

Before the exams...

Strategies for coping with stress

1. Try to balance your work and your time off. You need some time out every day.
2. Have weekly goals, and set times in the week to work towards them – have an overview of what you need to do then break that down. Be realistic, cover what you can.
3. Try to take some exercise, preferably every day. Find something you enjoy. Short walks are good. This all helps you ‘switch off’ mentally, relax body tension and feel more alert.
4. Try to ‘switch off’ mentally at other times. Do this by doing something absorbing – music, a good film...
5. Watch out for, and avoid, negative thinking (e.g. everyone else is revising better, coping better than me, I’ve got too much left to do..).
Challenge this by focusing on a positive every day, e.g. ‘I’ve done that revision on x....I understand that theory better than I did yesterday...’
6. Try to stop working an hour before bed time. You may find some muscle relaxation useful, like stretching, or concentrating on tensing and relaxing different muscles in turn... This can become very effective as a relaxant, with practice.
7. Try to avoid last-minute revision before the exam. This is often more muddling than helpful.
8. Have treats – TV, magazines, chocolate...- but avoid excess alcohol or sugar, which affect mood and memory negatively. Stick to carbohydrates, water, fruit and veg where you can.