**Talking About Mental Health – February 2020 Tests and Stress**

Taking tests is stressful for most students. However, there are lots of ways that your child and youth (and you!) can decrease the stress related to tests.

**Anticipate stress and be ready for it.**

* + Practice relaxing activities every day so during stressful times you already know how to cope.

**Eat well**

* + Learning and remembering takes a lot of energy. Keep healthy snacks close by so you can refuel easily with what your body needs to feel good and think clearly.

**Sleep**

* + During sleep, our brains make connections and consolidate our learning. Research has shown that during sleep, our brain cleans out toxins to allow for more learning to occur the next day.

**Drink lots of water**

* + Hydration is very important for good brain function. Cut down on caffeine, which contributes to the stress response and to poor sleep.

**Move**

* + Activity increases energy, stimulates brain growth and increases mood. Take regular active breaks; even 5 minutes of walking outdoors can make a difference.

**Pause and relax**

* + Take time to relax. Do some deep breathing. Listen to music. Meditate. Go outside. Write in a journal. Do some stretches. Go for a walk. Draw or doodle. <http://youth.anxietybc.com/relaxation> has some great examples of how to relax.

**Connect**

* + Talk to your friends.
  + Talk to your parent or a caring adult about how you are feeling.
  + At school, you can talk to your teacher, principal or CYC for support.

**Laugh!**

* + Laughter is a great release and allows our brains to recharge and reset.

*Jenny Marino is the Mental Health Lead for the Upper Grand District School Board.*