

10 Tips for Coping with Exam Stress

Working towards exams and other assessments is always going to be stressful and some stress can be useful in helping you to focus on preparation and in motivating you to work hard and achieve your best. But if stress increases further, it can start to have a detrimental effect on our performance. As we feel more anxious or panicky, we're less able to concentrate on our work and we can doubt our true abilities.

So below are a few tips you can use to help limit stress around exam periods

- **Take regular breaks.** Try to recognise when you're getting too stressed. It's a sign that you need to take a break, to do something else for a short time. You could also try out this http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomodoro_Technique
- **Don't let friends wind you up.** Talking people who understand and share the stress your under can be helpful, but comparing revision notes and subject knowledge never is, and will leave you feeling like you haven't done enough.
- **Make a revision timetable.** Timetable your revision with breaks at a frequency that works best for you. Work when you naturally feel more alert, whether that's in the morning or evening, at home, or in the library.
- **Eat well.** Eat regular meals including breakfast to maintain your blood sugar and energy levels.
- **Give yourself a chance to get a good night's sleep.** Stop working and give yourself time to unwind before going to bed, and don't take your revision notes with you when you do.
- **Use physical activity to give you a break from studying.** Exercise is one of the best ways to de-stress. Whether it's a gym session, or a short walk through the park, you'll return from it better able to focus on the mental activity you're engaged in. If you have more than one exam in a day, take a short walk in between, but give your self-time to get something to eat and drink also.
- **Treat yourself.** Use treats to motivate yourself and build these into your revision timetable, for example allow yourself time to watch an episode of your favourite TV programme after a few hours hard work or plan something nice for when your exams are over.
- **Try relaxation techniques.** It will take a bit of practice, but relaxation or breathing techniques can really help to calm nerves.
- **Don't take part in the exam 'post-mortem'.** Comparing answers with friends after an exam, when it's too late to change anything you have written, serves no purpose and will only increase your worry.
- **Keep a sense of perspective.** There will be life after exams, and there'll come a time when you never have to sit an exam again.

Remember, if it doesn't get better in a few weeks, think about registering with us again, for an appointment with a counsellor <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/counselling/register>, you'd be very welcome.