

coping with exam pressure

a guide for students

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"stress is not necessarily a bad thing"

people react to stress in different ways...

Stress can be a great motivator for some students, giving them the 'get up and go' that they need to succeed

Other students are **indifferent to stress**; they can float along without getting affected by stress in a good or bad way

Stress can be a bad thing for some students, when exam pressures become overwhelming

The **key things to remember** are that:

- stress is nothing to be scared of
- anxiety is not inevitable
- you can learn how to cope more effectively

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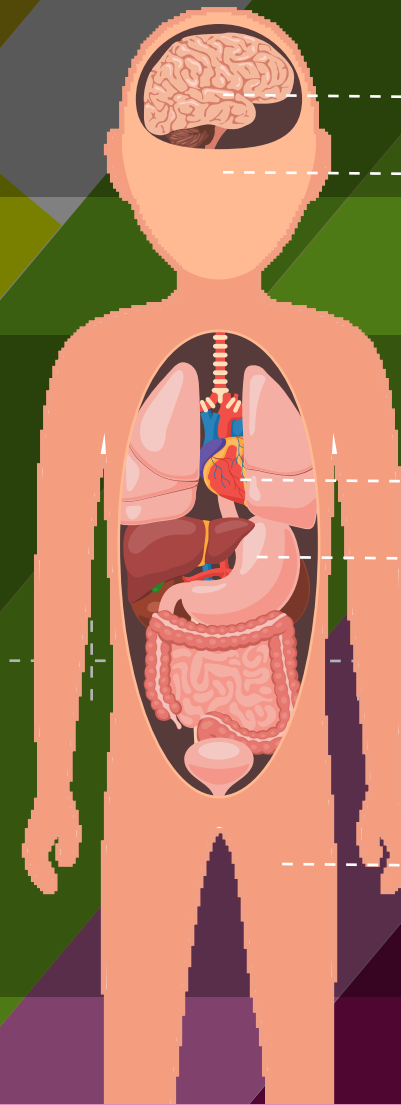
the signs of **high exam anxiety**

Cognitive signs (thoughts)

- going blank in an exam
- difficulty concentrating
- negative thoughts about past performance or consequences of failure

Affective signs (emotions)

- feeling excessive tension
- feeling panic
- feeling overwhelmed
- feeling not in control



Physical signs

- dizzy or faint
- sweating
- fast heartbeat
- tight churning stomach
- jelly or wobbly legs

The **key things to remember** are that:

- most people experience some of these signs during an exam
- high exam anxiety is when you experience them most of the time
- you can learn to control your physical reactions to anxiety

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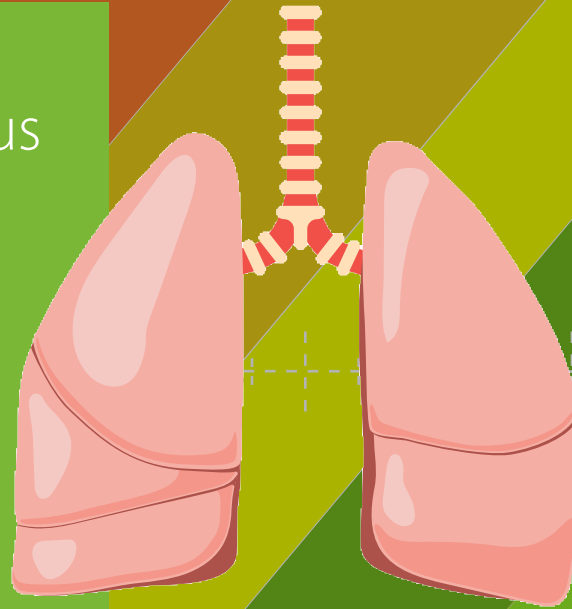
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how to control **physical reactions to anxiety**

Deep breathing

When you become anxious your breathing becomes shallow and fast.

Breathing slowly and deeply will help you calm down and feel in control.



How do I do it?

- sit comfortably with a straight back
- place your left hand on your chest, and right hand below it, on your diaphragm
- inhale deeply through your nose for 5 seconds
- hold your breath for 2 seconds
- exhale slowly through your mouth
- feel the expansion in your diaphragm
- repeat for 1 or 2 minutes until you feel calm

The **key things to remember** are that:

- you can learn to control anxiety with deep breathing
- many people find it easier to learn with an instructor
- yoga or mindfulness classes can also be helpful

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how to feel **more confident about exams**

What are negative beliefs?

Many people with high exam anxiety can't stop worrying about failing or the consequences of failing.

For instance, 'If I fail my GCSEs my whole life will be a failure'.

These types of beliefs focus on what you can't do rather than what you can.

Replacing negative beliefs with positive beliefs

Find a positive, realistic belief that can replace the negative belief.

For instance, if your negative belief is 'I am rubbish at maths' a positive, realistic alternative could be:

'Even if I will never be the best at maths, I will do better if I have a revision plan and stick to it'.

The **key things to remember** are that:

- if you suffer from anxiety, replacing negative beliefs can help
- some people find it helpful to keep a record of their beliefs
- you can become a more confident person with a 'can do' attitude

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how to **best plan your revision**

For many students, **starting revision is the biggest hurdle** to overcome

1. Create a plan

Break down everything you need to revise into small topics and just revise one topic at a time. By creating a plan you are taking control.

2. Set targets

Identify when you are going to revise each topic. Give yourself a time limit for when to complete each topic.

3. Check progress

Check your progress and set yourself a new time limit if necessary. Once you've met a target, set yourself a new one.

The **key things to remember** are that:

- targets should be achievable and manageable
- targets must be short-term and include a time-limit
- review your targets, and when complete, set new ones

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