

# Coping with Exam Stress

## What does 'exam stress' look like?

### Young people might:

Worry a lot, feel tense, get headaches or stomach pains, not sleep well, feel irritable, feel sad or low in mood, feel unmotivated, self-isolate

### People around young people might see:

Not going out with friends as much or going out with friends more, not eating as much, spending more time in their bedroom, conversations feel tense or snappy

## Parents and Carers can support young people by:

Support them to follow their revision timetable, fitting around home routine

Encourage them to take regular breaks when revising, especially to eat, drink water and exercise

Encourage them to start working by choosing a topic they like, and setting a short-term goal eg work for 10 minutes

Remind them to take time for rewards and treats, doing things they enjoy!

Provide space to talk about worries they have, as well as any positive feelings they have towards exams (are there times when exams have gone well?)

After an exam, focus on what went well

Celebrate the end of exam periods with an 'end-of-exams' treat

## What might be causing exam stress?

### Fear of Failure

You judge yourself based on your results

### Lack of Preparation

Anxiety can lead us to not studying  
We might not study if we don't feel stressed 'enough' by exams

### Poor test scores

We might worry about getting poor results again, so we stop trying or work really hard without time for anything else

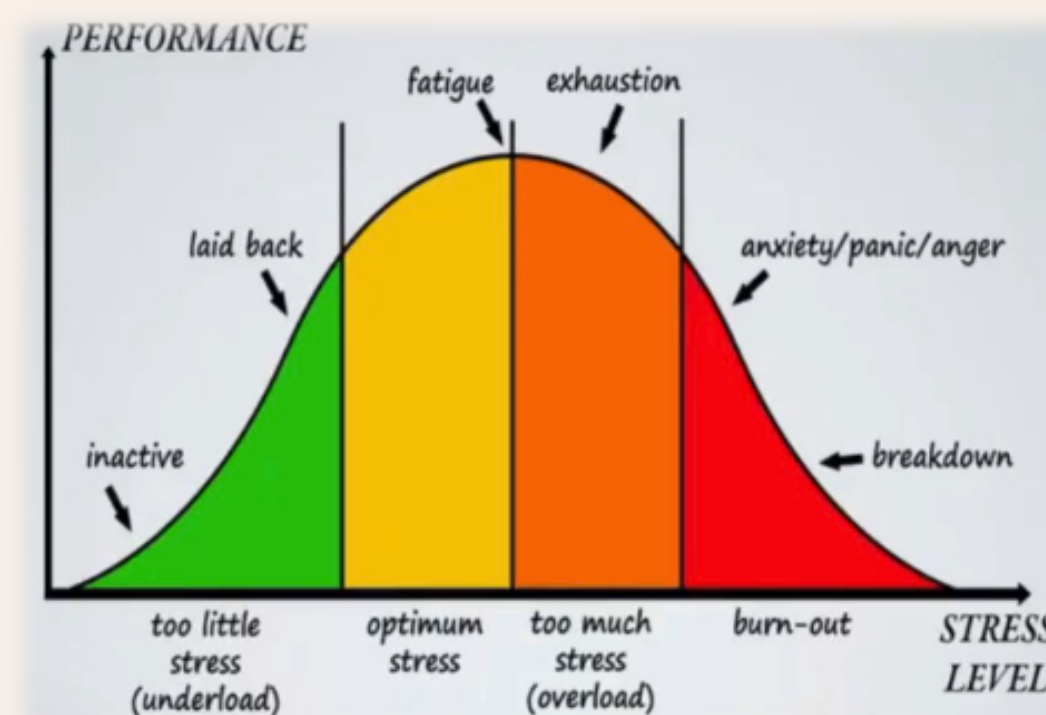
### Pressure to do well

We might want to do well to meet ours/other's expectations

### Comparison

It is easy to compare ourselves with others, but this can make things feel worse

## Stress-Performance Curve



The **stress curve** shows us the relationship between stress level and performance  
If you are in **green**, you might lack motivation to study

If you are in **orange** or **red**, you might be experiencing too much stress, and you might find it difficult to study

The 'optimum' stress level is **yellow**, and this might enhance your ability to study

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## For Young People: Exam Stress Techniques and Tips for Your Mindset

### Study Tips:

Create a realistic revision timetable, scheduling regular breaks



Keep making time to do the things you enjoy

Break down your work into manageable chunks - for example the 'Pomodoro' focus timer

Find out what makes it easier for you to study - you might prefer studying alone, with other people, with background noise (white noise or music), at home or in a library

Find a study space that you associate with study eg. a desk, a quiet space

Getting 8 hours of sleep, having a balanced diet and eating regularly, and getting some exercise will help you study effectively

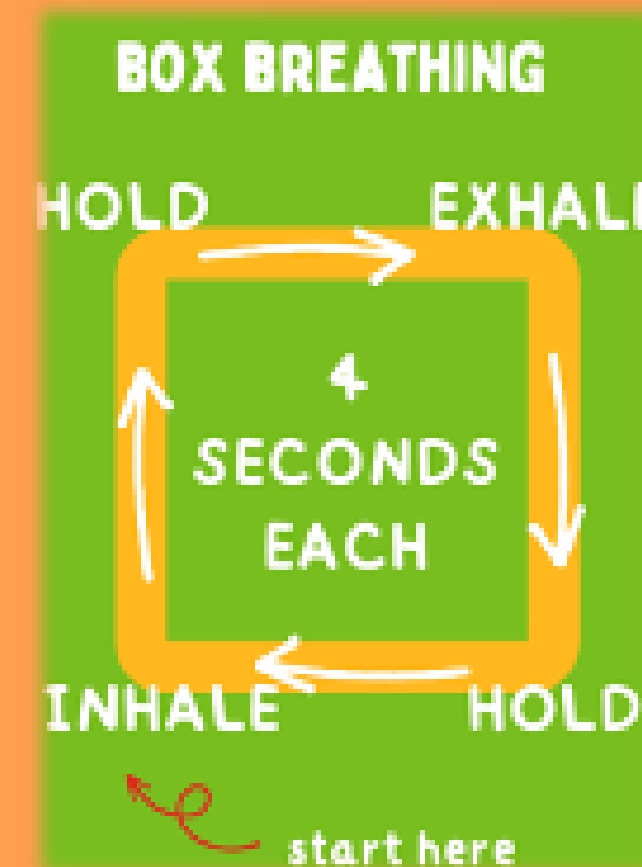
Talk to friends, family and others you trust about how you're feeling



Experiencing some exam stress is normal, but managing that stress is important so that we don't get stuck in unhelpful ways of thinking, feeling and behaving

### Aim for a Positive Mindset

**Breathing Techniques** can help when you are experiencing physical signs of stress (like feeling sick, panicked, tense) It can be helpful to use a breathing technique before or during an exam to feel calmer



#### THINK

"I am proud of myself and my work"  
"I am working hard"

#### INSTEAD OF

"I am going to fail"  
"I can't do this"

Try to work through anxious thoughts, to replace negative with positive

Stay in the present moment by: Focussing on the hard work and revision you are doing, rather than results day

### Thinking about 'Not doing well'

If you don't do as well as you hoped in an exam, there can still be lots of positives - try not to focus on 'not doing well'.

Take time to plan for different outcomes with a helpful adult, for example discussing all routes and options to reach your goals and aspirations