

How to Manage Exam Stress

The Big 5 Tips in Managing Exam Stress.

1 - First, believe in yourself. Your teachers or tutors wouldn't have accepted you on to the course or put you in for exams if they didn't have faith in your ability. If they believe in you, then believe in yourself.

2 - Second, don't try and be perfect. Make sure you have a balanced outlook about your expectations of yourself. Striving for an A+ result in every exam will only create additional stress. Aim high, aim to do your best but recognise and acknowledge that a pass is ok too.

3 - Next make sure you understand what will be expected in the exam. Make sure you understand the course material and if not ask your teacher or tutor. Getting stressed out won't help and will make matters worse. Ask your teacher / tutor for past papers and if necessary ask your peers for assistance.

4 - Don't bottle things up. Find someone you trust to confide in and talk to them if you're starting to feel overloaded.

5 - Lastly, keep your perspective. When you're sitting exams, they do seem to be the most crucial thing going on for you at that time, but in the bigger picture of your world, they are only a very small part. Whatever the results, the sun will still rise the next day and the day after and the earth still spins on its axis. Life will and does go on.

Specific hints and tips for dealing effectively with exam stress

Make a realistic revision schedule. Work out what you have to do and by when. Break this down in to manageable portions. Look to do a few hours each day in small chunks and if possible mix up the sessions so you won't get bored.

Understand your learning style and stick to it. Some people like to go out of the house maybe to the library where there are less distractions, some like to learn in a group with others and some might prefer to lock themselves in their room.

Know when to take a break. Recognise the signs of being overloaded and do something different for half an hour. Trying to work through when everything is getting on top of you is counterproductive and will increase your stress levels.

Don't compare yourself to your friends and peers. We all know someone who appears to breeze through this exam process, appears unflappable, revises for several hours every day and takes everything in their stride. As long as you have a realistic schedule and know and stick to your own learning style you will achieve your goal.

Remember to eat regularly and eat healthily. Your body needs fuel to work properly. Eating regularly and healthily regulates your blood sugars which in turn allow you to concentrate for longer. Cut back on your intake of caffeine, alcohol and tobacco. These deplete your system of vital nutrients, have a detrimental effect of regulating blood sugar and impact on your sleep and general wellbeing.

Get proper sleep. Give yourself enough time in an evening to wind down from your studies. Make sure you have an end time for your revision and stick to it. Don't be tempted to just read that last bit in bed before you try and go to sleep.

Make sure you keep your social life active. Go out with your friends and do things you enjoy.

Schedule in to your plan time for regular exercise. Exercise releases endorphins, those feel good hormones. So find something you enjoy and do it for a minimum of 30 minutes every day. Use one of your thirty minute break periods.

Learn some relaxation techniques. Employ a life coach, hypnotherapist or mindfulness coach to teach you methods of remaining calm. This will not only help you in the lead up to the exams but also during them. Exam nerves in those few moments at the start of the exam are the most nerve wracking. It is often the time when your mind goes blank, where you look at the questions in a blind panic convinced you don't know any of the answers. Being able to remain calm at these times is vital for clearing the mind and being to think clearly.

Keep in mind that you have all the resources you need to get through the exam schedule. Eat and sleep well, take regular exercise, learn some relaxation techniques, make and keep to a revision schedule and be as prepared as you can be.

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