

## Coping with Exam Pressure



It's normal to feel stressed and worried about exams. Stress is your body's natural response to pressure. While it can help you focus and feel motivated to get things done, sometimes it can feel hard to manage.

Exam stress can affect *anyone*, it can show up in different ways. For example, you might;

- feel anxious or depressed
- feel irritable and angry
- struggle to sleep
- notice changes to your eating habits
- have negative thoughts about yourself
- worry about the future
- lose interest in the things you enjoy
- struggle to focus and concentrate
- feel unwell – for example, you might get headaches, feel sick or tired

You might experience symptoms of stress that aren't listed here, and that's okay. We are all different and cope with stress and pressure in different ways.

### Pressure to do well

The pressure to do well can be overwhelming and only add to the stress of exams. This could be pressure from your school, family, friends, or the pressure you put on yourself. You may feel it when you come to do exams, or you may feel it long before they begin.

Often these pressures are unspoken. Even if the people around you aren't putting pressure on you, you might still want to do well to make them proud on results day. But remember, whatever your results, you're not letting anyone down.



There are things you can do to help ease the pressure:



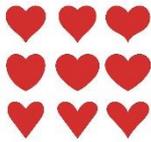
### **Be kind to yourself**

It can be helpful to think about all the things you've achieved so far, in or outside of studying. Or write a list of all the things you like about yourself, and the things other people value about you too. Setting aside time for the things you enjoy and are good at can really boost your self-esteem.



### **Talk about feeling under pressure**

If people around you - like your school or family - are putting pressure on you, it can help to tell them what you feel able to achieve. Let them know if your expectations are different to theirs. You could also talk to a teacher you trust about the pressure you are under at home.



### **Don't compare yourself to others**

Try not to worry about how others are preparing for exams and focus on what you can do. You might think that other people are doing better, revising more or just not stressing out as much. But we're all different and that's okay. Remember, your friends are coping with exam stress too. They might be feeling just as worried as you are.

### **How to deal with exam stress**

Exam stress can feel lonely and like a heavy weight to carry, but you don't have to handle it all by yourself. Lots of young people find exams difficult and it's okay to need support from people around you.

Try talking to someone about how you feel. If someone knows that you feel stressed, they can be there to support you, encourage you and offer a listening ear. This could be a friend, family member, carer, community or faith leader, a teacher, or anyone else that you trust. You don't have to go through this alone.

### **Tips and advice to help manage stress and get through exams**

#### **Ask for any practical help you need**

Think about whether there's any practical support that might help you deal with exam stress. If there is, speak to a teacher or tutor about it. This could be support with:

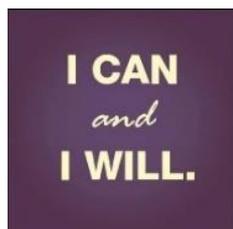
- a subject you're struggling with
- revision help and advice
- balancing different subjects
- somewhere quiet to revise
- access arrangements



It can feel nerve-wracking asking a teacher or tutor for help. But remember that they will have spoken to lots of students who are feeling the same way. Schools want to help their pupils pass exams and you deserve the help and support you need.

#### **Check in with your friends**

If your friends are studying too, they are likely to understand what you're going through. Knowing that someone else feels the same way can make all the difference. You can talk to each other about exams or take a break from studying by doing something you enjoy.



#### **Find a study group, or start your own**

You can work through problems together and help each other with different subjects. This can be a nice way to keep your social life going and boost your mood. It can also help you to see that you are not alone.

## When exams start



### **Get organised the night before**

Get everything you need for your exam ready the night before. You could ask someone you trust to help you make sure that you have everything. If you're going somewhere for your exam, check when and where it's happening. You can plan your journey and give yourself plenty of time to get there.



### **Try relaxation techniques**

Try not to cram in last-minute revision before your exam. This can be really overwhelming and make you feel like you're unprepared, but you've done everything you can. Instead, try to focus on remaining calm. Breathing exercises and grounding techniques can help you feel calmer before your exam.



### **Don't compare your answers**

It's hard not to come out of an exam and talk about it with your friends, but this might make you feel more stressed. Try not to think about the exam now that it's done.



### **Reward yourself**

Give yourself something to look forward to after your exam. That could be doing something fun or taking time alone to rest. It's difficult to switch off if you have more exams to prepare for but remember to pause and recharge first.



## Keeping things in perspective: results aren't everything

Exams can help you take the next step in your academic or professional career - but results are not the only measure of success.

There are lots of qualities that make you, you. But they can't be measured by exams. For example, you might be good at making people laugh, giving advice, being creative, or something else.

Whatever grades you get on results day, it's still possible to have the life you see for yourself in the future. There are lots of different routes you can take to get to where you want to be.

## Your life outside of exams is important too

Find the time (or plan your time) to do all the things you enjoy (hobbies) around your studying. You could try making a list of all the things you enjoy and find time to do them.

This can reduce your stress levels, improve your mood, and help you feel refreshed and relaxed. There is no need to feel guilty for taking some you-time to unwind. You're allowed to have a social life and interests outside of studying.



## **Support Links**

### **No Panic**

Supports people struggling with panic attacks, phobias, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and other anxiety-related issues - and provides support and information for their carers.

Call 01952 680835 for a recorded breathing exercise to help you through a panic attack (available 24/7).

Read [information about call costs](#).

Opening times:

10am - 10pm, 365 days a year

### **The Mix**

Free, short-term online counselling for young people aged 25 or under. Their website also provides lots of information and advice about mental health and wellbeing.

Email support is available via their [online contact form](#). They have a free [1-2-1 webchat service](#) available during opening hours.

Opening times:

4pm - 11pm, Monday - Friday

### **Shout**

**Text SHOUT to 85258.**

Shout provides free, 24/7 text support for young people across the UK experiencing a mental health crisis.

All texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical supervisors.

Texts are free from EE, O2, Vodafone, 3, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile and Telecom Plus. Texts can be anonymous, but if the volunteer believes you are at immediate risk of harm, they may share your details with people who can provide support.

Opening times:

24/7

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/exam-stress/>