

- Learn and practice relaxation strategies including calm breathing, mindfulness, and visualization with recorded exercises.

What should I do if I think I'm stressed, anxious, or I may have an anxiety disorder?

Talk to an adult that you trust about how you are feeling. If you are experiencing stress or anxiety, stress management and problem solving strategies will likely help you feel better, as will talking about your situation. Many self-help resources and detailed information about anxiety and anxiety disorders is available on the Anxiety BC website at: www.anxietybc.com.

When Should You Seek Out Professional Assistance?

Talking always helps - it is a relief to share and to receive caring support from someone else. Friends are a great support, but when you are feeling significantly anxious it is important to share your feelings with an adult. Seek out professional assistance (from your doctor, Ms. Beck, or a community counsellor or psychologist) when:

- You have tried stress management strategies and you are still feeling anxious most of the time.
- You find yourself avoiding situations or tasks like homework and assignments, activities, social events, school, etc. because they cause you to feel anxious.

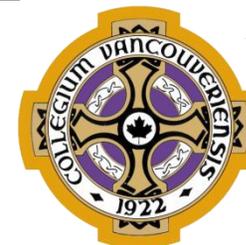
- You are experiencing anxiety which is out of proportion to the event(s) in your life and/or your anxiety is prolonged.
- Immediately if you have had, or are having, thoughts of self-harm.
- You are engaging in high risk behaviours.

Who Can You Talk To?

- Ms. Beck (counselling & referral): mbeck@mail.vc.bc.ca
- Your Teachers & Coaches
- Your Priest
- Your parents & family
- Your family physician
- Counsellors & resources in the community (see the Counselling and Support link at Student Services on the VC website: <http://www.vc.bc.ca/Student-Services/Emotional-Well-Being-and-Counselling>)
- 24/7 Counselling and Referral: [Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre of British Columbia](http://www.vc.bc.ca/Student-Services/Emotional-Well-Being-and-Counselling): (604) 872-3311 .
- Catholic Family Services: (604) 443-2200.
- Several self-help books and pamphlets on the topic of anxiety and anxiety disorders are also available in the Student Services Centre.

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Test Anxiety



VANCOUVER COLLEGE

Test Anxiety

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Anxiety, or stress, is something we all experience when we believe we are faced with a threat. Our brain and body respond with the "flight or fight" response which causes our heart rate and breathing to increase, our palms to sweat, and a number of other bodily changes.

A test or exam is something that can be considered a threat or a challenge - it's all in how we view it and how prepared we feel. Preventing and managing test anxiety involves taking care of more than our studying. We need to also pay attention to our thoughts, which impact our anxiety and mood, as well as self-care.

Symptoms of test/exam anxiety include feeling fearful, down, and/or worried, procrastination/avoiding studying, negative thinking, excessive worrying, 'going blank' or having trouble concentrating or remembering, disturbed sleep, sweating, upset stomach,

headaches, rapid breathing and/or heartbeat, and/or muscle tightness.

General Test or Exam Prep

- Prepare over an extended period of time focusing on the number of times you review and practice the information. Don't cram! Don't waste lots of time making test notes. Make sure you seek out clarification for things you don't understand long before the test!
- Seek out help long in advance, not the night before! Remember that your teachers all have extra help sessions and the school offers a very successful program of Peer Tutoring (application forms are available from Ms. Marino or anyone in Student Services), and Lunch and Learn drop in tutoring. Speak up when you're stuck or need help!
- Follow the 'work then play' motto - don't let gaming, surfing, texting, etc. distract you - save them for after.

Recognizing and Dealing with Negative Thinking

- Don't get caught up in the stress or competitive statements of classmates. Focus on doing the best that you can do.
- Think of the test/exam as a challenge, not a threat.

- Pay particular attention to negative self-talk - things you say to yourself that are critical or pessimistic. We know that self-talk is highly related to our mood and that countering negative self-talk with neutral or positive self-talk can dramatically affect our mood. Considerable research supports a strong connection between negative thinking and anxiety. For example, if you catch yourself thinking, "I'll never understand this! I'm going to fail!", say "I'm going to try my best to understand this. If I don't I'm going to see my teacher tomorrow and I can also request a peer tutor. It will be okay." There are many examples of these coping statements on the **Mindshift App** (see below).

Using Exercise and Relaxation Strategies to Prevent and Deal with Symptoms

- Work out - exercise has long been used as a therapy for anxious mood. When we exercise, our brain produces 'feel good' chemicals that help to counteract anxiety. Exercise also helps take the 'edge' off physically and relax tense muscles. The type of exercise required to do this is aerobic, meaning that your heart rate is raised steadily for 30 minutes or longer.
- Use relaxation strategies such as calm breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, yoga, or mindfulness to

prevent or reduce symptoms of stress.

Important Self-Care

- Test/exam times are often when students stay up late to study (or to game or surf!). A little bit of sleep deprivation can have a significant negative effect on our mood. Lots of research has found that teens need an average of 9 ½ hours a night!!!
- Avoid substances which can mask or exacerbate anxiety, and often create a second problem or condition.
- Eat, even if you don't feel like it. Think of your body like a car that needs gas to run properly. Your brain can't work properly if it doesn't have fuel (food).
- Maintain balance in your life - reward your studying with relaxation, fun, and time with friends and family.

Mindshift App

The **Mindshift App**, a free download at www.anxietybc.com (go to Youth and Download app at the top), allows you to do the following:

- Learn about anxiety and when you should seek out help.
- Rate your anxiety symptoms.
- Learn realistic thinking (things to say to yourself that will keep your anxiety in check).