

# Preparing for Exams

Managing anxiety  
Reducing stress levels

# Stress

- \* Stress is a natural part of being human. It's your body responses to the changes in the world around you. Stress about exams is a natural feeling. When exams and pressure get too much, the stress can show in your body.
- \* How to spot if you are stressed:
  - \* Feeling extra tired
  - \* Aching all over
  - \* Feeling sad and tearful
  - \* Broken sleep
  - \* Stomach upset
  - \* Feeling of panic
  - \* Run-down (picking up coughs and colds)

# Developing a positive mind set

- \* It is a natural human response to think negative thoughts. By developing a positive mental attitude you can challenge these thoughts.
- \* Helpful tips in developing a positive mind set
  - \* Visualise getting the grade you want to get. Visualise this over and over again in detail. Maintain a positive 'I can do this' attitude. Stress will transform into a positive thought.
  - \* View the exam as a time-bound project of 60 days. Look forward to the end of the project – Completion. Think about how you will reward yourself.
  - \* You are going to be okay. An exam is an opportunity for you to show what you can do. There will be more opportunities.
  - \* You will still be the same person before the exam and after the exam.
  - \* You will have already had success before these exams. Think about previous exams or situations where you have been successful. Focus on the positive aspects.

# Stopping negative thoughts

- \* When we become anxious we become negative – we get ‘negative thoughts’.
  - \* “I can’t do this”
  - \* “I can’t answer anything”
  - \* “I’m going to fail”
- \* Mentally shout in your head ‘STOP’ or picture a road STOP sign or traffic lights on RED. Once you have literally STOPPED the thoughts, you can continue planning or practise relaxation techniques.

# Relaxation

- \* BREATHE – practise slowing your breathing down.
- \* FOCUS – looking out of a window, noticing how many people around you have blonde hair, red hair, counting the number of people, all these strategies help to distract from negative thoughts and they keep your mind busy.

# Relaxation

- \* OBJECTS – it can help to carry or wear something which holds a positive association with a person or place. Touching the object can be reassuring, allowing yourself time to think about that person or place that makes you feel good can provide a calming effect.
- \* SELF TALK – replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts and messages.
  - \* “I can’t do this” is replaced with “This is just anxiety, it can’t harm me, relax and concentrate, it’s going to be okay”

# Making preparations

- \* **BE PREPARED** – read all your notes, books, essays. Ask a teacher for support.
- \* **MAKE A PLAN** – revision timetables can be really helpful – How much time can you spend on each subject?
- \* **KNOW WHEN AND WHERE YOU WORK BEST** – Work when you are most alert. We all have different body clocks. Try to be calm and in control

# Making preparations

- \* TAKE BREAKS – a psychology test was done where it was suggested that we can only concentrate properly for about 45 minutes at one time. Neuroscientists tell us that the longer we try and focus on one thing, the less our brains are able to deal effectively with learning.
- \* EAT WELL – and drink lots of water
- \* EXERCISE – Walk, swim, run, bike rides...
- \* SLEEP WELL – Don't watch TV before you go to sleep or go on-line. Bedtime routine – hot bath, shower.
- \* RELAXATION – focus your mind (Mindfulness)



# Making preparations

- \* TALK ABOUT IT – talk about how you are feeling to someone. You are not alone.
- \* REWARD YOURSELF – plan something to reward yourself. Treat yourself!
- \* KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE – Yes it IS great to do well in exams, but whatever you are studying, exams are not the ONLY thing that will help you to succeed in life. Employers will equally be pleased and interested in other things like attitude, ability to get on with others, etc.. Picture your success.

# Statistics

- \* The Childline 'National Exam Stress Survey' carried out last year (2014) revealed that
- \* 96% of the 1300 students who completed the survey felt anxious about exams and revision
- \* 56% were feeling the pressure from parents
- \* 64% said that they have never received any support with dealing with exams

When asked how students cope with these feelings of anxiety:

- \* 53% Talk to friends
- \* 29% Talk to family
- \* 29% Exercise
- \* 17% Talk to a teacher

# Anxiety

- \* ANXIOUS FEELINGS

- \* Fear of failure
- \* Pressure from teachers to do well
- \* Being the worst in the class, feeling stupid
- \* Embarrassed to ask for help

# FOODS TO HELP PRIOR TO AN EXAM

- \* Milk – calcium – stabilises the nervous system
- \* Bananas – helps the brain produce serotonin which helps stabilise mood, as well as potassium which helps to keep blood pressure to a normal level
- \* Citrus Fruits – Vital Vitamin C
- \* Whole-wheat bread – Contains amino acids which can ease emotional tension. Also rich in vitamin B which helps maintain the health of the nervous system
- \* Water – aids digestion and regulates body temperature

# RESOURCES

- \* • Childline – [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- \* • 0800 1111 – free
- \* •
- \* • The Samaritans – [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)
- \* • 08457 90 90 90
- \* •
- \* • Get connected – [www.getconnected.org.uk](http://www.getconnected.org.uk)
- \* • 0808 808 4994 – free
- \* •
- \* • Youth access – [www.youthaccess.org.uk](http://www.youthaccess.org.uk)
- \* • 020 8772 9900