

# EXAMS AND STRESS

Stress is not just negative – it only becomes negative when we have more or less stress than we want. In life we constantly react to stress. Often it is the speed of the reaction that saves a life or wins a race. The stress only becomes negative when it lasts too long or becomes too strong. In order to manage stress you need to be aware of your own personal stress levels.

Examinations are common sources of stress but the stress they cause can have positive as well as negative effects.

Tick which of these positive responses affect you within an examination situation.

Increased alertness Quick flow of thought Speedy reactions Focused concentration Others? _____ _____	
---	--

Now, write three possible negative reactions to examination stress. For example, '*I can't remember what I'm reading*'.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How can you deal with these negative reactions?

Well, examination stress starts at revision time. We tend to either make no revision plans and then feel guilty or make commendable but unrealistic revision plans that only a saint could keep to.

In order to combat stress, revision plans need to be realistic, include exercise and build in variety.

Write down here the *time* of day when you work best when and the *ways* that you prefer to revise. For example, some people are 'early birds', some like to revise through taping or condensing notes etc. etc.

OK. Now, take a couple of minutes to write down all of the rewards you are going to build in to your revision plan. For example, *going for a swim, walking the dog, playing football*.

--

Right, before you start getting stressed at the thought of revision, practise this breathing technique. It's a very easy relaxation routine that you should begin to use regularly - you can even use it in the exam room. It involves taking just five breaths.

- Breath one*                      Breathe in deeply and out fully.
- Breath two*                      Tense your feet muscles as you breathe in and relax them as you breathe out.
- Breath three*                    Tense your stomach as you breathe in and relax it as you breathe out.
- Breath four*                    Tense your hands and upper part of the body as you breathe in and relax them as you breathe out.
- Breath five*                    Tense your jaw as you breathe in and relax it as you breathe out.

Depending upon your situation you can have your eyes open or closed.

Finally, tick which of these you regularly do to alleviate examination stress during the revision period:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Plan revision</li><li>2. Build in variety to revision</li><li>3. Build in rewards</li><li>4. Use relaxation techniques</li><li>5. Revise with a friend</li><li>6. Practise time management</li><li>7. Practise past papers</li><li>8. Exercise</li><li>9. Work for short, sharp, focused times</li><li>10. Keep a sense of proportion – it might be an important exam but it's not worth risking your health over</li></ol>	
--	--

Anything else? Compare your strategies with a fellow student.