TEN TIPS TO BEAT EXAM STRESS

1. **Get organised** – Make sure you know what exams you have for each subject and which topics are covered in each paper. Get to know which kind of questions to expect for each subject and paper. Make sure you know when each exam starts and where it will be. Your school should give you a list – stick a copy up at home or transfer the information to a family calendar.
2. **Manage your time –** Your time is precious, so make the best use of it. Draw up a revision timetable to help you do this, breaking up your revision into manageable chunks. Many people like to plan in terms of an hour – 50 minutes of revision and a ten-minute break. Make sure you build in breaks between sessions to maintain your effectiveness. You might find it helpful to set a timer with an alarm to help you stick to your schedule. Block out any time on your calendar when you have to do other things, including some time when you can step away from revision and re-engage with friends and family (see No.8).
3. **Stay in control** – By sticking to your plan. Use it to review what you have already achieved and what you need to do next. It's a good idea to spend the first few minutes of each revision session reviewing what you covered in the last one.
4. **Create the right environment –** Work somewhere that is light has enough space and is distraction-free. Visual input from TV, screens & social media will just distract you, so it all needs to be switched off and put away while you revise. You may feel that listening to music is OK, or even helpful, but some research suggests that this can also reduce the effectiveness of revision. If finding a place to revise at home is difficult, ask your teachers about what school can do to help.
5. **Boost your confidence –** Use a revision journal to record your progress. Recall things that have gone well in the past and the areas you have covered in your schedule. Make a note of things which you were unclear about but now understand. A journal is a good way to note any questions for your teacher the next time you have a lesson. You can also use it to visualise your success.
6. **Eat healthily and stay hydrated –** Build proper meal breaks into your schedule and time for exercise, even if it's just going for a walk. Don't forget to drink to stay hydrated while you revise. Avoid 'energy' drinks: they may give the illusion of alertness but actually impair your performance. People may say they help, but ask yourself why you never see an advert saying, 'Drink Red Bull: it helps you revise.' It's because it doesn't and making such a claim in an advert would break the law.
7. **Get enough sleep –** Don't stay up late revising; a tired brain does not work well, either at the time or the next morning. 'Energy' drinks or tablets are not a substitute for sleep.
8. **Friends & family –** Let them know you have exams and need to revise. Keep in touch during those breaks you planned into your revision but be strict with yourself about keeping revision time for revision.
9. **Avoid life changes –** Stay on course with your revision. It's quite normal to find that things you ***don't*** have to revise become suddenly interesting but avoid distractions and stay on track. Now is not the time to start a new relationship or plan to run away to the circus (however tempting that may seem).

10. **Understand your body** and the signals it sends you – Recognise that signs of exam nerves like 'butterflies in the stomach' a dry mouth or sweaty palms are nothing to worry about. They are just symptoms telling you that your body is preparing for action. Actors sometimes use a technique to tackle stage fright. They tell themselves that these feelings are of excitement, rather than fear. You might try the same for exams – they are a chance for you to perform, to show the examiner what you have learned.

Helpful Links

Many organisations provide advice on revision, preparing for exams, and tackling exam stress. Here are some of the most accessible:

- Students can get more help and advice on student life in general, including advice on taking exams, from the **Student Minds website**
- These pages from the **Mind website** include a handy downloadable PDF document.
- The **Teen Mental Health** website has more information about the stress response, the 'myth of evil stress' and a range of strategies for healthy stress management.
- Parents and carers can find advice about supporting their children through exams on this area of the **NHS Choices website**