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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 and 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.

If you notice any of these feelings or you're worried that exam pressure is taking over your life, you are not alone. We have tips on this page that can help.

Coping with exam pressure

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



Talk about feeling under pressure

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.



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.

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.



“

I wish I knew then what I know now, which is that I am worthy and valuable regardless of what I've 'achieved'.

”

How to overcome the pressure to succeed

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.

Below are more tips and advice to help manage stress and get through exams.

In the lead-up to your exams

Here are some things that can help in the lead-up to your exams:

- Ask for any practical help you need** ✓

- Ask for access arrangements if you need them** ✓

- Check in with your friends** ✓

- Find a study group, or start your own** ✓

When exams start

Here are some tips to try when exams start:

- Get organised the night before** ✓

- Try relaxation techniques** ✓

- Don't compare your answers** ✓

- Reward yourself** ✓



Life doesn't stop around

The importance of self-care



'Self-care' is a phrase you've probably come across, but what does it really mean? Simply put, self-care is the little things we do to look after our own mental health.

If you feel stressed about exams, you may feel like you don't have time for self-care, or that you need to spend all of your time revising. It is of course important to revise, but you'll find it harder to revise if you don't take the time to look after yourself. You might try to eat and sleep well, or give yourself time to unwind by gaming or seeing your friends. We are not machines – we all need a break sometimes!

When you're thinking about how to use your time before exams, make sure to factor in time to take care of yourself. You deserve it!

More on self-care >

exams

We all have things going on in our lives outside of school, work and exams. Complicated things can happen during exam season that make it hard to study. You might not have the time, space, motivation or concentration.

It could be things like:

- moving house or schools
- [grief and loss](#)
- [family](#) or [friendship](#) problems
- being a [young carer](#)
- [bullying](#)
- mental or physical health problems
- starting a new [medication](#)
- breaking up with a partner

It's so important to ask for help if something in your life is making it harder to revise and feel ready for your exams. If you don't want to talk to someone you know, there are lots of helplines at the bottom of this page. You deserve support with whatever you're going through, no matter how big or small it seems.

More on reaching out for help >

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. We asked our Activists how they keep things in perspective when dealing with exam stress. Here's what they said:



“

What success really looks like is a lot of ups and downs, as opposed to the straight line we all imagine. Without failure we cannot grow, and without failure there is no success.

”

“

I'm not an 'exams' person, I'm a practical person, and there are lots of people like me who can't stand exams but will go far with their practical skill.

”

“

Exams aren't the be all and end all. There are so many wonderful things about you not determined by exams. There is a future without exams and you will get through.

”

“

Take lots of breaks, look after yourself. Your mental health is so much more important than how you do in exams, there are always other options if you don't do as well as you want to.

”

“

You've already achieved so much and will achieve more. If need be, these exams can be redone. Creating an immense amount of stress for yourself may lead to things which can't be undone. Look after yourself first.

”

“

Exams are a small snippet of your whole life when you put it into perspective, how can your whole life and world possibly be defined by that short amount of time?

”

How to remind yourself that there is more to life than grades:



Keep in mind that exam results do not define who you are



Make a list of all the things you want from life which

We don't usually think about whether the people in our lives did exams, BTECs or what grades they got. Exam results are not something we remember or value in each other. Your worth and how you see yourself is not based on the grades you get. 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.



Your life outside of exams is important too

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.

don't involve exams

This can help you realise that exams are only a small part of the picture. 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.

Real stories about exam stress from young people




How to look after your mental health during revision and exams

🕒 4 min read



Exam self-care

 4 min read

Revision tips



Try breaking it up into chunks and creating a



Be realistic about what you can achieve in a day

timetable

Figuring out what subjects you need to study and when can make revision feel more manageable. If you're not sure how to create a revision timetable, it's okay to ask for help from a teacher, tutor or someone else. [BBC Bitesize](#) has lots of tips to help you get started.

If you're struggling to get through your revision plan each day, have a look at how you can change it. It should make you feel better about revising and not leave you feeling burnt out. It might take some trial and error to find a plan that works for you, but it's worth doing to feel less stressed.



Make sure you take regular breaks from studying

Time spent taking a break is just as important as time spent revising. This will give you some relief and make it easier to concentrate. Young people have told us that they often feel guilty for taking a break, but rest is productive. You don't have to earn rest – take it whenever you need it.

Not everyone learns in the same way

We all have our own ways of learning. If you feel distracted or struggle to remember your notes, it might help to try something different. There are lots of techniques to test out and see what works best for you. Take a look at the examples of learning styles and techniques for exam revision.

You might find one way of studying works for one subject, but not for others. You can try different techniques and see what helps you learn best. Revise in whatever way works for you.

> **Visual - learning by looking** ✓

> **Auditory – learning by listening** ✓

> **Kinesthetic – learning by doing** ✓

> **Verbal – learning by talking** ✓

More tips and advice from young people

Our Activists and people like you share their tips for revision and coping with exams:



“

Stress – especially academic stress – has really affected my sleep over the years. I struggled with insomnia all throughout secondary school when I was facing my GCSE exams and then my A Levels.

”

Four tips if you can't sleep because of academic stress

“

Constantly revising without a break can make you feel emotionally and physically drained, so it's crucial that you take time to step back and do something that you enjoy.

”

“

Keep gaps between revision and drink lots of water. Try to not to stress and revise the day before exams. Rather than copying notes, draw mind maps or images to help you remember information.

”

“

Don't put so much pressure on yourself, take a deep breath. Get an early night and do some meditation before bed.

”

“

Take time out of your day to breathe, try not to compare yourself to others (easier said than done but it's important). Schedule in time for yourself and reach out if it's affecting your mental health.

”

Dealing with disappointment on results day








Show/hide caption

If you don't get the grades you want on results day, it can feel devastating. Whether it's going to affect what you do next, or you just feel you could have done better, it's okay to sit with any emotions that come up for a little while.

But know that it really isn't the end of the world, and it happens to lots of people for all sorts of reasons. Life doesn't always go to plan, but stay calm - you are going to be okay. There are still loads of options available to you.

Here are some steps you can take if you are unhappy with your exam results:

- **Take your time** 
- **Explore your options** 
- **Talk through next steps with someone** 
- **Apply for special considerations** 
- **You don't have to share your results** 

Real stories about exam results stress





Dealing with disappointing exam results

🕒 2 min read



“

Don't give up - there is always more than one route to get to where you want to be. It doesn't matter how long it takes or how you get there.

”

Get help now

If exam stress is taking over and you're struggling to cope, you are not alone. Here are some organisations who can support you.



Exam Results Helpline



Provides careers advice to help young people and their families decide on options following GCSE, A Level and Nationals results days.

Usually available through August. Opening days and hours may vary each year - check website for details.

If you live in Scotland, call 0808 100 8000.

[0800 100 900](https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/exam-stress/)

 **Exam Results Helpline****National Careers Service**

Provides information, advice and guidance to help young people make decisions about learning, training and work.

Webchat available via the website homepage.

Opening times:
8am - 10pm, 7 days a week

0800 100 900

 **National Careers Service****Samaritans**

Whatever you're going through, you can contact the Samaritans for support. N.B. This is a listening service and does not offer advice or intervention.

Opening times:
24/7

116123

jo@samaritans.org

 **Samaritans**

Childline



If you're under 19 you can confidentially call, chat online or email about any problem big or small.

Sign up for a free Childline locker (real name or email address not needed) to use their free 1-2-1 counsellor chat and email support service.

Can provide a BSL interpreter if you are deaf or hearing-impaired.

Hosts online message boards where you can share your experiences, have fun and get support from other young people in similar situations.

Opening times:
24/7

0800 11 11



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



You might also find helpful...

More tips, advice and real stories on what to do if you're struggling with exam stress.



Problems at school



What retaking my A-levels taught me about mental health



Coping with exam pressures at university.



This page was reviewed in October 2023.

It was co-created by young people with lived experience of exam stress.

We will next review the page in 2026.

YoungMinds is a proud member of PIF TICK – the UK's quality mark for trusted health information.



Help us improve our content



Website by **element**⁷⁸