



Exams. We all have to do them. Working towards exams can make us feel a lot of pressure, especially at uni where we're aiming for a degree. We might not have that much choice over whether or not we actually do exams, but there are definitely things we can do to help deal with the stress we're feeling. Here are some tips on dealing with exam stress!



KEEP IT IN PERSPECTIVE

- Lots of people will tell you this, because it's true - **exams aren't everything**. Whatever happens in your exams, you can still be successful in life afterwards. So if you don't do as well as you'd hoped, try to keep things in perspective.
- **Employers don't just look at your exam scores**. They're just as interested in your attitude, your transferable skills and how well you'll get on with other people.
- **Exam success doesn't define you as a person**. There's so much more to you and your personality than how well you can tackle a highly specific

exercise that is in any case almost never a perfect gauge of your ability in that subject.

- **Think about how far you've come already.** You've already done incredibly well to get to uni, and stopping or failing exams at this point isn't 'throwing away' your past success.
 - **Once you've done an exam, try to forget about it.** There's nothing you can do about it, and worrying won't change your mark.
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- **Picture your exams as a time-bound project.** Are the exams 60 days away? That's your 60-day challenge. Best of all, there's a definite end point.
 - **Work out the basics: which exams you have, how the marks are allocated, and how much you have to learn for each one.** Don't expect to learn everything; but having in mind where you'll get the marks can help you prioritise.
 - **Break your revision down into small chunks, and form a plan.** Once you've got a plan, you won't have any more dilemmas at the start of the day about what to work on.
 - **Schedule in plenty of free time to unwind, and protect this time. Nobody can work all day every day.** Give yourself plenty of rest and you can do the same amount of work in half the time or less.
 - **Equally, don't panic if you go slightly off schedule - tomorrow is another day.**



**GET THAT ORGANISED
FEELING**



GET INTO SOME GOOD HABITS

These habits will help you concentrate as well as reducing stress!

- **Take frequent breaks.** Psychologists say we can only concentrate properly for 30-45 minutes. There are lots of online services like Pomodoro that help you take regular breaks. When you're on your break, do something completely different - move away from your desk, walk about, or make some tea!
- **Eat well.** Keep blood sugars level to avoid highs and lows of energy, by eating slow-release foods like bread, rice, pasta, fruit and veg.
- **Drink lots of water.** People often underestimate how much hydration helps!
- **Think about when and where you work best.** Some of us aren't morning people, and not everybody finds themselves productive in the library. There's no one best place or time to work - it's about what works for you!
- **Keep active.** Even a short walk will do. Exercising is one of the quickest and most effective ways to de-stress. Fresh air will clear your head and perk you up.
- **Sleep!** Try to get about 8 hours' sleep a night. If you're stressed about not being able to sleep, there are lots of ways you can overcome sleep problems.
- **Find activities that help you relax.** Maybe it's a hot bath, watching a TV show, or a creative activity. Schedule this down-time into your timetable.

Check out this brilliant article on how NOT to cope with exam stress. Here are some highlights:

- **Don't set yourself ridiculous goals.** Nobody can revise 10 topics in a day! Avoid setting the day up to be a disappointment.
- **Don't cut out all the enjoyment from your life.** It's tempting to decide you'll just knuckle down to work and "focus", but this is counterproductive - it's impossible to focus without giving your brain rest by doing other activities.



AVOID

- **Avoid stimulants.** Caffeine, alcohol and drugs impede your energy and concentration in the long term. It'll also make it more difficult to get that much-needed sleep.

THESE BAD HABITS



GET SUPPORT FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- **Don't be put off by peers saying they're doing huge amounts of revision.** As already mentioned, that's probably not actually working out for them. One of the key reasons we feel exam stress is from comparing ourselves to others. It's important not to forget that your exam results are just a small part of who you are.
- **If you can, discuss with your parents what they're expecting you to achieve.** Parents with steep or unrealistic expectations will just add unnecessary pressure. It's helpful to let them know what you think you have the capacity to achieve, and to insist that the best way to get there is to have support from your parents, not pressure.
- **If you're feeling really worried or anxious, chat to a good friend, family member, or tutor.** It helps to get it out of your system, and they may well be able to help think about practical strategies to deal with exam stress.

Lastly, if you're feeling overwhelmed or are finding it difficult to cope with the stress around exams, make sure you get support. Take a look at our Further Support section for the services you can access nationally and on campus.