



Dear CCNY Community,

As we embark on navigating this unfamiliar semester, the CCNY Counseling Center is bringing back our ***Letters to Home Series***. A monthly newsletter providing information on how to care for your mental health.

This week we present:

## ***Letters to Home – Skills to Prepare for Exams***

It is natural to experience test anxiety. Many students – even those who are well prepared – experience some level of anxiety before and during an exam. While a certain amount of test anxiety is beneficial (and prompts us to adequately prepare), too much anxiety can be harmful if it prevents you from studying, preparing properly, or concentrating during the exam. During the COVID-19 pandemic, while attending classes remotely, exams are being taken in an unusual and unfamiliar format. Below are some test-taking tips and resources:

- **Develop Good Study Habits:** One of the most effective ways to address test anxiety is to adequately prepare. Reflect back on study habits and skills that have and have not worked for you in the past. Start early to decrease feelings of panic and running out of time. Preparing early and effectively for the questions on an exam also builds confidence. As your confidence increases, your test anxiety will decrease.
- **Be Prepared:** If you are well prepared for the test and familiar with the questions you are likely to be asked, your anxiety will reduce. If you are not sure what to expect, ask your professor! Often times insight regarding test format or chapters to review can be provided. If you are learning a topic or concept that is difficult for you to understand, start working with your professor, and connect with a mentor, classmate, or tutor early in the semester to get the help you need.
- **Avoid Cramming!:** Cramming the night before an exam is a major cause of test anxiety. Students who take time to study regularly will experience less anxiety than those who study a day or a few hours prior to an exam. Cramming can leave you pressed for time, increase negative self-talk, and also prevent you from getting the assistance you may need in time.

- **Get Adequate Exercise:** Exercise can relieve stress, enhance mental functions, and increase energy. Prioritizing taking care of your body will prove beneficial in various ways, including helping you sleep the night before a test and increasing your ability to approach the exam in a relaxed manner.
- **Get Plenty of Sleep:** Lack of sleep prior to a test can result in fatigue, decreased concentration, difficulties in recalling information, and increased anxiety. In order to ensure you get enough sleep during the week and night of an exam, set a deadline to stop studying and rest. Adding sleep to your schedule holds you more accountable to your studying timeline and prioritizes rest.
- **Plan to Eat:** Taking a test on a hungry stomach can be difficult. Sometimes eating prior to an exam is neglected because of anxiety, poor time management, or desire to spend every last-minute studying. Planning to grab even a small healthy snack can have great benefits.
- **Practice Relaxation Skills:** Before and during an exam, be sure to take deep breaths to help regulate and calm your body and mind. Leading up to test time, you may even try focusing on something unrelated to the exam or school. In addition, prepare ahead of time a list of mental relaxation skills that work for you. The day of an exam is not the appropriate time to learn new relaxation skills.
- **Focus on the Learning Experience.** Do not be too hard on yourself if you do not perform up to your expectations on an exam. Instead, learn from the experience, so that you can make appropriate changes in the future. Getting too nervous about the past can create difficulties in moving forward.
- **Ask for Help.** If all else fails, seek help. Severe test anxiety can cripple a student's academic ability. If your mind goes blank every time you sit down for an exam, or you feel like you are going to pass out or throw up, you might need to talk with your teacher, academic advisor, or a counselor. Do not be afraid or ashamed to ask for help. Severe test anxiety can be a psychological condition that causes otherwise smart, hard-working students to underperform academically.

**Additional Resources:**

[Text Anxiety Self-Assessment](#)

[6 Study Skills](#)

[Test Anxiety Skills](#)

[How to Approach Questions on a Test](#)

The Counseling Center is open and providing remote clinical services, via online platforms and phone, to actively enrolled CCNY students. Services provided include screening and

assessment, crisis intervention, individual short-term counseling, group counseling, referral and case management, and workshops.

If you are a CCNY student and would like to connect with a counselor, you can do so by:

- Emailing us at [counseling@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:counseling@ccny.cuny.edu)
- Calling our office's main number (212) 650-8222

For more information, please visit our website: <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/counseling>

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline \(Lifeline\)](#) -- **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**, or text the Crisis Text Line (**text HELLO to 741741**). Both services are free and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The deaf and hard of hearing can contact the Lifeline via TTY at 1-800-799-4889. All calls are confidential.

Trevor Lifeline, the only national 24/7 lifeline for LGBTQ youth is 1-866-488-7386.

Veterans Crisis Line, for U.S. Military Veterans, call 1-800-273-8255, press 1.

For immediate mental health support please call NYC Well 1-888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355). NYC Well provides free, confidential services to support mental health concerns. NYC WELL is available 24/7 and can provide assistance in over 200 languages.

You can also text WELL to 65173 or access the NYC WELL website at <https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/> to chat with a counselor.

Stay safe and take care of each other,  
The CCNY Counseling Center