



FROM THE DIANA AWARD

A YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE TO

# DEALING WITH EXAM STRESS\_

From The Diana Award



# EXAM\_STRESS

High stress levels can really kick in around exam time and this can have a negative effect on your performance. This can cause panic, anxiety and mind blocks during time-pressured exams.

While a little bit of stress around exam time can be seen as useful for helping you to focus and work hard, heightened stress levels as exam dates draw nearer can lead to feeling out of control, causing a negative effect on time spent on crucial revision.

Increased levels of stress leads to the activation of the 'fight or flight' response to try to deal with it. Fight is where you take on the challenge head on and flight is ignoring or running away from the problem.

While it can be natural to experience some of the symptoms listed opposite during exam times, if you experience all of them or over a long period of time, we encourage you to talk to a trusted adult about how you're feeling.

Main symptoms of stress can include, but are not exclusive to:



**tiredness, difficulty getting to sleep or waking up**



**forgetfulness**



**unexplained aches or pains**



**poor appetite**



**loss of interest in activities**



**higher levels of irritability**



**increased heart rate and dizziness**

All of these responses to stress can have a damaging effect on studying and, more importantly, on your emotional well-being.

# TOP TIPS FOR DEALING WITH EXAM STRESS\_

## RECOGNISE WHEN YOU'RE STRESSING OUT:

This first pointer requires you to be self-aware and have self-management. When the pressure is mounting, take a break from revision and chat to someone who understands the level of pressure you're feeling to help get things into perspective. Plan in break times to your revision timetable.

## KNOW WHEN YOU WORK BEST:

Some people are early birds and prefer to get up and get studying early, while others prefer to stay up late working in their rooms. Suss out when you feel most alert and aim to revise at that time. Find places where you can focus on your revision without too much disruption, so it keeps you calm and relaxed.

# EAT\_ WELL

Make sure you're providing your brain and your body with the fuel it needs for concentrating on revision; you can't focus on what you need to revise on if your energy levels are low and your stomach is growling!

Try to eat as much fresh fruit and vegetables as possible and limit how much you indulge in coffee and chocolate; caffeine and sugar only provide a temporary boost, so go for the natural sustenance instead. Most importantly, make sure you eat breakfast before any exam.

## YOU CAN DO YOUR BEST

# SLEEP WELL\_

Do what you need to do to prepare, but plan in when you stop revising; your brain needs time to switch off and unwind before going to sleep as this allows you to get good rest. Give yourself time to wind down to make sure you sleep well without constant worry preventing you from dropping off. Make sure you switch off your phone, tablet and other devices at least an hour before you go to sleep. Try and get around 8 hours sleep at night.

# STAY POSITIVE

# EXERCISE\_

## MAKE SURE YOU DO SOME PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:

Physical activity is one the best things you can do to de-stress. Anything from a 20 minute walk to an hour long exercise class helps reduce physical tension and relases feel-good chemicals in the brain. Make sure you do activities you enjoy as this will raise your endorphin levels and make you feel more positive in all you do.

## AVOID COMPARING SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE WITH YOUR PEERS:

Having a chat with friends about stress levels can be helpful, but comparing what you know is not always helpful as you may feel like you haven't done enough. Remember, everyone learns differently, so you may find it useful to find a study partner so you can support each other.

# RELAX\_

## TRY RELAXATION TECHNIQUES:

If you're feeling really anxious before an exam, give yourself the time and space to do what calms you down. This could be finding a calm quiet space or breathing deeply in and out for a couple of minutes. Also try deep breathing techniques during exams to help reduce feeling panicked.

## STEER CLEAR OF EXAM POST-MORTEM:

Analysing and comparing answers after the exam has finished with your peers never ends well. You can't go back and change your answers, so knowing what your friends have written for each question will just make you worry more about how you've done.

# REWARD\_ YOURSELF

Build treats into your exam timetable. E.G. watching the latest episode of your favourite programme, treating yourself to a few snacks or listening to music you love.

Also, plan something exciting for the end of your exams to keep you focused on finishing them! Maybe a meal out with your family, or a trip with your friends.

# DONT QUIT

# AVOID\_ STIMULANTS

Caffeine can be seen as a way of keeping alert and helping you to stay on top of the workload you have. Some can make negative choices on stimulants that can be more harmful. But they all leave you craving more and, in excess, will either reduce your cognitive ability, lower your mood or even over-stimulate you.

Drinking plenty of water is a good way to remain refreshed and is a natural way of keeping you more alert.

## KEEP GOING

# DON'T\_WORRY

## KEEP IT IN PERSPECTIVE:

There's more to life than just exams. While things may seem tense around exam time, it's important to remember this will fade. Try to focus on doing the best you can, but don't burden yourself with unreasonable expectations. Also remember that performance in exams is not the only thing necessary to be successful, you have skills in other areas that you can capitalise on.

## MANAGE YOUR ROLE AS AN ANTI-BULLYING AMBASSADOR:

Don't forget, you need to make sure that you take care of your own stress levels while balancing your role as an Anti-Bullying Ambassador. Help others, but also ensure you have support for yourself from your trusted support networks.

**YOU CAN**

**DO IT\_**  
**\_**