JOURNALING ANXIETY

WHAT IS JOURNALING ANXIETY?
Journaling anxiety means taking some time to consciously and intentionally write down what you are feeling and experiencing during moments of anxiety.

WHY WRITE?
The worry we feel competes with our working memory when we are faced with a difficult task. For example, when taking an exam, information should move from long-term memory (LTM) to working memory as you answer each question. Material in your working memory only stays there for up to 30 seconds so when we feel anxious our working memory struggles, our focus is disrupted, and performance on the task can suffer.

Writing may help lessen the burden that worries place on your working memory. This allows an opportunity for your working memory to focus and help you complete the necessary task (like answering exam questions) instead of anxiety taking over. This activity can be useful to do 30 minutes before an exam.

KEY POINTS
Research often shows that when we feel a desire to perform at a high level, we worry about the situation and its consequences or outcomes.

**Situation:** Student preparing for/taking an exam
**Consequences:** Feeling anxious about taking the exam; worrying about receiving a poor grade

Anxiety is not just a feeling – it causes physical and mental changes to our bodies and brains.

- **Physical symptoms**
  - Muscle tension, headache, shoulder/neck aches
  - Nausea
  - Shortness of breath, feeling faint
  - Shakiness

- **Mental symptoms**
  - Confusion, difficulty thinking clearly
  - Making careless errors
  - Blank out, forget familiar material
  - Difficulty focusing

HOW TO JOURNAL ABOUT ANXIETY
Write about your anxiety on a piece of paper.
- When do you become anxious?
- Physically, how do you feel?
- What mental symptoms are you experiencing?
- What is going through your mind?

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