

# 9 WAYS TO MANAGE REVISION STRESS

Revision time is one of the most stressful periods of year for students. This is true for many, both young and old. [It was recently reported](#) that students as young as 6 were feeling the stress, with many secondary students stating that they feel more stressed during this revision season than ever before. So what advice can we give to students to help them minimise the stress of revision?

## DO THE ACTUAL WORK – REVISE!

You don't need to post on Facebook or Twitter about how much revising you are doing. You don't need to delay any longer by making your revision timetable pretty and colour co-ordinated. You do need to do the revision. Address the problem head on and [don't procrastinate](#) any longer. The best way to give yourself a chance to get better grades is to focus on doing high quality revision.

## WHEN REALLY STRESSED, TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT IT

Talking through your problems, fears or worries can be very therapeutic. Parents, teachers and older siblings have experience in managing the stress of revision and exams; talking to them, even if they don't have all the answers, can help you provide clarity in your own mind about what you need to do next.

## GET SOME FRESH AIR EACH DAY

[A recent report](#) found that children spend less time outside each day than prisoners. The value of nature can't be underestimated. Those who spend more time outside and feel more connected to nature [report experiencing more positive moods](#) (such as joy, interest and alertness) as well as life satisfaction. Research suggest that getting fresh air can also help [improve your concentration](#) when you come back to your work.

## STICK TO REGULAR MEAL TIMES

Let's start with breakfast. Simply put, this is the most important meal of the day. The gap between dinner and breakfast is the longest your body goes without refuelling. [Studies](#) have shown that eating breakfast helps improve memory and concentration over the course of the day. Furthermore, [researchers have found](#) that those who eat breakfast regularly were 'less emotionally distressed and had lower levels of perceived stress than those who did not eat breakfast each day.'

Regular meal times help you structure your day. This consistency provides a great platform to plan your revision around. Many of the students tell me that they eat more during revision time. Why? Not because they are bored. But because they are either stressed or looking to distract themselves from their revision.



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## DO SOMETHING TO SWITCH OFF AN HOUR BEFORE BED

Is your bedtime routine helping or hindering you get to sleep? One of the best ways to fall

asleep is to go to bed relaxed. If you are stressed, overly emotional or too alert, this will be difficult. Ensure the last hour before bed is time spent unwinding from the day's revision and not spent making [common sleep mistakes](#).



### DON'T SACRIFICE A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP FOR A NIGHT CRAMMING YOUR REVISION

This is very common amongst students. For the very driven, high-achieving students, the temptation is to stay up late and use every hour available to revise. For the more lazy type of student, cramming the night before an exam is the consequence of not doing enough work during the past few months. Cramming is a poor revision strategy and not getting enough sleep can hinder your concentration, mood, memory and judgement.

### DON'T DWELL ON WORST-CASE SCENARIOS

Being aware of worst-case scenarios is not necessarily a bad thing (it stops us walking down the dark alley late at night on our own). However, dwelling on it, especially if it is not realistic or likely to happen, isn't helpful. Under the stress of exams, it is easy for students to catastrophize and assume the

worst. How to overcome this? [Research suggests](#) that looking for alternative evidence and not talking in extremes or superlatives (i.e. 'always', 'have to', 'every time') should help.

## ONCE YOU'VE DONE THE EXAM, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT ONE

[People have a negativity bias](#). That is to say they are more likely to remember the bad stuff compared to the good. By overthinking the exam once you have finished it, it is tempting to work yourself up into a worry, as you over-emphasise the one or two questions you know you got wrong.

You don't want to forget the material you've learnt. Far from it: the stuff you learn in preparation for your exams can help you for many years in the future. But you do want to quickly refocus on to the next exam (especially if you have several in quick succession). Don't ask too many people what they put for each answer, as this will probably do more harm than good. Just focus on what you have to do next.

### **DON'T AIM FOR PERFECTION**

Perfection is a myth. It doesn't exist. Trying to attain it can quickly result in students entering a vicious cycle of unsuccessfully trying to attain it, followed by bitter disappointment and stress afterwards. Work hard. Be nice. Do the best you can do. If you do that, you may not be perfect, but you will go to bed each night knowing you gave the best representation of yourself possible.

### **FINAL THOUGHT**

Revision time is unlikely to ever be the most fun time in a student's life. Exams may not be life defining, but they certainly are life altering. Although revision may never be fun, recent research from psychology may be able to help us nudge students towards a less stressful and more productive state of mind, resulting in them maximising their learning.

For more help preparing for exams have a look at our page [Best Ways to Revise](#) - where you'll also find links to great blogs with tips on doing your best in exams.