It is natural to feel some degree of anxiety, stress or apprehension about exams. In fact, some anxiety can actually be beneficial as it can help you perform better. However, higher levels of anxiety might actually get in the way of your ability to function at your best. For example, if may actually lead to difficulty focusing when studying or completing your exams. Below are some useful strategies that you might find helpful if exam anxiety is a concern for you.

**Tips for managing anxiety just prior to or during an exam**

**Manage your thoughts or ‘self-talk’**
Notice what your mind is telling you. It may be negative and fear-producing, such as: “I can’t remember the answer, I’ll fail.” or “I’ve gone blank I’ve blown the entire exam.” These thoughts are unhelpful so try not to engage with them. Label them as ‘unhelpful’ and then refocus your attention by using some mindfulness techniques.

You could also try to be more realistic and positive with your thinking: “I don’t have to know everything or get 100%, I will attempt all that I can and come back to this question and have a go at it later. More will come to me as I get going.” and “This stress reaction will settle down. I just need to calm down and breathe slowly.”

**Manage your reaction to uncomfortable feelings and sensations**
It is important to acknowledge and accept the uncomfortable sensations, if you ignore them they will get worse. Remember, these feelings will pass.

Acknowledge the sensation and then focus your attention on your breathing or your feet on the floor and say to yourself, “It’s ok I can do this”, then return to undergoing the exam.

**Slow down your breathing**
Breathe in for four seconds, hold for two seconds and then breathe out for six seconds. Repeat 5-10 times.

**Recognise muscle tension**
Learn to tense and then release groups of muscles throughout the body. Let the tension go on each outward breath. Observe the difference.

**Strategies you can practice during the year and the weeks prior to exams**

**Be prepared**
Being prepared for exams is essential and will reduce your anxiety. See the University of Newcastle’s resources on ‘Surviving First Year Exams’ and ‘Study Tips’.

**Learn stress management techniques**
- Talk to a Professional: It might also be helpful to talk to someone who can better help you learn and develop strategies to manage exam anxiety, such as University Counselling and Psychological Services on (02) 4921 6622.
- Student Wellbeing ‘Stress’ tip sheet.

**Apps**
Search on the App Store or Google Play

**Smiling Mind**
Smiling Mind is a mindfulness app with a number of different audio scripts to help you develop your mindfulness skills.