

MANAGING EXAM STRESS



Wellbeing – top 3 tips

1. The most important thing when struggling with exam stress, or stress in general, is remembering to eat well, to keep hydrated, to engage in gentle exercise and good sleep hygiene. In order for your mind to work well, your body needs energy and nutrition and rest.
2. Secondly, ensuring you have a clear, tidy and quiet space to complete your revision and homework will help protect you from distractions.
3. Taking regular breaks, around every half an hour for 5-10 minutes to stress and think about something else will help you to maintain your focus and retain the information.

What is exam stress?

Exam stress comes from feeling anxious about a variety of different things encompassing exams, such as being able to retain all the information expected, sitting in a large hall with lots of other people sitting in silence, worrying about whether you've done enough revision, worrying about forgetting everything and failing, and many other things.

Here is a link to a short video explaining how the *Fight, Flight or Freeze* response underpins the anxiety we experience: [Fight Flight Freeze – Anxiety explained for teens](#)

Is it all bad?

It's important to remember that *some* stress / anxiety is ok, it can push us to perform at our optimal level, but when it takes over and becomes debilitating, this is when it can be a problem.

The Stress Bucket

If we imagine that we all carry around an internal bucket and each time we feel stressed about something, whether that be exams, friendships, or anything else, this drops into the bucket. The bucket therefore gets heavier and heavier over time and eventually we feel so weighed down we are unable to do any of the things we want to and need to.

Before the bucket gets to this point we need to remember that every time something is added to the bucket, we also need to release something by doing something we enjoy, such as reading a book or going to the cinema, or doing something to look after ourselves such as taking a bath or doing some exercise. In this way, we can keep some control over the stressful things in our lives and are able to continue engaging the things we want to and need to.

Write some ideas down here of things that you enjoy and/or things to look after yourself:

Here are a few ideas:

- Going for a walk.
- Listening to music.
- Watching tv / a film.
- Having a shower.
- Spend time with family or friends.
- Having a nap.
- Cooking or baking.
- Painting.
- Doing yoga
- Talk to someone.

What else can we do about exam stress?

There are different techniques we can use to help manage exam stress. What works for one person doesn't necessarily mean it will work for everyone, so sometimes we need to try different things to find out what works best for us as individuals. Here are three example techniques that can help with exam stress and other anxieties:

Breathing

Breath control is a natural tranquilizer as it helps slow down our heart rate.

Place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest. When you breath, your belly should expand, your chest should remain still.

BOX BREATHING

4:7:8 BREATHING

Grounding

Grounding brings you back to the present, allowing your mind to calm and focus on what it is important for you.

Use these exercises to help you ground in the present moment.

5 Things that you can see

4 Things that you can hear

3 Things that you can feel

2 Things that you can smell

1 Things that you can taste

ROOM SEARCH

Find everything in the room that fits one category. For example:

Find everything that's green

Find all of the squares in the room

Count the in the room

Relaxation

By relaxing our body we can release the accumulated tension in our muscles.

One way to do this is to tense and relax all the muscles in your body one by one:

TENSE FOR 5 SECONDS → **PAUSE FOR 10 SECONDS**

1. Raise your eyebrows
2. Clench your eyelids
3. Open your mouth wide
4. Raise your shoulders
5. Take a deep breath
6. Clench your fists
7. Pull in your tummy
8. Tighten your buttocks
9. Pull your toes upwards
10. Curl your toes

Links

Please follow the link below to watch a short video where Dr. Sheila Redfern gives advice and tips about managing stress around moments such as exams:

[Dr Sheila Redfern gives advice on managing stress at important moments - YouTube](#)

The charity *Young Minds* has a great online guide offering advice around when it's all just getting a bit much:

[Exam Stress | How To Deal with Exam Stress | YoungMinds](#)

Here is a video about negative thoughts hijackers:

[Struggling with Internal Hijackers? - YouTube](#)

Apps – these are useful apps to help young people and adults with mental health and wellbeing:

	Headspace	A meditation app that acts as a personal guide to health and happiness.
	Mindshift	Helps teens and young adults cope with anxiety.
	Smiling mind	A meditation program developed by psychologists and educators to help bring mindfulness into your life.
	Calm	Mediation techniques to aid with stress and sleep.
	Chill Panda	Helps children better understand their stress and shows them ways to feel better using breathing techniques, yoga, <u>exercise</u> and calming games.
	Mee Two	A fully moderated app for young people which provides peer support, expert help, inbuilt educational and creative resources.
	Think Ninja	Helps young people aged 11 – 17 years old with their mental health, emotional <u>wellbeing</u> and resilience.
	Feeling Good Teens	Uses short audio tracks to help let go of worry, improve sleep, develop self-esteem, <u>resilience</u> and goal focused motivation.
	Worry Tree	Aims to help you take control of worry wherever you are.

A collection of advice, guidance and resources. Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust does not claim to be the author of the suggested materials.