

Bolton

Together

# I Thrive - Exam Stress

PRACTICE DEEP  
BREATHING

STAY  
ORGANISED

TAKE  
BREAKS

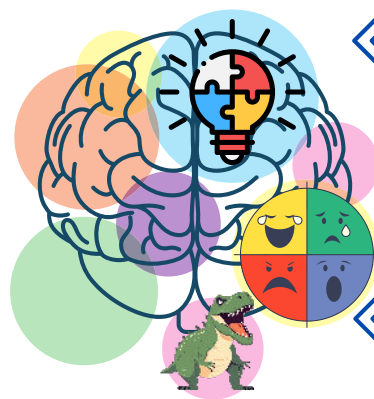
EXERCISE  
REGULARLY



# THE SCIENCE BEHIND STRESS

Stress is the body's reaction to difficult situations. It is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives. Everyone experiences stress to some degree. The way we respond to stress, however, makes a big difference to our overall well-being.

Your brain has three main parts that react to stress. The reptilian brain keeps you alive by controlling things like breathing and heart rate. The limbic brain controls your emotions and how you feel.



NEOCORTEX - responsible for logic/thinking.

LIMBIC BRAIN- responsible for emotions and feeling.

REPTILIAN BRAIN - responsible for primitive functions and survival.

The neocortex helps you think, plan, and solve problems. When you're stressed—like during exams—your emotional brain can take over, making it harder to focus or think clearly.



Fight



Flight



Freeze



Flop



Fawn

When you're stressed or scared, your body reacts in different ways. You might want to fight (get angry), flight (run away), freeze (feel stuck), flop (give up), or fawn (try to please others). These are normal and happen because your brain is trying to protect you. Once you know what's happening, you can learn how to manage it.

# EXAM STRESS STRATEGIES



Getting out, meeting with friends, and talking to someone can help relieve exam stress by offering emotional support, fresh perspective, and a much-needed mental break from studying.



There are many different ways to relax, such as yoga, meditation, and deep breathing. Find a method that works for you and make sure to practice it regularly.



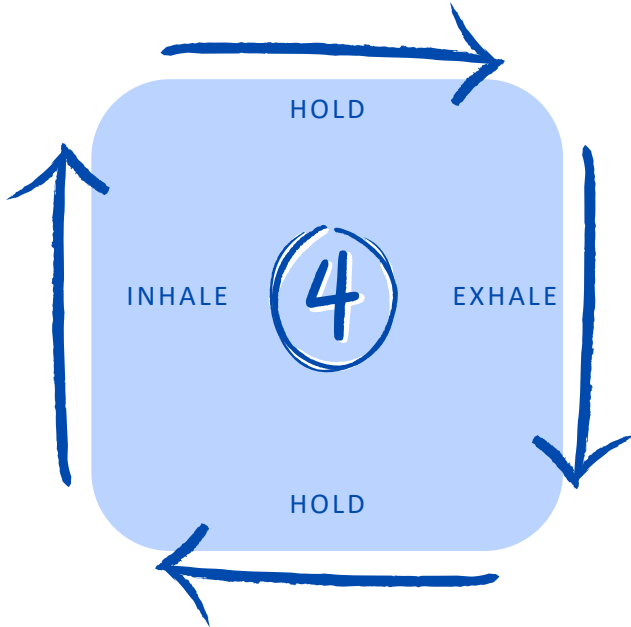
Exercise and movement help reduce exam stress by releasing endorphins, boosting mood, and improving focus, making it easier to stay calm and clear-headed while studying.



Rest and sleep are essential for managing exam stress because they help the brain process information, improve memory, and restore energy, allowing for better focus and performance.

# EXAM STRESS STRATEGIES

## BOX BREATHING



Breathing exercises can help calm you down when you're feeling anxious or stressed.

With this box breathing exercise, follow the edges of the box, breathing in for 4 seconds as you trace your finger along the side of the box, hold the breath for 4 at the top, then exhale for 4 as you trace along the next side, and holding for 4 again at the bottom. You can repeat this as many times as you would like, breathing slowly.

You can find more information here:  
<https://blog.calm.com/blog/box-breathing>

## FIDGET & SENSORY TOYS



Things like **fidget and sensory toys** can be really helpful for relieving some anxious energy. They can even be used whilst you revise, some people find they help them to concentrate if they can keep their hands busy.



## SCHEDULING REGULAR BREAKS

We have already recommended socialising and exercise as useful exam stress strategies, but how should you put this into practice?

Scheduling this time into your revision timetable is really helpful for battling exam stress before it becomes overwhelming. If you plan your revision around these breaks to just relax, see friends or get some exercise you can help combat stress and still get your revision done.



# EXAM STRESS STRATEGIES

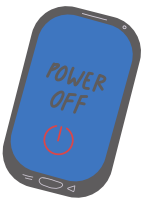


## SLEEP HABITS



As we know, getting enough sleep is really important, especially when preparing for exams, but it can be hard to know how to do this.

## SLEEP TIPS



**Avoid using screens an hour before bedtime** - the blue light emitted by screens can make it hard for you to fall asleep!



**Consistent sleep schedule** - This helps our body know when to wake up and when to sleep, making it easier to do both.



**Wind down routine** - Having a routine before bed to calm you down can make it easier to fall asleep, things like reading a book, having a warm shower or listening to calming music can help.

# EXAM STRESS

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICE

We spoke to some young people who have been through exams, and asked them about their revision techniques and what they found helpful.

'Some methods I use are: Brain Dumping, which is when you write down everything in your mind in no particular order to declutter your thoughts. This can really help when you have too much on your mind. I also find that knowing the points in the day when I work best can help me to work more efficiently, meaning the work takes less time to do and I have more free time in the day to relax.'

-Matthew

'As a visual learner, I have found it helpful to use strategies such as mindmaps and putting post it notes around my room. Having the information laid out visually really helped me to absorb the information. I also used different coloured pens/paper for different topics to associate the information with that topic.'

-Hollie

'I used flashcards to test myself, having the questions on the front and the answers on the back to see if I knew the answer. I would also split my time into chunks, working for 25 minutes and then having a short break before working again.'

-Katie



Read more about how these work on the next page..



# EXAM STRESS

## SCIENCE BEHIND REVISION

### BRAIN DUMPING

Brain dumping is not just used in revision but can be a helpful mental health tool too. It gives you a way to organise your thoughts and empty your brain of distractions and previous work. This allows you to be more productive.

### MIND MAPS

Mind Maps can be good for people who process information visually, as they can help us to recall information better by allowing you to picture the image in your head. They also allow you to connect the topic to the information and simplify complex information.

### COLOUR CODING

Colour coding your notes can increase productivity and motivation to revise. It can also help enhance memory and recalling of information, as the colours can help you connect the information with that colour.

### FLASHCARDS

Flashcards and covering your answers to test yourself helps promote active recall in your brain. This helps things go from your short term memory to your long term memory so you remember them better.

### TIME CHUNKING

By splitting your revision into chunks it gives your brain an opportunity to have a fresh start in each area - studies show we learn more from the beginning and the end of lessons.



# EXAM STRESS

## HELP WITH DISTRACTIONS



It can be hard to stay focused on revision when you have a lot of distractions, but sometimes you need some help to manage these.

Below are some apps for your phone and PC to help combat this!

- **Opal** - an app for your phone that stops you from opening selected apps and prevents notifications from them in a certain time period.
- **Zen** - Zen is similar to Opal but is used for your laptop and apps/websites on this instead.
- **OneSec** - an app for your phone that gives you a small, few second break before opening selected apps for you to reconsider. This helps break the habit of picking up your phone and going straight to apps you know distract you.
- **Flora** - Flora is an app for your phone which allows you to set a time target to revise for and grows a tree by the end of it when you reach your target.





# PRACTICAL REVISION SKILLS

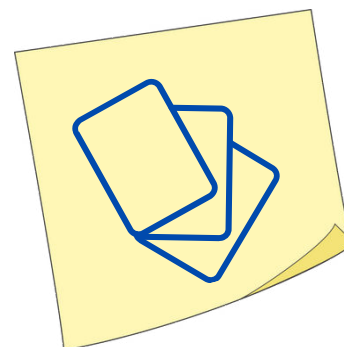


## Chunk It

Break your revision into small bits. 25 minutes of study + 5-minute break = more focus and less stress.

## Use Flashcards

Write questions on one side, answers on the other. Great for quick review anywhere!



## Teach It

Explain a topic to a friend, pet, or even your pillow. If you can teach it, you know it.

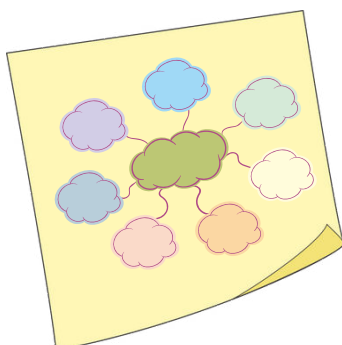
## Past Papers Practice

Try exam questions from previous years. It helps you get used to the style, and spot what you need to revise.



## Mind Maps

Draw your notes! Use colours, doodles, and arrows to make ideas stick in your brain.



## Mix It Up

Don't revise one subject all day. Switch between subjects to keep your brain fresh.





# Exam Revision Planner

CLASS/MODULE:

EXAM DATE:

TOPICS:

UNDERSTANDING:



TO DO

DATE

COMMENT

CLASS/MODULE:

EXAM DATE:

TOPICS:

UNDERSTANDING:



TO DO

DATE

COMMENT

CLASS/MODULE:

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TOPICS:

UNDERSTANDING:



TO DO

DATE

COMMENT

# SATS, GCSEs, & A LEVELS

## WHAT TO EXPECT



### SATs

SAT's are exams held for primary school students in England in May, these are normally undertaken in year 6. You can't fail SAT's and they just check how you are doing. The exams focus on Maths and English.

You can read more about SATS here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/articles/cld0r24zdww0>



### GCSEs

GCSE's are exams held between May and June for years 10 and 11 in secondary school. Students normally take between 7 and 10 different subjects

Different exams have different exam boards such as AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC eduqas. these exam boards determine the content in your exams and what you will need to revise. English, Maths and Science are taken by everyone, but you get to choose some subjects yourself based on your interests.

Some subjects have tiers and your school will help to decide which level of exam you will sit.

You can read more about GCSEs here:

<https://www.themix.org.uk/work-and-study/what-qualification/gcse-everything-you-need-to-know-2077.html>



# SATS, GCSES, & A LEVELS

## WHAT TO EXPECT



# A Levels

A Levels take place when you are 16-18, either at college or sixth form at your school. A levels are more advanced exams than GCSE's but you only take 3-5 subjects, and you can choose what these are. These exams take place between May & June, and the content covers what you have learnt in both years at college/sixth form.

The exam boards used for A levels are normally similar to the ones used for GCSEs, and the results from the exams come out in August.

A levels and AS levels (equal to 40% of an A level but can be dropped after 1 year) can help you go on to attend university, start work or begin an apprenticeship. It can help to consider what your next steps might be after A level so you can choose subjects which can help you achieve these goals.

You can read more about A levels here:

<https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/a-level-choices/how-are-my-as-and-a-level-studies-structured>



# SUPPORT AND ADVICE



## WHO TO CONTACT FOR SUPPORT IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

**Childline** - <https://www.childline.org.uk/> or call for free on 0800 1111

**Young Minds** - <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

**Mind** - <https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/>

**The Mix** - <https://www.themix.org.uk/get-support>

**Kooth** - <https://www.kooth.com/>

You can also speak to your **family, friends or your school** about how you are feeling.

**iThrive** - You can access the other iThrive workbooks on our website here: <https://bolton-together.org.uk/ithrive-support/ithrive-for-young-people/>

**iThrive** also offer support for 2-19 year olds (up to 25 with SEND) for emotional health and wellbeing support. Please be aware there is a waiting list but we will let you know what is happening and you will receive support as soon as possible. You can self refer to us using our form here if you think you need more support: <https://bolton-together.org.uk/ithrive-2-19-years-referral-form/>

If you are finding it difficult to complete the form or are unsure about some of the questions you can email: [IThrive@boltontgether.org.uk](mailto:IThrive@boltontgether.org.uk) and we will arrange a time to support you to complete it over the phone.