

MANAGING EXAM STRESS



Whether you are doing your SATs, GCSEs, or A Levels - exams can make us feel stressed from time to time. During exam season, we face pressure to do well from teachers, parents, friends, and even from ourselves, which makes it hard to focus, think positively, and manage our wellbeing. Some people cope with exams very well, and some people even enjoy them, but for others exams can feel overwhelming, and make us feel sad, stressed, and anxious. Just as exam season does, these feelings will pass, but it is good to learn how to manage these feelings during exam season.

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is the mind and body's reaction to feeling under pressure, and your body's way of telling you that something requires your attention. It usually happens when we are in a situation that we don't feel able to manage or control. A little bit of stress can be good as it produces adrenaline which helps us to perform well, complete tasks and feel more energised, but too much stress can have a negative impact on our wellbeing. Stress is not a mental health problem, but experiencing lots of stress for a long time can have an impact on our mental health. Everyone experiences stress from time to time, but the way that you respond to stress can make a difference to your overall well-being.



HOW DO I KNOW WHEN I AM FEELING STRESSED?

Stress can affect our emotions, our body and how we behave. Sometimes when we are stressed, we can spot it right away, but at other times, we keep going without recognising the signs. Stress can impact our emotions by making us feel angry, frustrated, sad, nervous, worried, afraid or lonely. It can impact our physical body by causing us to feel tired, tense, nauseous, sweaty, chest pains, a sore throat, or dizziness, for example. Finally, stress can cause changes in our behaviour, such as finding it hard to concentrate, losing interest or enjoyment in things, crying, eating too much or too little, not speaking to people, avoiding the thing that makes us feel stressed, being snappy, and finding it hard to sleep, for example.

TOP TIPS TO MANAGE WELLBEING DURING EXAM SEASON

1 Improve your sleep. Sleep is incredibly important for repairing our mind and body, and for helping us to remember the things that we have learnt. Sleep also helps us to reset and relax, which relieves feelings of stress. Please refer to our leaflet "Improving Sleep" for tips on improving your quality of sleep.

2 Create a routine. This may involve waking up and going to bed at the same time every day, revising at a particular time of day, and relaxing at certain times of the day. Routine creates a sense of predictability which helps to reduce stress, increase motivation and also helps you to manage your time effectively.

3 Schedule in revision and breaks. Revising helps us to feel prepared which can alleviate stress so it is important to schedule revision, and minimise distractions. Research shows that revising for 20 minutes at a time is the most effective way of learning and processing information that you are revising. Be really clear on what, where, how, and for how long you will revise, and also when and for how long you will take a break for. Creating a timetable is a great tool to help you balance revision and breaks, and stay on track.

4 Remember that thoughts aren't facts. When we are stressed, we can experience more negative thoughts such as "I'm not good enough" or "I'm going to fail". These thoughts are caused by stress, and they are rarely based on factual evidence. Take a moment to analyse the thought, and think about what evidence you have that proves the thought to be true, and what evidence you have that proves the thought to be untrue.

5 6 Ways to Wellbeing. The 6 Ways to Wellbeing help us to understand how we can implement daily practices to maintain positive overall wellbeing. It is useful to follow these practices all of the time, and not just in exam season. Please refer to our leaflet "6 Ways to Wellbeing" for more advice.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE SUPPORT?

USEFUL WEBSITES:

www.YoungMinds.co.uk
www.TheMix.org.uk
www.Kooth.com

USEFUL APPS:



Catch it
(12+)



Chill Panda
(4+)



Mindshift
(12+)



Smiling Mind
(3+)



IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE BECOMING OVERWHELMED WITH EXAMS, AND AREN'T ABLE TO MANAGE IT YOURSELF, SPEAK TO A TRUSTED ADULT AT YOUR SCHOOL OR COLLEGE FOR MORE SUPPORT.