

Stress buster tips

It's critical for you to pace yourself and not let stress build up.

- ◆ **Get your sleep:** Sleep deprivation will greatly reduce your exam performance and heighten your anxiety levels.
- ◆ **Get a study plan:** Don't leave everything to the last minute, and equally, don't burn out too early in the year.

Think of your study time as one more correct answer in the exams. Last-minute cramming heightens stress and reduces performance – it is the biggest factor for “blank outs” in exams. Study boosts your confidence. It gives you a greater sense of control, as you are more prepared.

- ◆ **Know your goals:** This is the perfect time to restate your goals and get focussed. If you are clear about what you are working towards, your motivation will be high and crystal clear. This fuels your momentum, especially at difficult moments. You are doing this for yourself. Parents and teachers are on your side and want you to succeed, even if they seem difficult to communicate with now.
- ◆ **Believe in yourself:** keep fear and anxiety gremlins in check. Remember the law of attraction – what you focus on expands. If you find yourself constantly worrying and anxious, this feeds a vicious circle of worry and doubt. Your anxiety levels soar as a result, and your confidence, self image and behaviour are affected also. Your self image sets the boundaries for your achievements. Expand your self image and you expand your possibilities.

Make it easy for yourself:

Eight easy steps to de-clutter your mind and improve your focus.

1. **Get organised:** Organise your subjects. Have all the materials you need ready and accessible. Don't lose time looking for your red pen or new copy book – it will frustrate you and by the time you are all set to get going you've lost half an hour

and are now in a bad mood. Develop a system that works for you, so that you can find what you need when you need it.

2. **Plan your time:** things can take longer than you think - plan in breaks. Use wall charts to map out your study and homework timetables.

3. **Create the right study environment:** A tidy environment will ease your mind. Avoid background 'noise' that will add to your anxiety. If listening to music helps you, make sure it is easy listening and not high intensity.

4. **Attend your classes:** Avoid the temptation as exams loom to skip classes in favour of study. If you already have poor study technique, this will only reinforce it and add to feelings of isolation.

5. **Get clever with your study:** Are you familiar with exam paper layouts and marking schemes? Start practicing. You can download exam marking systems from www.examinations.ie or buy them in your school supply shop. If you haven't got them already, don't delay, get them today. As your revision work, look over past exam papers and answer questions or subject areas covered in class, time yourself and correct your answers.

6. **Stay connected with friends and family:** If you are feeling stressed out, take time off and talk to people. Don't isolate yourself.

7. **Take regular guilt-free breaks:** Leave the books at home when you are off. Likewise, when you are studying, turn off the phone and focus.

8. **Nourish yourself:**

◆ Eat a balanced diet – Avoid fatty foods, excessive amounts of sweets, chocolate, fizzy drinks. Always have breakfast.

◆ Sleep. Make sure you are getting your eight hours. Ideally be in bed before 11pm.

◆ Take a fish oil supplement to help improve concentration or multi-vitamin to boost your immune system

- ◆ Monitor caffeine intake – no more than three cups of coffee/tea per day.
- ◆ Drink lots of water – a minimum of eight glasses per day.
- ◆ Take regular exercise and relaxation.
- ◆ Limit nicotine and alcohol. They reduce your performance, concentration and memory.

Finally, wishing you every success and good luck.