

Coping With Exam Stress



[Click here](#) for relaxing background music for your mentor session

Objectives:

- What events do I have coming up that could be stressful?
- How can I deal with exam stress?



What Is Coming Up?

- Discuss in pairs what might be coming up in your life that could cause you stress.
 - Mock exams!!! (Beginning Monday 6th February)
 - REAL exams (this summer for some or next summer)
 - Sporting fixtures
 - Presentations
 - Job interviews
 - Apprenticeship applications
 - Coursework deadlines
 - Etc.

Make 2 lists...

It is likely that you will feel some stress when it comes to completing your exams. One way to combat this is to make two lists:

List 1: What aspects of the mock are out of your control?

List 2: What aspects of the mock are in your control?

By creating these lists you can focus on list 2 and start being proactive in dealing with the upcoming challenge you face.

How many possible symptoms of stress can you name?

Common symptoms:

- Anxiety, irritation, anger, flustered
- Poor concentration, difficulty making decisions
- Headaches, palpitations, hot flushes
- Dry mouth, lump in throat, shaky hands
- Sleep problems
- Excessive intake of caffeine, cigarettes or alcohol
- Problems eating or swallowing
- Tearfulness, depression or feeling suicidal
- Chest pain
- Diarrhoea or constipation



What causes stress?

There are many things which can trigger a person to feeling stressed. What are your triggers?

Home triggers:

School triggers:

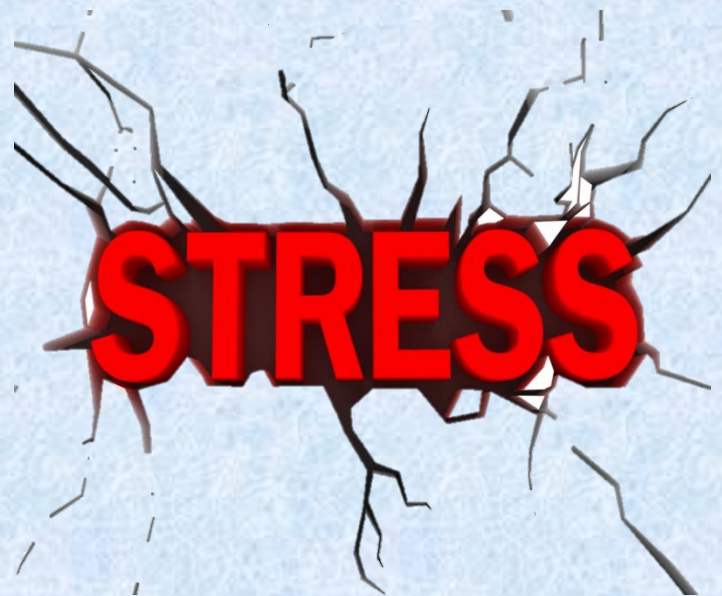
Relationship triggers:

Friend triggers:

Family triggers:

Work triggers:

Miscellaneous triggers:



Techniques to Cope with Stress



What do I do if I can't cope alone?

Never struggle alone!

The Sixth Form Team (your mentor, Mrs Pinder, Mrs Penny, Mrs Houston, Mr Tointon) are all here to help you. If you want or need to speak to us you are always welcome.

If you are seriously concerned about your stress levels then you should seek help from your doctor.

Your parents and friends are also a good place to seek comfort.

How do I cope with stress?

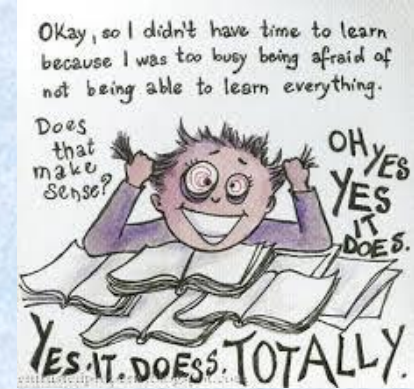
There are many ways to cope with stress. The charity MIND has created the following video which gives some ideas for relaxation techniques:

<http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/relaxation/#.VqZkDxEynpo>

Which techniques could you adopt?



Before the exam:



- Establish relaxation periods into your revision timetable – find the best method for you.
- **Be as well prepared as possible:** Make a list of questions to ask your teacher, know the practical aspects about your exams (how long are they, when is it, what can you take with you).
- Close your eyes and visualise.
- **AVOID last minute revision / cramming...** it can make you muddled and anxious.

What Relaxation Techniques Could You Use?

- Going for a run
- Having a bath
- Listening to music
- Dancing around your room
- Meditation
- Etc.

Copyright 2002 by Randy Glasbergen.
www.glasbergen.com



“Experts say that petting a cat is a good way to reduce stress...but nobody told the cat!”

Focussing Exercise

- Take a deep breath in and a long breath out.
- Breathe in again & straighten your back – as if someone were pulling a lever between your shoulder blades.
- Look straight ahead at an inanimate object and focus your mind on a positive thought:

“I CAN DO THIS EXAM”

- Take another deep breath in and a long breath out.
- Breathe normally

Do this 3 times.

Panic in the exam...

- Take time to read the whole paper and mark the questions you CAN answer.
- Stay focussed and positive (focussing exercise).
- Have a time plan - begin with the questions you are most confident with and stick to the plan.
- Plan your answers for the questions as you go, if you have ideas for other questions, jot them on another piece of paper, don't lose focus.



Other relaxation techniques

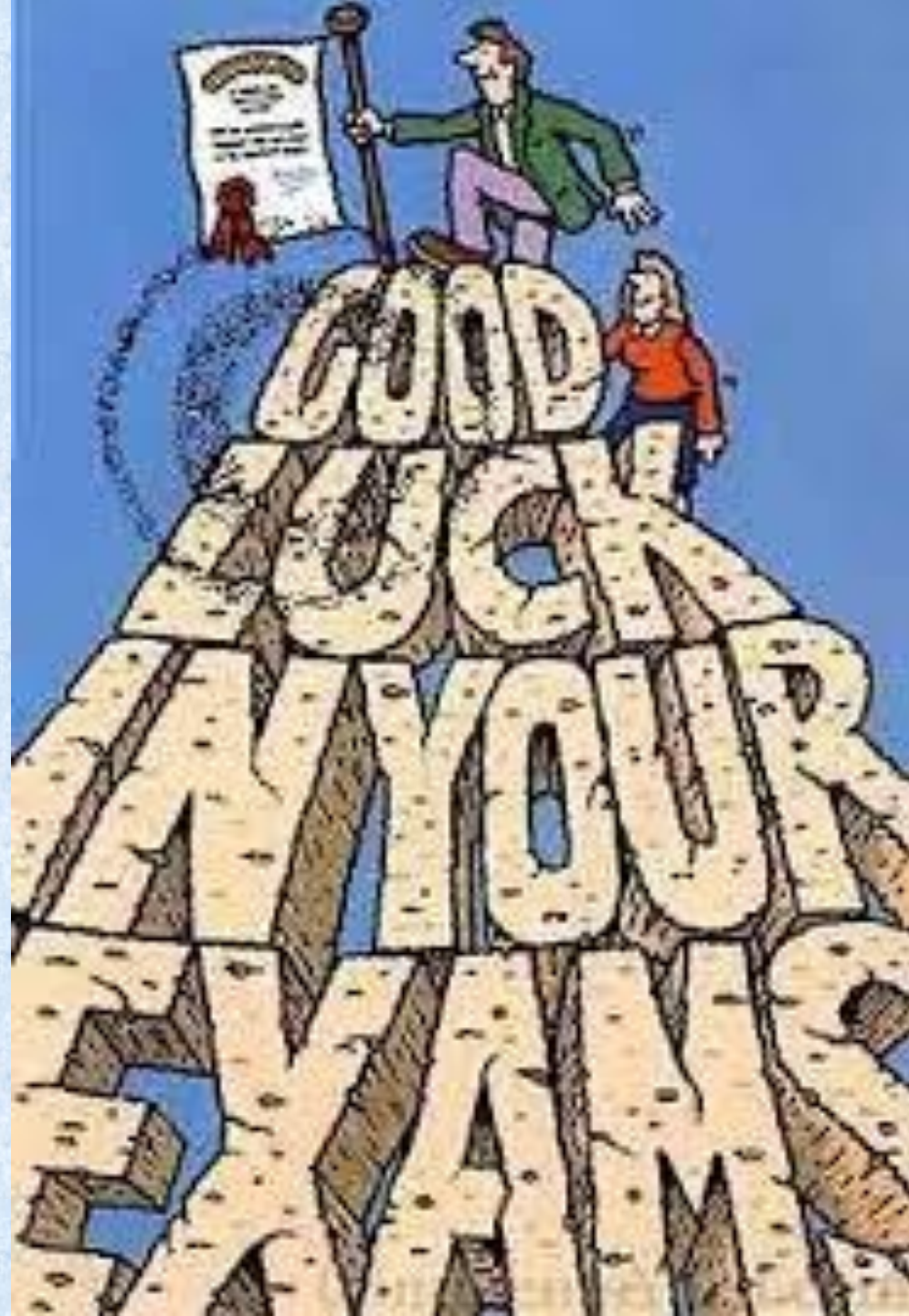
- **Thought-stopping** As soon as negative thoughts begin, mentally shout “STOP” or picture a road sign or red traffic light.
- **Creating a distraction** Lightly pressing your fingertips into your palm or twanging an elastic band on your wrist can override feelings of anxiety.
- **Use a mantra** Repeating a word or phrase over and over in your head ‘relax’ or ‘calm’.
- **Focusing** Count the number of desks in a row, make words from titles, mentally make alphabetical lists will distract the mind from panic.
- **Self-talk** Reassure yourself with positive ‘it’s going to be OK’ - type phrases to replace the ‘I can’t do this’ negative ones.

Give each one a try!

Don't suffer stress in silence!

- Get active.
- Take control.
- Avoid unhealthy habits.
- Work smarter, not harder.
- Don't miss out on 'me' time.
- Be positive.
- Talk to someone (Your friends, your parents, your mentor, Mrs Houston, Mrs Pinder, Mrs Penny).





Extension Work

Deep Muscle Relaxation

- **Face:** push the eyebrows together, as though frowning, then release.
- **Neck:** gently tilt the head forwards, pushing chin down towards chest, then slowly lift again.
- **Shoulders:** pull them up towards the ears (shrug), then relax them down towards the feet.
- **Chest:** breathe slowly and deeply into the diaphragm (below your bottom rib) so you're using the whole of the lungs. Then breath slowly out, allowing the belly to deflate as all the air is exhaled.
- **Arms:** stretch the arms away from the body, reach, then relax.
- **Legs:** push the toes away from the body, then pull them towards body, then relax.
- **Wrists and hands:** stretch the wrist by pulling the hand up towards you, and stretch out the fingers and thumbs, then relax.

Relaxed Breathing



- Fill up the whole of your lungs with air, without forcing. Imagine you're filling up a bottle, so that your lungs fill from the bottom.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Breathe in slowly and regularly counting from one to five (don't worry if you can't reach five at first).
- Then let the breath escape slowly, counting from one to five.
- Keep doing this until you feel calm. Breathe without pausing or holding your breath.

Visualisation Exercise

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=soZwJQTFpJk>



Abdominal Breathing Technique

How it's done: With one hand on the chest and the other on the belly, take a deep breath in through the nose, ensuring the diaphragm (not the chest) inflates with enough air to create a stretch in the lungs. The goal: Six to 10 deep, slow breaths per minute

