



VISON

COPING WITH EXAMS



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Exam time can be stressful. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. Manageable levels of stress can help you to think faster and more effectively, and generally improve your performance. However, if the anxiety you are experiencing feels overwhelming, your performance can be affected.

Remember that revision is just that – it is about seeing something again and refreshing your knowledge. It isn't about new work. The key to reducing exam anxiety is to make an early start on your revision. Take enough time to do yourself justice. Six weeks before the exams should be enough. If you have less than six weeks until the exams, be realistic about what you can revise. You could ask for some guidance from your tutors, who should be able to help you identify core material or areas you should focus on.

If you feel that your anxiety levels are likely to increase between this point and the start of the exams, do something about it now.

Above all remember that exams aren't everything, there are many options for your future that don't rely on top grades. You are not defined by your exam results – you are more than an exam grade and will find other opportunities to express yourself and succeed.

Things you can do to help control your anxiety

Self Care

Put yourself first. This is an important time for you. Take some time to think about what helps you to relax and plan how you can include this in your schedule.

In 5 minutes

- Try some grounding exercises that focus the brain on a specific task not related to work. You could count the words on a page, or the number of blue things you can see in the room.
- Try counting backwards from 5: think of 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell/taste, 1 good thing about yourself.

In 15 minutes

- Do something makes you smile. Listen to a song, watch a youtube video.
- Take a break from your work. Try to focus on how much you're enjoying the break, rather than your work.
- Do something creative. Dance, draw, colour, create a collage of funny pictures.

In 1 hour

- Have a shower or bath using soap that smells really good or calming.
- Get outdoors. Go for a walk, or sit in the garden.
- Connect with others. Make time for friends or chat with family. Try to support each other so you don't feel isolated and over-worked.

Before the Exams

- Plan your revision timetable with plenty of small chunks of time. Do you find it easier to concentrate early in the morning or later in the afternoon? Plan to revise when you're feeling alert. Include breaks in your timetable, and time to relax and socialise. Leave time to relax after revision, before you go to bed.
- Sort through your work and identify the key revision topics. Think about questions you might expect to find in your exam. Break your revision into chunks and only focus on the work you have planned for that session.
- Where do you work best? Do you need a quiet room, to be with others, or listening to music? Do you need a cold or warm room?
- Talk to your family about how they can help. They might bring you snacks at agreed times; or leave you to have your own space; or you might ask them to try being a little quieter around the house.
- Think about how you learn best. Try revision note cards, visual pictures on your wall, mind maps, practice exam questions, or a combination of different methods. Don't sit reading for long periods of time. Instead, try actively using your notes. Re-write them using different words, or condense them into mind maps, or bullet points.
- Ask for help and guidance from your tutor if you find something you don't quite understand.
- Eat regularly, a balance of good quality food, like wholemeal bread, pasta, nuts, fruit, lots of vegetables etc.
- Dehydration can really affect your concentration. Make sure you have plenty of healthy drinks, e.g. water, milk, real fruit juice etc. Avoid energy drinks. These make your sugar levels spike, then drop rapidly, making it harder to concentrate, not easier.
- Take regular exercise. Find something you enjoy, like swimming, jogging, football, walking

- Your brain needs rest. Go to bed at a reasonable time. Turn off all your devices, close your books and relax.
- Remember that everyone has different study patterns and energy levels, so try not to compare yourself to others.
- Learn in advance how to relax. You can then feel confident that, if you start to panic or your mind goes blank, you will be able to regain control.

The Night Before

- Try to use humour to help beat negative thoughts. Read a book or comic, watch an amusing DVD or think of your favourite jokes.
- Do your best to be well prepared. Have everything ready to take with you, pens, pencils, calculator, matriculation card etc.
- Try to avoid working too close to the exam (the night before or the morning of the exam). Do something relaxing instead. Go for a walk or have a warm bath.
- Eat something even if you don't feel hungry. Bread, crackers and cereals are good for settling a nervous stomach.
- Make sure you know exactly when and where the exam is, and plan to arrive nice and early.

During the Exam

- Make yourself comfortable. Are you warm enough, or too cold? Adjust your clothing. Sit with your eyes closed for a little while and take a few deep breaths to ease the tension before you turn the exam paper over.
- Remember that most people feel tense at this point. It is only natural. However much you have prepared, your task now is to do your best.

- Take time to read through the instructions and questions carefully. Do that at least twice to make sure you get a firm grasp of the questions. Don't rush. Taking time at this point can really reap dividends later.
- Pick out the questions that best relate to the revision you have done. Decide whether you want to do the "easy" or "difficult" questions first. Doing an "easy" one might help to relax you, or you might prefer to do a "difficult" one while you are most alert.
- Plan your answers. Five minutes spent on a plan and a rough guide will help your thoughts to flow.
- If you are stuck on a question, go to the next. You can come back to it later. If you are really stuck, try to have an intelligent guess anyway.
- Manage your time. Keep an eye on the clock so that you allow enough time for your final answer. If you are starting to run out of time, give a skeleton answer in note form. At least you will have put something down.
- Avoid perfectionism. It's good to check spelling and punctuation but no one is expecting perfection.
- If you feel you are starting to panic, then stop, put your pen down and relax. Breathe slowly. Close your eyes for a few minutes. If it helps, put your head on the desk. Shake your arms. Move your head slowly from side to side to ease the tension. Say something positive and encouraging to yourself. Imagine yourself somewhere else where you feel happy and relaxed.
- If you feel unwell, ask the invigilator if you may leave the room for a short while. Taking a few breaths of fresh air and some sips of water may be all you need to calm down.

After the Exam

- Be kind to yourself. Do something that makes you feel good. You have just worked hard and you deserve it!

- Try to put the last exam out of your mind and look ahead to the next one. You can't go back and change things.
- Try not to go through the answers afterwards with your friends if it is only going to make you more worried.
- You are you. Remember that all anyone can expect of you is that you do the best you can on the day.

Help & Advice

If you feel that you can't cope, find someone to talk to. Don't bottle it up!

- Talk to your friends and family about how you are feeling.
- Speak to a teacher that you get on well with.
- Make use of school revision groups.
- Use the café in Visyon's Congleton office to study; or the music/art rooms to take a break.
- Come to a Visyon open access session in Congleton, Crewe, Biddulph or Leek if you would like to talk to someone. See visyon.org.uk or phone 01260 290000.

Childline 0800 1111 – confidential telephone support for children and young people

Kooth.com – online counselling chat for young people 11-25

www.theMix.org.uk – information and support website for young people under the age of 25

BBC Bitesize – <https://www.bbc.com/education/beta> has lots of revision help (general and subject related).



**YOUTH
AMBASSADORS**

Are you aged between 14 and 20?

Do you want to help raise awareness about mental health?

Do you want to learn more about mental health?

Do you want to support Visyon?

Our Youth Ambassadors programme can help you learn more about mental health, learn how to campaign for better mental health and develop your peer leadership skills.

You'd be part of a team that meet every other Monday at our base in Congleton who will help make decisions about Visyon and get stuck into promoting a positive attitude to mental health.

Visyon is creating a community of people who understand what it means to have good mental health and how they can support each other.

This starts with you!

Get in touch now on **01260 290000** and ask for **Laura** or **Jamie**

HOW AND WHERE YOU CAN FIND US

Telephone: 01260 290000

Address: Fellowship House, Park Road,
Congleton, CW12 1DP

Website: www.visyon.org.uk



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Company No: 5250758