as might thought challenging. Thought challenging might also help with picturing yourself doing poorly (e.g., students could respond to that thought by focusing on more balanced thinking, such as, “I am preparing as carefully as I can. I’ll be as ready as I possibly can be.” Or they might try, “Even though it’s not my best subject, I’ve done okay in the course so far. My preparation is paying off and it will help with the exam, too.”
<p>Pause 2: strategies for the day before an exam</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite students to consider strategies. • Here they may wish to focus on addressing the specific issues raised in the scenario. • Relaxation may help with the stomach issues and sleep. Ask students for ideas. Would they suggest deep breathing? Or listening to some calming music while trying to fall asleep? • Thought challenging might also help. For example, students might try, “I’m going to focus on myself, not anyone else.” Invite students to generate other examples of balanced thoughts. • Students might also wish to think about study style and the value of taking some breaks rather than cramming all night. • Other strategies, such as packing their bag so they won’t have to do it in the morning, might help them feel prepared, too.
<p>Pause 3: strategies for the morning of an exam</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite students to consider strategies. • Students may wish to think about the value of eating a good breakfast (if possible), giving themselves plenty of time to get to the exam, and doing something that calms them (e.g., listening to music) rather than cramming until the moment the exam begins. • Students have now completed their exam preparation so the focus here may be on trying to stay calm and relaxed and challenging unhelpful thoughts (e.g., “I did everything I could to help me do my best.”). • They may also wish to avoid friends and classmates who are stressing. • During the exam, students may also wish to use specific test-taking strategies, such as beginning with easier questions, planning their time, and underlining key terms and phrases.
<p>Pause 4: strategies for after an exam</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite students to consider strategies. • Student may wish to focus here on doing something that supports their well-being, such as planning something relaxing for themselves to celebrate their efforts (e.g., taking a walk, watching a movie, or seeing a friend). • They may also wish to avoid debriefing the exam and second guessing their answers. They will have the opportunity to review their exam when it is returned and that is the best time to think about their preparation and what they might like to do the same or different next time.





Extensions

Extend the lessons for your class

Should you have time and feel that mental health literacy is particularly relevant to your curriculum area and/or group of students, below are additional activities for you and your class.

Thought Changing

Where it fits: Action Task (Strategy #3: Challenge Your Thoughts)

- ▶ Review [Thought-changing exercise bundles – School Mental Health Ontario](#) (smho-smsso.ca) (thought changing exercises bundle) with students.
- ▶ Brainstorm ways to share any resources students find helpful with other classes/your school. Could they be printed out and posted around the school? Shared on social media? Posted on a class or school website?

A Letter About Test Anxiety

Where it fits: Consolidation

- ▶ Review [Test Anxiety - Anxiety Canada](#) with students.
- ▶ Ask students to think about what their own letter might say. Then ask them to play the role of the “expert” and respond, given what they have learned. Should you wish, this may be done as a creative writing exercise (with the letters being for student reflection, rather than assessment purposes).



Extend your learning as an educator

Mental health and well-being aren't just important during a few days or lessons a year. They are important all year long. **Look for opportunities to integrate well-being and mental health literacy into course content.** Health and physical education provide a natural connection, but they are not the only place for students to learn about mental health and well-being. Many novels also offer obvious links. Perhaps a creative writing project could provide opportunities. Or does the character trait or virtue of the month connect to well-being? Could you look at brain chemistry or structure and mental health within a science course? Or maybe a math course provides a chance to examine mental health statistics. There are many ways to embed well-being into the work students do every day.

Here are some additional ways to continue to bring well-being into your classroom and school.

Learn	Grow	Partner	Extend
<p>Access the School Mental Health Ontario Website for additional ideas about how to support student mental health and well-being: Take your learning deeper with the educator mental health literacy course developed collaboratively by School Mental Health Ontario and Wilfrid Laurier University. It's free and available online.</p>	<p>Student voice indicates that the majority of students are not currently involved in mental health leadership initiatives at their schools, but most would like to be. Students are also interested in opportunities to participate in mental health clubs, events, and other initiatives.</p> <p>HearNowON Student voice summary of findings</p> <p>Consider the opportunities in your school. Could you start a well-being club or student mental health leadership team? Student voice and participation are great ways to ensure well-being initiatives are engaging and meet the needs of your school community.</p>	<p>Take full advantage of your professional support services school team, if one is available. Professional support services staff can help you identify well-being priorities, resources, and supports; they can provide professional learning opportunities, such as lunch and learns; and they can partner with you in the delivery of programs. Have a conversation with your school team about the full range of supports and services they offer.</p>	<p>Continue to bring mental health and well-being into your classroom. There are a variety of resources available to assist you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary Virtual Field Trip – Visualization • Anxiety Management and Coping Social Media Bundles for Secondary Students • Social Emotional Learning Posters for Secondary Students





Take care of yourself – educator mental health matters

We recognize that the mental health and well-being of students, staff, and families are inextricably linked. We know that you are doing all you can to help your students. We hope that you can prioritize your wellness and mental health, as well. Personal wellness looks different for everyone. There is no one way to maintain balance with the many challenges and demands we all sometimes face. Taking time for you, to engage in well-being practices and maintain connections that help you to feel well, is so very important, and sets an excellent example for our students.

[Take Care of Yourself](#)
(smso-smsso.ca)

[Coping with Stress and Anxiety](#)
(camh.ca)

If you feel you could benefit from support for your own mental health and well-being, connect with:

- ▶ Your family doctor
- ▶ Your board Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- ▶ [Mental Health & Addiction Treatment Services | Connex Ontario](#) Also available at 1-866-531-2600
- ▶ [Get medical advice: Telehealth Ontario | Ontario.ca](#) Also available at 1-866-797-0000
- ▶ [Wellness Together Canada | Home \(portal.gs\)](#)
- ▶ [Ontario 211 | Community and Social Services Help Line \(211ontario.ca\)](#)

If you are in crisis:

- ▶ [Crisis Text Line | Text HOME To 741741](#) Crisis Text Line, powered by Kids Help phone, provides free, 24/7, nationwide service to people of all ages in Canada
- ▶ Go to the emergency room of your local hospital or call 911 (if you feel safe to do so) right away. If you choose to call 911, you may request that a mental health professional who understands your culture be sent.

