

Emotional Health & Wellbeing
For Preparation in Exams Hand Out

Pressure

Low Level Pressure

Helps us to achieve our goals

AIM FOR “Medium Level Pressure”

Time keeping and planning are crucial here to “keeping up”

High Level Pressure

Be aware that prolonged periods can lead to stress/anxiety

Stress: “Extra to do”

Anxious: “Uncertainty” ... “What if ...”

Some Warning Signs

Excuses, Irritable, Moody, Forgetful, Avoidance, Appetite Change, Frightened, Tearful, Withdrawing from others

Some Physical Signs

Headaches, Muscle Tension, Sweating, Feeling sick, Butterflies, Pins and needles, Difficulty Sleeping, Restlessness

Helpful Motivation

Keep motivation up by:-

- Getting enough sleep
- Identify the best times of the day that suit you to “study best”
- Prioritise study time and still have time for you
- Getting organised and staying organised with your work
- Keeping up with your homework and deadlines
- Having a balance between studying and downtime
- Finding something that re-energises you, such as sport or another enjoyable activity
- Giving yourself something to look forward to by rewarding yourself with some time off, a treat or an activity after you have studied
- Spending time with positive, helpful and encouraging people
- “Nip in the bud” signs of exam anxiety
- Believing in yourself, knowing that you can succeed with your studies
- Keep your thinking positive
- Getting help and support when you need it, remember to ASK for help

Cont/ 2 ...

"If we don't change the direction we're going, we're likely to end up where we are headed..."

Old Chinese Proverb

Exam Diet Tips

- Eat regularly. Guide 3 Meals and 2 Snacks
- Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, particularly during study/exam time
- Drink water – dehydration can make you lose concentration
- Be mindful of becoming too hungry as being hungry in itself, stresses the body out and can affect your memory

Some Helpful Foods

- Eating fruit is better for you than sugary snacks as sugary snacks can cause an energy dip. Try bananas (can help alertness), apples, blueberries, blackberries or dried fruit
- Pumpkin seeds
- Oily fish - Salmon, sardines, mackerel, kippers
- Spinach (good for stress)
- Wholegrain cereals, porridge and granary bread
- Oranges (Vitamin C)
- Milk (Good at bedtime for sleep problems)
- Fresh orange juice or fresh juices

Exercise

- Exercise is one of the best ways to combat stress
- Keeps the heart healthy
- Helps to deplete stress hormones
- Releases Endorphins "happy hormones"
- Find an exercise that you enjoy

Cont/ 3 ...

Calming Techniques to Reduce Stress/Anxiety

Focus On Your Breathing/Controlled Breathing

If you can control your breathing then it is much easier to stay in control and remain calm. The golden rule is to first of all breathe out and empty out your lungs of air as this in itself will relax your body, before breathing in.

It is very common for anyone who is stressed or worried to have irregular breathing patterns. Often they breathe in a shallow way and tend to breathe in more than they breathe out. This in turn, interrupts the gases in a person's system, causing them to feel stressed or anxious.

A very simple method is to first of all breathe out and then breathe in through your nose for a count of 3 or 4, gently pause and then out for a count of 3 or 4. Keep on repeating this in a controlled way. This in turn will help your body to stay calm.

If you prefer you can breathe in through your nose for a count of 7 and out through your mouth for a count of 11 and repeat until you feel calm.

Option - You can try visualising breathing in and out your favourite colour with either of the above breathing exercises.

Grounding/Senses Exercise

This exercise is good for helping anyone who is suffering with anxiety or stress. Quite often when we suffer with anxiety or stress our minds tend to wander and our thinking can become ungrounded.

The idea is to use your 5 senses to bring you back into the here and the now and use these senses to focus out.

Use your eyes, ears, smell, touch and taste to make contact with the world that you are in, in the "here and now". Keep it very simple. Ask yourself ... "What am I seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling. Think about your experience.

Repetitive Thinking Exercise

Helps to regain mind control and bring calm especially when your stress/anxiety levels are high. This will help to restore your memory again. Try any of these ideas:-

- Counting backwards from 10 to 1
- Recite your favourite poems
- Replay your favourite songs in your mind
- Times Tables
- Anything simple and brain engaging

Affirm the Positive

Repeat positive statements to yourself such as:-

- I can do this
- It's going to be ok
- I will survive this
- This time will pass
- This is a small part of the rest of my life

Thought Calming Exercise

This exercise can be used when you are trying not to worry about something and need to relax. It can be useful at bedtime to aid sleep.

- Make yourself comfortable, sit or lay down
- Close your eyes
- Allow your breathing to become calm and relaxed
- Count downwards from 10 to 1 (in your mind)
- When you have reached 1, bring to your mind a memory of a time gone by which makes you feel happy and relaxed
- Bring that memory into focus and use your senses to tune into it. Recall again what you saw, heard, touched, smelt and even tasted
- Spend as long as you like going back into that memory
- When you are ready count back up from 1 to 10 and when you reach 10 come back into the here and now

If you have the time, you can follow the first memory with another happy memory and repeat.

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