



ST. DAMIAN'S R.C SCIENCE
COLLEGE

How to Beat Exam Stress

WORRYING ABOUT EXAMS

Most people worry about taking exams.

Worrying can make us feel stressed and anxious.

We feel like this because our adrenal glands produce a chemical called adrenaline which puts us on 'red alert'. This is the body's natural way of coping with a crisis.

Adrenaline helps animals cope with being chased or attacked by making them react quicker. It's sometimes called the 'fear, fight or flight' hormone.

You probably perform better in exams if there's a bit of adrenaline in your system.

But lots of adrenaline can give you some uncomfortable feelings like having butterflies in your stomach, feeling sick, dizzy or hot, going to the toilet a lot, not being able to sleep, your muscles tensing up, a feeling of panic.

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO TO CALM DOWN

- ✓ **Don't leave your revision until it's too late.** Pace yourself over the weeks before the exams start.
- ✓ **Get some exercise.** Exercise uses up hormones which build up when we are stressed – so exercise makes tense muscles relax.
- ✓ **Don't spend hours in your room trying to revise.** It might impress your family, but quality revision is best done in short bursts with breaks in between.
- ✓ **Plan a treat for when you're taking a break.** Chill out. Try to do something which makes you laugh. Laughter is good for releasing tension.
- ✓ **Don't rely on alcohol or drugs to make you feel better.** They may appear to work at first but they can actually make you feel much worse in the long run.
- ✓ **Talk about your worries to your parents or a friend.** There may be someone in school you could talk to – one of your teachers, the school nurse or the Student Support Officer. Sometimes things can get out of proportion when you keep them to yourself.
- ✓ **Take care if you're sharing your feelings with people in chatrooms.** Make sure that you're getting something positive out of it.
- ✓ **If you think you might need extra help talk to your doctor. Don't be embarrassed – adults talk to doctors about stress all the time!**

PLAN AHEAD

DO:

- ✓ Make your own revision timetable – start planning well before exams begin. Your teachers will be able to help with this.
- ✓ Make your books, notes and essays user-friendly. Use headings, highlighting and revision cards, and get tips on other revision techniques from teachers and friends with experience of exams. You could also consider buying revision guides.
- ✓ Take notes of the important points when revising. Try to answer the questions of past exam papers – explain answers to tricky questions to someone else.
- ✓ Everyone revises differently. Find out what routine suits you best – alone or with a friend or parent/carer; early morning or late at night; short, sharp bursts or longer sessions; with music or without noise.
- ✓ Ask for help from your teacher/learning mentor, parent/carer or a friend if there are things you don't understand.

DON'T:

- Don't leave revision to the last minute.
- Don't avoid revising subjects you don't like or find difficult.
- Don't forget that there is life beyond revision and exams.
- Don't cram ALL night before an exam.

Remember that it's important to eat and sleep well!

Put yourself first – this is an important time for you. Try to talk to your family about how they can make studying a little easier for you – for example, by agreeing times when you can have your own space, when they will try to be a little quieter around the house and when you'd rather not be disturbed (except perhaps for the occasional treat, such as a drink or a snack).

Don't revise all the time!

Make sure you give yourself time each day to relax, taking breaks to do something you enjoy – watch TV, listen to music, read a book or go out for a walk.

PREPARE FOR THE BIG DAY

CHECK...

- ✓ Have a good breakfast if you can.
- ✓ Make sure you know where the exam is being held and what time it starts. Give yourself plenty of time to get there.
- ✓ Take all the equipment you need for each exam, including extra pens and pencils.
- ✓ Take in a bottle of water and tissues.
- ✓ Go to the toilet beforehand!

If you feel really anxious, breathe slowly and deeply while waiting for the exam to start.

PACE YOURSELF...

- ✓ Read the instructions before starting the exam.
- ✓ Ask the teacher or exam supervisor if anything is unclear.
- ✓ Read through all the questions before starting writing, and make sure you are clear how many questions you are required to answer.
- ✓ If there is a choice, start by answering the question you feel you can answer best.
- ✓ If you are stuck on a question, go on to the next. You can always come back to it later. If you are really stuck, try to have an intelligent guess anyway.
- ✓ Leave time to read through and check your answers before the exam finishes.

Plan how much time you'll need for each question.

PERFORM AS WELL AS YOU CAN

- Knowing that you've done your best may help you overcome feelings of letting anyone down.
- Don't go through the answers afterwards with your friends if it is only going to make you more worried.
- Try to put the last exam out of your mind and look ahead to the next one. You can't go back and change things.

You're you, so you can only do the best you can on that day!

EXAMS ARE OVER!

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Pat yourself on the back – it's time to relax and forget about them.

Celebrate that your exams have finished!

Remember that there is life beyond exam results.

Whatever happens there will be lots of other opportunities to express yourself and succeed in life!

WHAT IF YOU DON'T GET THE RESULTS YOU HAD HOPED FOR?

It's good to be ambitious and to **set yourself targets** for personal achievement.

However, **disappointing things can and do happen to all of us during our lives.**

Although, it may seem so at the time, **it's not the end of the world.**

In fact, **many successful people have failed exams** somewhere along the way.

There is always the chance to **try again** or to **rethink your plans.**

**If your feeling of disappointment is overwhelming...
TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT IT!**

HELP AND ADVICE

During or after the exams, if you feel that you can't cope with the pressure or are feeling stressed, find someone to talk to. Don't bottle it up! Try to talk to your teachers, parents or friends.

Whatever your worry, it's better out than in!

If you feel unable to speak to someone you know ring a helpline.

ChildLine is the UK's free, confidential helpline for children and young people. They're there in case you need advice and support, by phone and online, 24 hours a day. Whenever and wherever you need them, they will be there.

ChildLine – 0800 1111

Parents and carers can help too! Ask them to give you encouragement and support, and not to put pressure on you. Don't forget to talk to them if you are worried – don't bottle things up inside.

Exams are important – but they are not the only key to a successful future.