

Exam Stress and Anxiety

(2 Hours)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Knowledge, Skills
& Actions



To understand the science
behind fight, fright and freeze
responses to stress

To recognise that stress is
only beneficial in the short
term and that long term it can
affect you physically and
emotionally

To understand how to
manage stress and relaxation

NEW VOCABULARY

Relaxation, Stress,, Cortisol,
Hormones, Meditation, Yoga,
Para-sympathetic



STARTER ACTIVITY

Do you know what makes you stressed?

Is stress good or bad?

How could you tell if you or a friend is experiencing stress?

What would you like to know about dealing with exam stress?



3 Minutes

GROUND RULES



Be Respectful

Listen & don't interrupt others
Only 1 person talking at a time
Use the agreed appropriate
Language (Avoid slang terms)



Don't Make Assumptions

about people's values,
attitudes, behaviours, life
experiences or feelings

Be open and honest
No Personal Comments
Discussions must be about
'general situations'

PSHE CLASSROOM **RULES**

DEALING WITH POSITIVE
TOPICS

REGARDING YOUR
WELFARE & HAVING YOUR
INTERESTS AT HEART

You don't have to say
things about yourself if
you don't want to

Be Non-Judgemental
No put-downs. Challenge
the opinion, not the
person

It's OK to be embarrassed
by a topic but don't show
that you are embarrassed
through silliness

Conversations on sensitive
topics stay in the
classroom unless it is a
safeguarding issue

There are **no stupid questions**
It's OK to get things wrong

Enjoy the lesson, challenge your perceptions and understand how to seek further advice and support



Exam Stress and Anxiety

ASSESSMENT
FOR LEARNING

BASELINE CONFIDENCE CHECKER

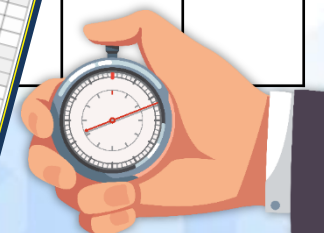


BEFORE THE LESSON	NOT CONFIDENT				CONFIDENT				VERY CONFIDENT	
Knowledge, Skills & Actions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I can identify the symptoms of stress										
I know a range of methods to help me overcome any exam stress I have										
I understand how different amounts of stress can impact my performance and ability to think clearly										



Complete a baseline assessment of where you think you are at for this lesson

(Discuss or complete sheet)



2 Minutes

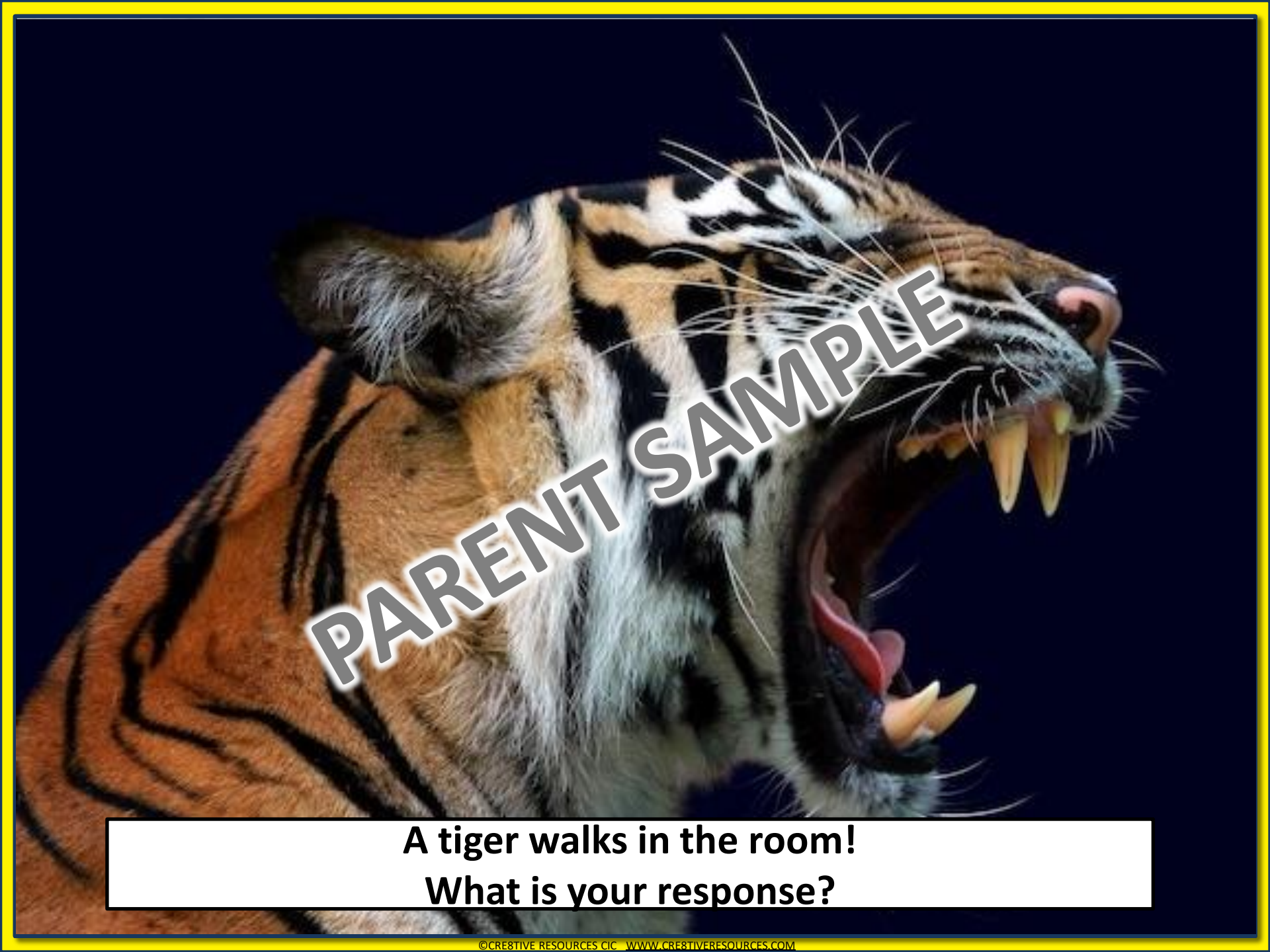
I'm not confident at all on this topic

A little confident

Confident

Very confident

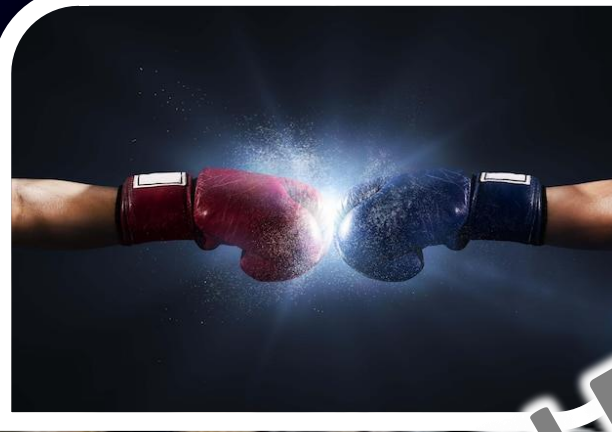
I am super confident on this topic



PARENT SAMPLE

**A tiger walks in the room!
What is your response?**

‘FIGHT’



A tiger walks in the room and what is your response?

‘FLIGHT’



‘FREEZE’



Stress

- Stress is an automatic response to dealing with challenges.
- When we stress, our bodies are flooded with hormones that raise heart rate and blood pressure, boost energy and prepare to 'fight, flight or freeze'
- Over time, too much stress can become a serious issue and could make someone unwell

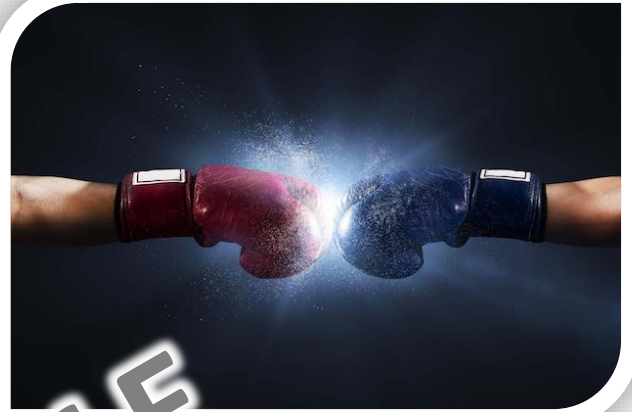
The right amount of stress is a good thing, it helps to motivate us to perform well in school or exams or to even just get out of bed in the morning.

Task

What are some examples of short-term stress in your life?

What are some examples of long-term stress in your life?

What extra stresses might adults have that students don't have?





How Stress Can Impact Your Life



**Life Noggin Clip:
How Much Stress Can
Kill You?**



4 Minutes

Task

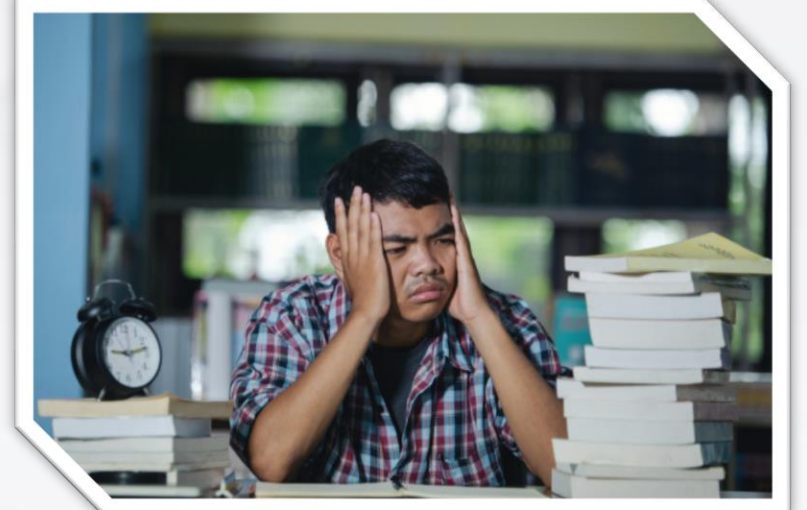
Why is it important to be able to manage stress in your life?

Why is it so important to not let stress get in the way of your learning and living?

What strategies do you think are the most useful to use when dealing with stress?



Have you ever felt like any of the characters when revising?
What could someone do to help themselves in these situations?



Ranked: Table Of Stresses

According to a UK study - (excludes social media)

BOYS

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1. | <div>[Click to Reveal]
No. 1</div> |
| 2. | <div>[Click to Reveal]
No. 2</div> |
| 3. | <div>[Click to Reveal]
No. 3</div> |
| 4. | <div>[Click to Reveal]
No. 4</div> |
| 5. | <div>[Click to Reveal]
No. 5</div> |

GIRLS

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1. | <div>[Click to Reveal]
No. 1</div> |
| 2. | <div>[Click to Reveal]
No. 2</div> |
| 3. | <div>[Click to Reveal]
No. 3</div> |
| 4. | <div>[Click to Reveal]
No. 4</div> |
| 5. | <div>[Click to Reveal]
No. 5</div> |

What do you think the top five stresses are for boys and girls of secondary school age?



What do you notice about the differences between boys and girls?

ACTIVITY

STRESS BALLS

Take a piece of paper and tear it into three pieces.

Next write down on each piece something that stresses you out.

Finally screw all three up into individual balls and throw them into the teacher's bin.



2 Minutes



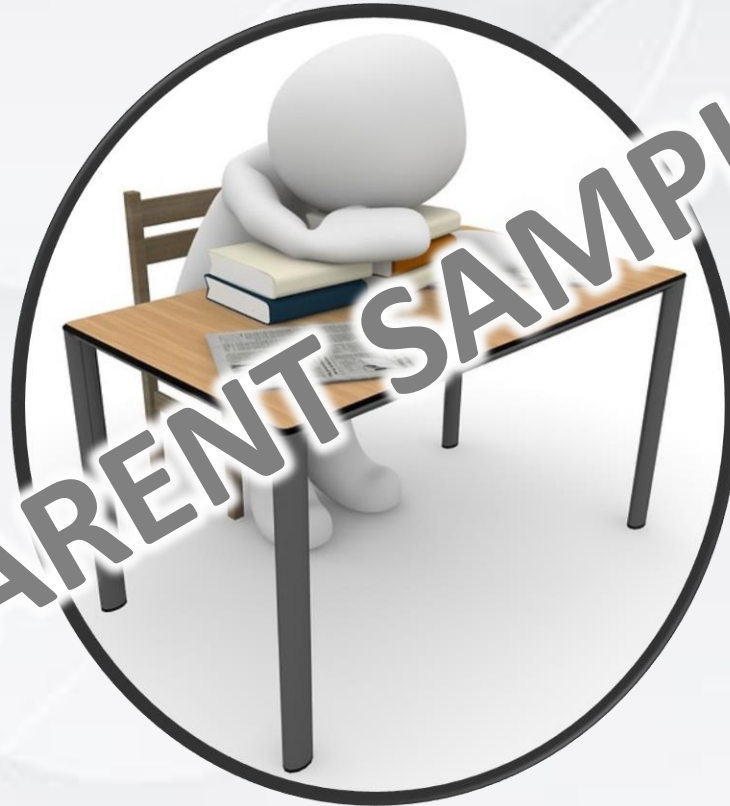
Did you know?

Everyone has a different capacity to deal with stress

What happens when the bin fills up?

How could we begin to deal with this much stress?

What makes exams so stressful?



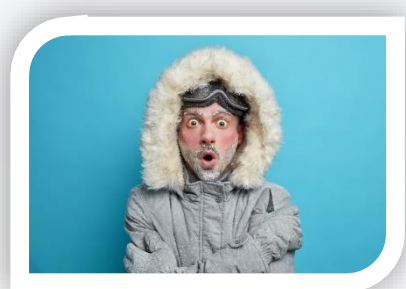
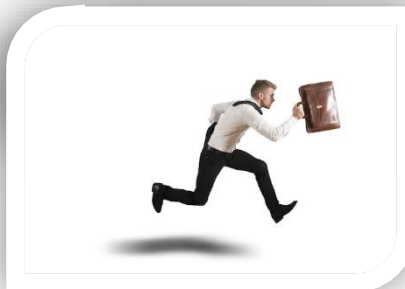
What might the signs of getting stressed in an exam be?

- Increased Blood Pressure
- Sweating
- Increased Heart Rate



A) If you had the fight, flight or freeze reactions while revising for an exam what would be the different outcomes?

B) If you had these reactions during an actual exam what might be the three different outcomes?



The Science Behind Fight, Flight Or Freeze

The para-sympathetic nervous system is responsible for managing our hormone output. Constantly overloading emotions on our nervous system releases the stress inducing hormone Cortisol.

This puts strain on our body, it is the hormone released when we fight, flight or freeze. Any of these actions needs the body to have more blood and oxygen to the muscles, lungs and brain and less to our other organs and endocrine system (hormone producing, signalling and releasing system in our bodies).

Too much of this reaction over time creates an imbalance, as the endocrine system is producing too much of one hormone (Cortisol). This causes the body to be in a state of permanent stress or high alert.

This creates tension in the body as the body is always ready to react (fight), run (flight), or contract its muscles and remain in position (freeze).

Major organs are having their blood supply slowed down constantly which restricts the ability to work at optimum function sending a mixture of messages to the brain.

Excess cortisol in the body also leaves the brain confused and forced to move our bodies to increase our volume of oxygen in our blood which increases the output of our cardiovascular system to make all the organs work a bit harder to clear out the excessive hormones.



Did you know?

Circulating emotions will create long term physical responses which affect our para-sympathetic nervous system. Persistent stress can create illness.

Recognising some of the physical symptoms of stress

1. Difficulty in sleeping or waking up
2. Constant tiredness
3. Forgetting things
4. Unexplained aches and pains
5. Poor appetite
6. Loss of interest in activities
7. Increased anxiety
8. Increased heart rate
9. Migraines & headaches
10. Blurred vision and/or dizziness
11. Comfort eating
12. Drinking too many caffeinated/energy drinks
13. Run down immune system
14. Generally feeling 'run down'



Have you ever had any of these?

Which of these are easier to identify than the others?

Have you ever spotted any of these in your friends?

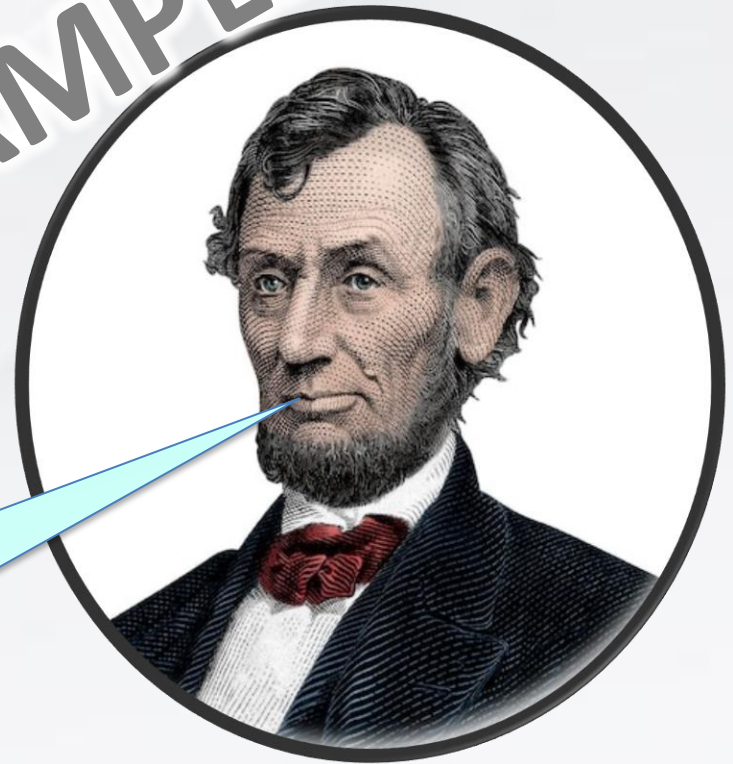
How can you prevent too much stress from building up?

It's all about creating positive coping strategies:

- Organising oneself with a study schedule making set times for different subjects
- If you plan to study with sufficient time and stick by your timetable then you won't need to stress that you don't have enough time
- The thing is to be disciplined with anything you do (or at least plan to do)

'Discipline is choosing between what you want now with what you want most'

– Abraham Lincoln



Exercise

- Exercise helps the body process stress (Cortisol)
- Cortisol – the hormone responsible for the stress response in the body. It is broken down in the body and passed through the waste organs and sweated or excreted.
- Excess of non-useful compounds have been eliminated and removed, the body is functioning at a higher level. That's why mood is improved, sleeping is deeper, cells are restored and confidence is improved.

Task

Would this method work for you?

How likely are you to do this when you are feeling stressed?

Scale 1 – Not likely ----- 10 Very likely

Did you know?

Stress can be a positive force. If you are worried about an exam you may be more likely to study. However, too much stress over a prolonged period can be harmful to our health and wellbeing. Stress in your life needs to be balanced by relaxation.



Mindfulness and Meditation

- Both disciplines are centralised in the theme of bringing our mind's attention to our bodies.
- When we are aware of our bodies, we can understand what feels right and wrong. We can then focus on being in more of a relaxed state using our para-sympathetic nervous system.
- To be in in state of relaxation means that our stress response is at a low. Our body feels calm and stress free. There is no need for ourselves to be on alert.

Task

Would this method work for you?

How likely are you to do this when you are feeling stressed?

Scale 1 – Not likely ----- 10 Very likely



Yoga and Breathing Exercises

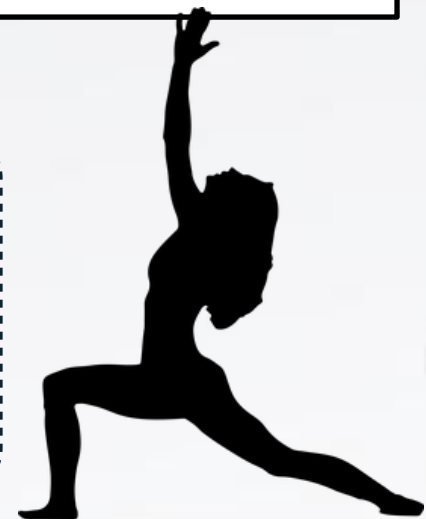
- Moving and stretching your body, but with consciousness awareness of how your body is reacting.
- This is learnt by first being aware of your breath. Count your breath (every 4) or saying to yourself “breathing in, breathing out”. If you are practising yoga with a video tutorial or a yoga teacher, they will generally tell you when to breathe in and out to help with certain yoga postures.
- Being aware of your breath puts your conscious mind into a focused state and has your brain concentrating on this one thing.
- Your subconscious (the other part of your brain responsible for keeping your body systems operating without you having to give thought to it) can speak to you about how your body is feeling.

- Is your body tight or tired or does it have loads of energy today? These physical questions can be asked in yoga but as you relax into the practice, more emotional feelings may come up and the reasons for your stress may become clearer to you.
- You become aware of what your body needs through movements that connect the body and mind, together with the regulation of the breath. Asking your mind to think about where your breath is and how it feels in that area of the body and how it helps the body to move or stretch more, takes your mind away from random thoughts. It calms the mind down.

Task

Would this method work for you?

How likely are you to do this when you are feeling stressed?
Scale 1 – Not likely ----- 10
Very likely



How Can Breathing Help In Exams?

Inhale the future,
exhale the past.

Author
Unknown

Breathe. Let go. And
remind yourself that
this very moment is the
only one you know you
have for sure.

Oprah Winfrey



Oxygenating our body helps it
function optimally allowing
the body to relax every time
we take a deep breath.
Breathing is the greatest
treasure in life.
Giovanni Papini

Breathe deeply, until sweet
air extinguishes the burn of
fear in your lungs and every
breath is a beautiful refusal
to become anything less
than infinite.
D. Antoinette Foy

Task

Would this method work for you?

How likely are you to do this when you are
feeling stressed?

Scale 1 – Not likely ----- 10 Very likely

The Science of Yoga and Meditation

- It calms the mind down because your breath is deeper and slower. Your diaphragm becomes less tense (dome-shaped muscle under lungs that expands and contracts), allowing the hormone of nitric oxide to be released. This expands the blood vessels, increases blood flow and allows the body to function better, in the same way exercise can.
- Meditation is the action of sitting (but can also be standing or walking), where we purposely take no just our breathe (minimum 2 - 3 minutes). During this time, we are solely allowing the mind to follow the breath.
- Not paying any attention to our thoughts allows our brains to process and compare the information it has been processing (mostly information from the recent past but also all of our life). It's like letting your phone or computer have a rest when you have been constantly using it and it's hot. Think of it as a reset for your mind.
- If you are doing this every day, you can become very organised in your mind, the same as if you cleaned your room a little every day. How tidy would that be!



“Revising for an exam is often more stressful than taking the exam itself”

THOUGHTS & FEELINGS

What is your opinion on the statement above?

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

DISAGREE

AGREE

STRONGLY
AGREE

Start with one of these cards

There is
evidence
that...

Surely...

I'm not
convinced
that...

I understand
that, but...

I'm not sure
and I can
clearly see...

So, are you
saying that...

In my
opinion...

I think...

Therefore...

Clearly...

Yes, but on
the other
hand...

So...

So, you think
that...

Does this
mean...

So if ... does
that mean
that...

I wonder if...

I would
contest...

Why do you
think that...

I disagree...

I partially
agree...

Consequently
...

Obviously...

Something
else to
consider is...

PARENT SAMPLE

Task 1: Discuss / Debate with your partner your own personal views towards this statement / idea, use the cards to help get you started.

Extension: Can you think of specific examples of recent events that would support this statement and other specific examples that would go against this statement?



Discussion task



2-3 Minutes

Relaxation / Processing

- Taking time to relax is one of the best ways for the body to process and store information, once we have put it in a few times!
- The mind needs time to process so once you've had a big study session then switch off, and I mean switch off! No computer games or phone and no more screen time.
- Relax with a walk, hobby, yoga, meditation or reading. It's the quiet time the body needs to allow the information to be filed away properly and not just replaced with what you've just seen on your phone.

Task

Would this method work for you?

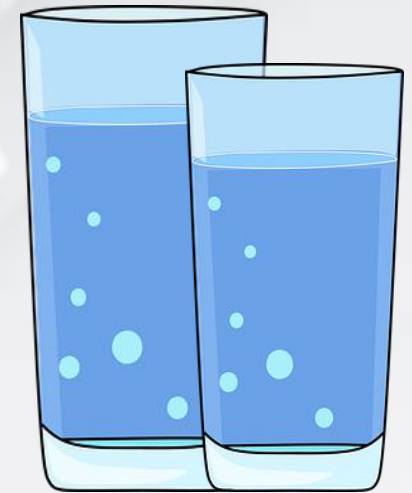
How likely are you to do this when you are feeling stressed?

Scale 1 – Not likely ----- 10 Very likely



Healthy Eating

- Healthy meals with healthy ingredients can provide good fats for the brain which help nerve connections
- We have a lot of nerve connections in our brains. Oily fish, avocado, nuts, especially walnuts, help our brains. Walnuts even look like a brain!
- Fruits, vegetables and meats supply us with the macronutrients, vitamins and minerals, magnesium and potassium we need
- We need the macronutrients to keep our muscles, our organs functioning, our blood pumping, and to help with hormone production
- The body is a complex machine and needs lots of tiny nutrients to function and all this is found in our food.



Task

Would this method work for you?

How likely are you to do this when you are feeling stressed?

Scale 1 – Not likely ----- 10 Very likely



Talking Openly

- Talking openly and honestly to people you trust
- When we open up about our fears and our worries to someone we trust, the problem can feel halved just in the action of telling someone something.
- Thoughts can spin around in our heads and circulate. Voicing them out in the open and into reality makes them feel less heavy. This is why people say 'a weight has been lifted'.
- Sometimes that can be the end of the worry.
- Just being listened to the problem go away. Others may also be able to offer a different perspective on your situation.
- When you hear a thought come out it can sometimes sound a lot smaller than your mind has made it to be and you might be able to solve the issue yourself.



Task

Would this method work for you?

How likely are you to do this when you are feeling stressed?

Scale 1 – Not likely ----- 10 Very likely

ACTIVITY

- ✓ Define stress, relaxation and mindfulness
- ✓ Explain the negative impacts stress can have
- ✓ Explain how a small amount of stress can be positive
- ✓ Explain the five sessions
- ✓ Facts and statistics
- ✓ A basic overview of the day

SUCCESS
CRITERIA

Get into teams of 3

Imagine you are running a drop down day for students who need to deal with their own exam stress anxiety surrounding exams.

Design a leaflet for a one day to Year 11 students showing what each of the five sessions would

EXTENSION

Research, plan and deliver one of those sessions

(PowerPoint Format)



___ Minutes

CREATIVE
RESOURCES

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REVIEW YOUR LEARNING OUTCOMES

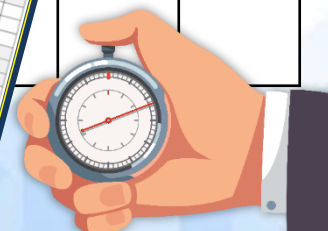
ASSESSMENT
FOR LEARNING

CONFIDENCE CHECKER



AFTER THE LESSON	NOT CONFIDENT		CONFIDENT		VERY CONFIDENT
Knowledge, Skills & Actions	1  2	3  4	5  6	7  8	9  10
I can identify the symptoms of stress					
I know a range of methods to help me overcome any exam stress I have					
I understand how different amounts of stress can impact my performance and ability to think clearly					

PARENT SAMPLE



3 Minutes

Complete the confidence checker of where you think you are at for this lesson

(Discussion or complete sheet)




I'm not
confident at all
on this topic


A little
confident


Confident


Very
confident


I am super
confident on
this topic

HOMework SUGGESTION



Homework Explained

Commit to practising at least one (but ideally more than one) of the de-stressing techniques you have learnt in this lesson for at least 10 minutes each day this week.

- Physical Exercise
- Meditation
- Mindfulness
- Processing/Emotional
- Yoga
- Breathing Exercise
- Journaling
- Talking Openly

DUE DATE

It must be submitted by..

Hand / Google
Classroom





IMPORTANT INFORMATION



2 Minutes



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE TOPICS COVERED IN THIS UNIT
WE WOULD ADVISE ONE OF THE BELOW

SPEAK TO YOUR PARENTS/GUARDIANS, A TRUSTED ADULT OR

IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT YOURSELF OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW.
IT IS IMPORTANT TO SPEAK UP AND TELL SOMEONE!

SPECIFIC FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS TOPIC CAN BE FOUND HERE:

- ☐ <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/exam-stress/>
- ☐ <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/help-your-child-beat-exam-stress/>
- ☐ <https://www.studentminds.org.uk/examstress.html> - Exam stress hints and tips

LIFE
BEYOND
SCHOOL

SEEKING
SUPPORT

REFLECTION PLENARY



A problem I overcame today was...

**Before I only knew...
now I also know...**

**The key words for this lesson
were...**

I'm really proud of the way I have

Today I have tried to

**The most important thing I have
learnt today is...**

I used to feel ... but I now feel ...

**Before I would have done...
Now I will ...**

Next lesson I would like to...

**A question I would like to ask
is...**

I would like to learn more

**I need further support
or help I could speak to.... or
contact...**

**I now know I can supported
others by...**

**One thing I didn't realise was...
this will help me to...**

2 Minutes





REFER TO MINDFULNESS POWERPOINT

