

# **coping with exam pressure**

a guide for students

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# "stress is not necessarily a bad thing"

people react to stress in different ways...

**Stress can be a great motivator** for some students, giving them the 'get up and go' that they need to succeed

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

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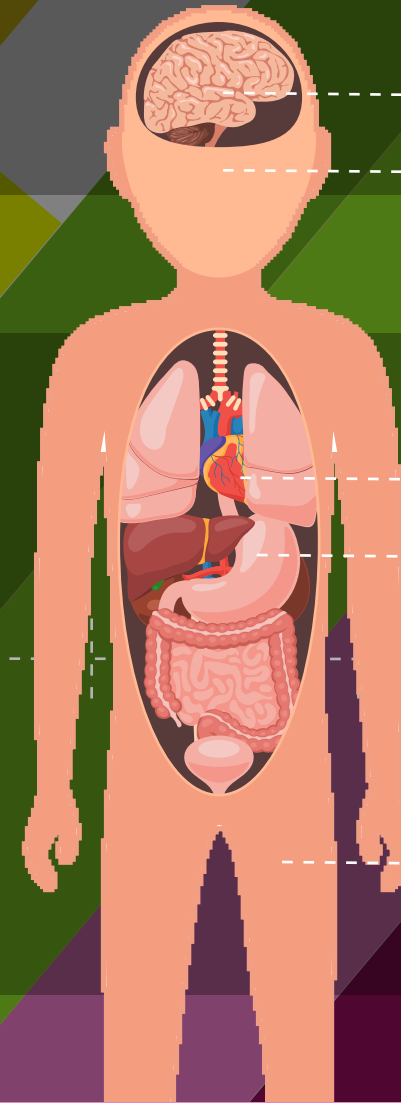
# the signs of high exam anxiety

## 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



## Physical signs

- dizzy or faint
- sweating
- fast heartbeat
- 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

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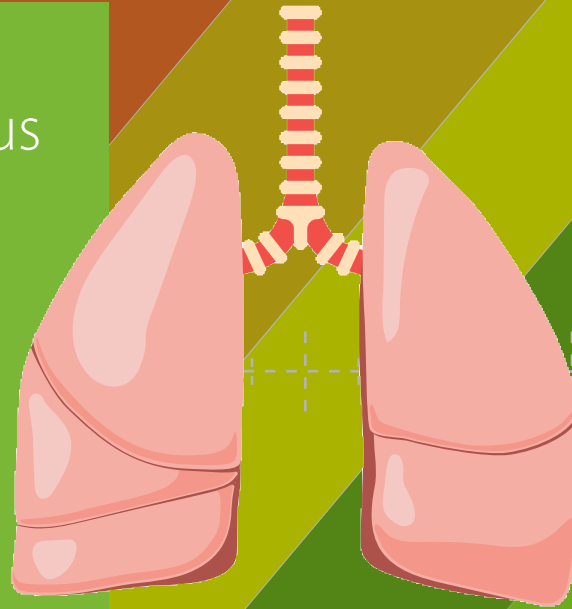
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# how to control physical reactions to anxiety

## 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.



## How do I do it?

- 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

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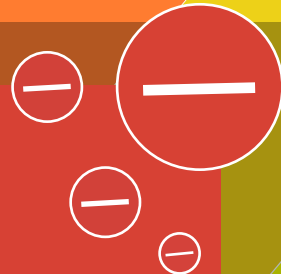
# how to feel **more confident about exams**

## **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'

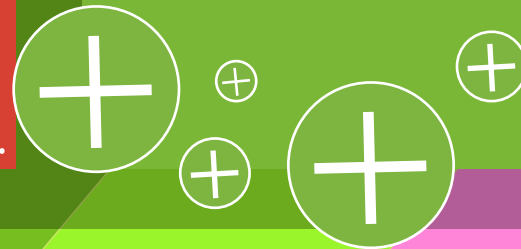
These types of beliefs focus on what you can't do rather than what you can.



## **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

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# 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

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