

Coping with Exam Pressure

There are many emotions linked to exams. These can be negative, positive, physical, cognitive and affective. All of these are normal. How we manage these and the frequency of these emotions and feelings is important.

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'.

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

The Signs of High Exam Anxiety

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

Cognitive signs (thoughts)	Affective signs (emotions)	Physical signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• going blank in an exam• difficulty concentrating• negative thoughts about past performance or consequences of failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• feeling excessive tension• feeling panic• feeling overwhelmed• feeling not in control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• dizzy or faint• sweating• fast heartbeat• tight churning stomach• jelly or wobbly legs

For ways to manage the signs of exam anxiety click [here](#)

For more information and support about coping with exam pressure, speak to any teacher in school or click on the links below

[What is it like to experience exam stress? A student perspective](#)

[Understanding test anxiety](#)

Adapted from resources published by the DfE