

Tips for coping with Exam Stress



Stowe Valley
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Exam stress can feel like a lot to cope with, but there are things you can do to improve your wellbeing. We have tips and ideas to help you cope at different times. Remember: we are all unique, so what works for you might be different to what works for someone else. You might also have to try a few different things to see what works best.

During exam period:

Unless you are in year 13 where you will get an allocated leaving date, you have to continue going to school throughout the exam period and there isn't exam leave. You might also be working a part-time job if you are in year 12/13. The exam period can feel long and difficult, and you might feel under pressure.

You can look after yourself in different ways:

- Make time for things you enjoy. Find ways to release stress and celebrate progress. You could listen to music, draw, cook, play with a pet or go for a walk. You can try things alone or with friends.
- Talk to others about how you feel. Connect with other people, especially people who are going through the same thing. For more information, see MINDs page on talking about how you are feeling.
- Try finding balance. Take regular breaks and be realistic about what you can do in a day. Keep things in perspective and remember that exams won't last forever.
- Take care of your physical health. Make sure you get enough sleep, food, water and exercise. If you take regular medication, keep up with your routine.
- Focus on yourself. Try not to compare yourself to others. Think of things you like about yourself and what you're good at - this can help boost your confidence. For more ideas, see MINDs page on looking after your wellbeing.

Preparing for an exam

While you're preparing an exam, you could try lowering stress levels by:

- Finding a study group. If there's nothing at school, try starting one with friends or people in your class.
- Making a revision timetable. This helps organise your revision and your breaks. You can find useful tips on the BBC bitesize website.
- Working in the best way for you. Be creative or active if it helps, like drawing diagrams or making up acronyms, mnemonics, acrostics. Try being open to different types of studying and revision. Don't change what you do... keep doing how you do things as everyone is different but there are ways you can enhance your revision technique- reach out to a teacher/HOY to help you if you need.
- Revising in the best place for you. You might prefer the quiet or being around others. If you don't have a space to study at home, you could try at school, the library, a cafe, or a family member or friend's house.

Remember: feeling stressed about exams is normal, but you don't have to struggle on your own.

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On the day of your exam: To help cope with stress on the day of your exam, you could:

- Prepare your items the night before. Get everything you need ready to take with you, like pens and water for your exam.
- Start your day the best you can. Try to eat breakfast and make sure you have enough time to arrive at your exam without rushing.
- Try to ground yourself with a breathing exercise. If you feel overwhelmed in the exam, try to breathe in through your nose for four counts, hold it for two counts, and breathe out through your mouth for seven counts. If you repeat this, it can slow your breath and help keep you calm.
- Take your time. Read the exam carefully and plan what you need to do before answering.
- Remind yourself that it'll be over soon. You've done your best and that's all you can do.

After your exam: To cope with stress and difficult feelings after an exam, you could:

- Try not to compare your answers to others. If possible, avoid talking to other people about the questions, comparing answers or looking up answers online.
- Reward yourself. Think of something to do afterwards that you enjoy. You could go out with your friends, play video games, or eat your favourite food.
- Focus on next steps. Plan what you'll do next, like going home, doing something fun, then revising for the next exam. Think ahead in a positive way – if you have another exam, focus on the time and date that it'll be over.
- Relax before your next exam. The stress from doing an exam can leave you feeling exhausted. You might find it hard to revise again before you take a break.

Remember: you can only try your best. Each new day is a chance to start again.

Where can I find support? During exams, you may need extra support to help cope with exam stress, as well as your mental health. Remember: it's okay to ask for help at any time. Support from school or college. Your teachers and Heads of Year will be able to offer support to help with your exams. You could ask for help with:

- How to revise and any tips they have
- Topics you're struggling with
- Preparing for exams
- Balancing different subjects and topics
- How to take care of yourself

Your school might be able to offer you more support, such as a counselling service. Talk to a trusted adult in school. Staff will be there to help you and explain what is there to help if you're not sure what's available,

Other types of support. Not all of us can find the support we need from school or college, perhaps external professional support is needed if you feel like things are getting too much, you could:

- Talk to someone you trust, like a family member, partner or friend. For ideas on how to start the conversation, see "opening up to others" on the MIND charity page.
- Speak to someone confidentially, like Childline or The Mix.
- Visit the MIND charity useful contacts page for a list of other organisations who can help. Some offer text or instant messaging services for extra privacy.
- Young Minds offer specific exam stress advice too. See www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/exam-stress/#Dealingwithexamstress