# coping with exam pressure a guide for students



## "stress is not necessarily a bad thing"

Stress can be a great motivator for some students, giving them the 'get up and go' that they need to succeed people react to stress in different ways...

Other students are indifferent to stress; they can float along without getting affected by stress in a good or bad way

Stress can be
a bad thing for some
students, when exam
pressures become
overwhelming

### The **key things to remember** are that:

- ---- stress is nothing to be scared of
- --- anxiety is not inevitable
- -- you can learn how to cope more effectively



## the signs of high exam anxiety

## **Cognitive signs** (thoughts)

- going blank in an exam
- difficulty concentrating
- negative thoughts about past performance or consequences of failure

## Affective signs (emotions)

- feeling excessive tension
- feeling panic
- feeling overwhelmed
- feeling not in control



- → dizzy or faint

- → sweating



tight churning stomach

• jelly or wobbly legs

## The **key things to remember** are that:

- --- most people experience some of these signs during an exam
- --- high exam anxiety is when you experience them most of the time
- --- you can learn to control your physical reactions to anxiety





## how to control physical reactions to anxiety

#### **Deep breathing**

When you become anxious your breathing becomes shallow and fast.

Breathing slowly and deeply will help you calm down and feel in control.



- sit comfortably with a straight back
- place your left hand on your chest, and right hand below it, on your diaphragm
- inhale deeply through your nose for 5 seconds
- hold your breath for 2 seconds
- exhale slowly through your mouth
- feel the expansion in your diaphragm
- repeat for 1 or 2 minutes until you feel calm

### The **key things to remember** are that:

- --you can learn to control anxiety with deep breathing
- --- many people find it easier to learn with an instructor
  - -- yoga or mindfulness classes can also be helpful



## how to feel

## more confident about exams

## What are negative beliefs?

Many people with high exam anxiety can't stop worrying about failing or the consequences of failing.

For instance, 'If I fail my GCSEs my whole life will be a failure'.

These types of beliefs focus on what you can't do rather than what you can.

### Replacing negative beliefs with positive beliefs

Find a positive, realistic belief that can replace the negative belief.

For instance, if your negative belief is 'I am rubbish at maths' a positive, realistic alternative could be: 'Even if I will never be the best at maths, I will do better if I have a revision plan and stick to it'.



## The **key things to remember** are that:

--- if you suffer from anxiety, replacing negative beliefs can help
--- some people find it helpful to keep a record of their beliefs
--- you can become a more confident person with a 'can do' attitude



## how to best plan your revision

For many students, starting revision is the biggest hurdle to overcome

#### 1. Create a plan

Break down everything you need to revise into small topics and just revise one topic at a time. By creating a plan you are taking control.

#### 2. Set targets

Identify when you are going to revise each topic. Give yourself a time limit for when to complete each topic.

#### 3. Check progress

Check your progress and set yourself a new time limit if necessary.

Once you've met a target, set yourself a new one.

### The **key things to remember** are that:

--targets should be achievable and manageable --targets must be short-term and include a time-limit --review your targets, and when complete, set new ones

