

## **Anxiety**

Normal levels of stress can help you work, think faster and more effectively, and generally improve your performance. However, if the anxiety you are experiencing feels overwhelming, your performance can be affected. There are, however, techniques you can use to get you through feelings of anxiety leading up to and during the exam.

## **Anxiety Reduction**

A key way to reduce exam anxiety is to be prepared through effective revision. Remember revision is just that – it is about seeing something again and refreshing your knowledge. It is not about new work.

### **Plan Your Revision**

- Set aside plenty of time for revision
- Sort through your notes, essays and reports, and focus on the essential material
- Actively use your notes – re-structure and condense them
- Think about questions you might expect to find in your exam. Review copies of previous exam papers
- Seek help and guidance from your Tutor etc. if you find something you don't quite understand

### **Take Proper Breaks**

- Be realistic about your revision schedule. You cannot revise constantly but will need breaks
- Think about your day and when you will have realistic time slots for revision.
- Take a 5-10 minute break for each hour you study
- Keep up with some of your other activities – try to get the balance right between study and leisure
- Get the support of your friends, family and/or your partner
- Do activities that you enjoy e.g. exercise that helps you relax your mind and body
- Eat properly and make sure you get enough sleep

### **Revise when you are Feeling Alert**

- Make sure you take time after doing revision to wind down.
- Try not to go straight to bed without winding down

### **Dealing with Panic the Night Before**

You have been feeling quite calm during the revision period. However, what do you do if panic sets in the night before?

- Learn in advance how to relax. In that way, you will feel confident that, if you start to panic or your mind goes blank, you will be able to regain control
- Try to use humour to help you beat negative thoughts. Read a book or comic, watch an amusing DVD

Adapted from: <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/advice/leaflets/examanxiety/>

- Do your best to be well prepared – it will give you some confidence that you have done the work needed
- Try to do something relaxing the night or morning before the exam e.g. taking a warm bath or going for a walk
- Make sure you know exactly when and where the exam is. Try not to arrive late at the exam as that would only increase your anxiety
- Have everything ready to take with you – pens, pencils, calculator, ID card etc.

## **Panic Attacks during the Exam**

If you feel panic in the exam, there are ways to deal with this.

- Make yourself comfortable. Perhaps go to the toilet before the exam. Take a few deep breaths to try to ease the tension you are feeling. Sit with your eyes closed for a little while. Only then, turn over the exam paper
- Remember that most people feel tense at this point - it is only natural. However much you have prepared, your task now is to just do your best
- Take time to read through **all** the instructions and questions carefully. Do that at least twice to make sure you get a firm grasp of the questions.
- Pick out the questions that best relate to the revision you have done. Do not rush anything. If you can't decide all the questions you want to answer, start with those you have picked and come back to the others later
- Plan your answers. This is a really important point. Five minutes spent on a plan and a rough guide will help your thoughts to flow
- Do your best to ignore everyone else while you are at the planning stage – not easy, but it helps.
- Manage your time. Keep an eye on your watch so that you allow enough time for your final answer. If you don't have enough time for that final answer, make a skeleton answer in note form – at least you will have put something down
- Avoid perfectionism. It is good to check spelling and punctuation but no one is expecting perfection. **Remember that it is always better to write something than nothing.**
- If you feel the panic is getting worse – stop, put down your pen and relax. Breathe slowly; close your eyes for a few minutes. Say something positive and encouraging to yourself. Imagine yourself somewhere else where you feel happy and relaxed.
- You can leave the room and go to the toilet. Just being in a different space for a few minutes may calm you. Perhaps have a drink of water or run cool water over your wrists.

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