

# Exam Stress

## Support Booklet

### Staying well during revision and exams



We asked young people to give us some wellbeing advice for exam time and this is what they told us:

1. Always take a moment just to breathe, whether in the exam, before or after.
2. Remember that school does offer support, just reach out and ask!
3. Keep your work balanced. Spend time revising, but socialise and relax too.
4. Keep a self-care routine so that your revision is the most productive it can be whilst you feel as good as possible.
5. Break up revision with food and exercise to make sure you stay energised.
6. Remember that results do not define you.
7. Find a revision space and style that works for you: silence, background chatter, music with or without lyrics.
8. Work to your own pace – everyone is different in how they work.
9. If you feel nervous about the time pressure of an exam, practice timing yourself when you revise, or try some test papers.
10. Plan in some treats to reward yourself, and celebrate when it's all over!

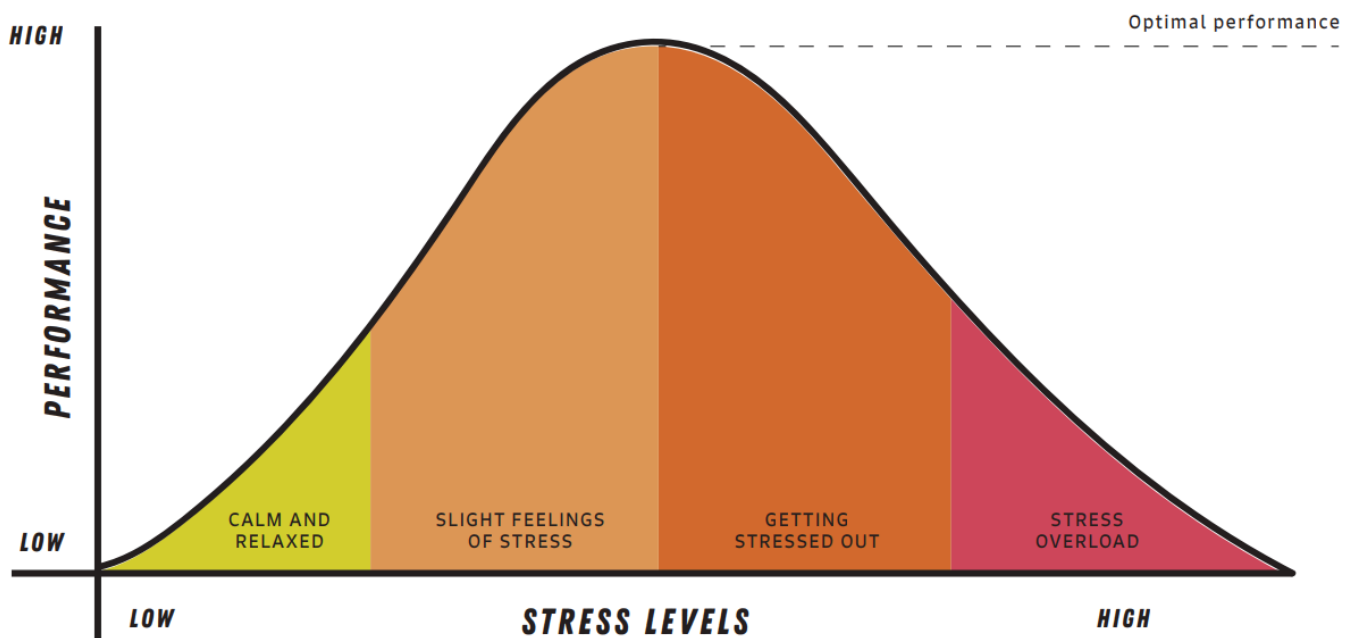


# Managing Stress

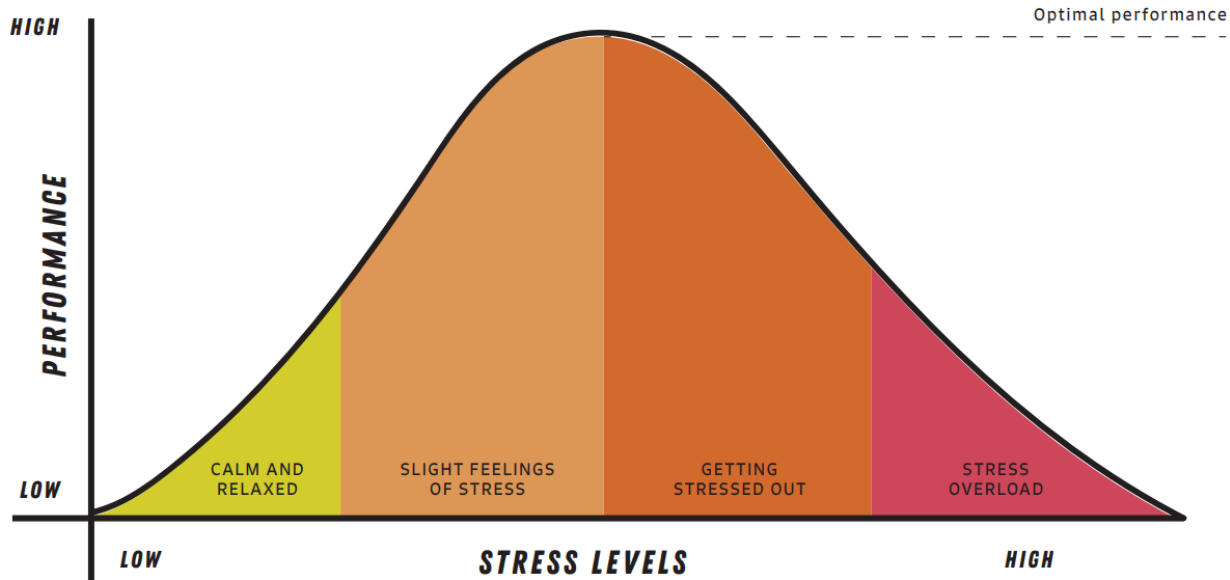
It may seem strange but the right amount of stress actually improves our performance. However, once we start getting too stressed it impacts us negatively!

Feeling slightly stressed drives us to revise or work hard but too much stress impacts our ability to function. It's important to recognise when we're starting to get stressed out or entering stress overload.

## MANAGING STRESS



# Managing Stress



<b>CALM &amp; RELAXED</b>	<b>FEELING EXCITED/NERVOUS</b>	<b>GETTING STRESSED OUT</b>	<b>STRESS OVERLOAD</b>
SYMPTOMS	SYMPTOMS	SYMPTOMS	SYMPTOMS
WHAT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE THIS?	WHAT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE THIS?	WHAT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE THIS?	WHAT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE THIS?



# Managing Stress

**The next few pages are a wellbeing toolkit that you can use to think about the signs that you're starting to struggle. You can then create a self-care plan that you can use to combat any stress or difficult feelings. You can also think about things that might be useful as breaks from revision/how to be kind to yourself during exams.**

**There's some signposting to support services and other resources for managing exam stress at the end of this booklet.**



# My Wellbeing Toolkit



## Recognising that I am starting to struggle..

The first step in knowing when you might need to do something to look after your wellbeing, is recognising when you are starting to struggle. In the examples below, you can see what some warning signs might look like..

### My emotions

What emotions might you start to feel?

**STRESSED**                      **OVERWHELMED**  
**WORRIED**                      **ANXIOUS**  
**ANGRY**                              **SAD**  
**UPSET**                              **NERVOUS**  
**BORED**

### My body sensations

What might you start to feel in your body?

**MUSCLES ARE FEELING REALLY TENSE**  
**SHAKY - CAN'T STOP FIDGETING**  
**BODY FEELS HEAVY AND LIKE I HAVE NO ENERGY**  
**MY HEART STARTS TO BEAT REALLY FAST**  
**MY BREATHING GETS FASTER**  
**MY HEAD STARTS TO HURT**

### My thoughts

What thoughts might you be having?

**"I CAN'T DO THIS"**  
**"EVERYTHING IS GETTING TOO MUCH"**  
**"NOTHING IS MUCH FUN AT THE MOMENT"**  
**"I HAVE SO MUCH TO DO AND I HAVE NO IDEA WHEN I AM GOING TO GET EVERYTHING DONE"**  
**"I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT THE SAME THING OVER AND OVER AGAIN"**

### My behaviours

What might you be doing or not doing?

**CAN'T CONCENTRATE**  
**SHUT MYSELF AWAY IN MY ROOM**  
**TRY TO AVOID THE THING THAT IS MAKING ME WORRIED**  
**CAN'T THINK STRAIGHT**  
**SPEND MORE TIME SCROLLING ON INSTAGRAM**  
**STOP DOING THE THINGS I ENJOY**



## Recognising that I am starting to struggle..

What are the warning signs you recognise in yourself when you're struggling? Write some ideas in the boxes below...

My emotions

*What emotions might you start to feel?*

My body sensations

*What might you start to feel in your body?*

My thoughts

*What thoughts might you be having?*

My behaviours

*What might you be doing or not doing?*

# Things I do to keep myself well

Once you have recognised that you might be struggling, it is important to have some tools that you can use to try and help yourself. The tools that help will be different for different people and different in different situations. If you are unsure what helps, it is worth giving some of the ideas below a try and seeing if they work for you!

## IDEAS FOR ACTIVITIES TO TRY

### CALMING

**BREATHING EXERCISES**

**WATCH A TV SHOW YOU LOVE**

**STROKE A PET ANIMAL**

**HAVE A HOT BATH OR SHOWER**

**MEDITATE**

**READ FOR PLEASURE**

**LISTEN TO SOOTHING MUSIC**

### ACTIVE

**DO AN ONLINE EXERCISE VIDEO**

**GO FOR A WALK/JOG/RUN**

**PLAY A SPORT YOU ENJOY**

**YOGA**

**GO FOR A SWIM**

**DANCE**

**MAKE A PLAN TO MANAGE YOUR TIME**

### RELATIONSHIP

**SPEND TIME WITH A FRIEND**

**SPEND TIME WITH FAMILY OR PEOPLE AT HOME**

**GIVE SOMEONE A CALL**

**PLAN TO MEET UP WITH SOMEONE YOU LIKE TO**

**SPEND TIME WITH**

**TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT HOW YOU FEEL**

**CONNECT WITH SOMEONE WITH SIMILAR INTERESTS**

**THROUGH A CLUB OR SOCIAL MEDIA**

### EXPRESSION

**MAKE SOMETHING WITH YOUR HANDS**

**DO SOME WRITING**

**DO SOME PATINING OR DRAWING**

**SINGING/RAPPING/PLAYING MUSIC**

**DRAMA**

**WRITE A POEM**

**COOK SOMETHING DELICIOUS**

# IDEAS FOR STRATEGIES TO TRY

## Grounding Techniques

Grounding Techniques are there for a time when you feel anxious to help you to concentrate on what is happening to your body and your surroundings rather than being trapped in your own mind with distress

Why they are useful:

It can help you stay with the present moment rather than thinking about what worries you in the future or what worried you in the past. Below are some grounding techniques that may help you with this:

### 5-4-3-2-1

This is a technique to help you concentrate on all five of your senses.

To begin with, close your eyes and take a deep breath in and out. Then open them and name out loud:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Take a deep breath to finish

### DISTRACTION

Another way to ground yourself is the distraction method. For this begin by taking a deep breath and looking around your surroundings and pick something to count.

For instance, you could be counting the amount of trees you can see or the number of white cars.

You can also mentally distract yourself through trying to double numbers in your mind starting with the number 2 - this can be quite challenging so may help to distract your mind from the distressing thoughts.

### 4-7 BREATHING

**WHY/WHEN:** When we are stressed, anxious or angry we breathe faster and take in too much oxygen which can lead to dizziness and a feeling of panic

**HOW TO:** Count to 4 in your head (or on your fingers) as you breath in  
Count to 7 as you breath out

To make your out breath last longer imagine you're breathing through a straw

Repeat for 5 minutes or until you feel calmer

### ROOTED

This technique is useful to clear your mind and calm your emotions it can be helpful to focus fully on the present and feel rooted to the earth

**HOW TO:** Sit or stand with your feet placed flat on the ground or lie down on your back the ground (be careful it's a place you won't get hurt). Close your eyes and breathe deeply as you focus you're attention on the parts of your body touching the ground one by one. What does it feel like?

Feel the ground support and hold your body. Allow your body to grow heavy and sink into the ground. Imagine your body growing roots into the earth.

**NOW MAKE  
YOUR OWN  
SELF-CARE PLAN**

# **CARE PLAN**

**OTR**

Consider all the different activities and strategies you could practice to regulate your emotions and practice self-care. Consider which category these fit into below.

## **CALMING**

Ways to feel more relaxed, peaceful and rested. Think about it like recharging your batteries

## **ACTIVE**

Doing something physical or practical. This might be getting outdoors, exercising or planning something active

## **RELATIONSHIP**

Ways you can connect with others who help you feel good

## **EXPRESSION**

Get creative as a way of getting your feelings out or expressing yourself

# IDEAS FOR APPS TO TRY

## USEFUL APPS



Calm Harm



Clear Fear



MeeTwo



SAM



DistrACT



My Possible Self



Smiling Mind



Stay Alive



What's Up?

# Helpful Organisations and Professionals



[www.otrbristol.org.uk](http://www.otrbristol.org.uk)

11+

OTR is a mental health social movement by and for young people aged 11-25 living in Bristol and South Gloucestershire.



[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

11+

webchat open from 3pm – midnight everyday



[www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)

11+

online support and counselling, self-help materials and forums  
midday - 10pm on weekdays, 6-10pm Sat and Sun



[www.childline.org.uk/get-support](http://www.childline.org.uk/get-support) 0800 1111

24/7 helpline and online 1-2-1 chat. Talk to a trained counsellor in a safe space about anything that's worrying you

## School Health Nursing Team

**South Bristol:** Telephone 0300 125 6277

**East & Central:** Telephone 0117 939 3760

**North Somerset:** Telephone 01934 419 339

**North Bristol:** Telephone 0300 124 5816

**South Glos:** Kingswood Hub: 01454 862441

Patchway Hub: 01454 862442

Yate Hub: 01454 338804

Lines open Monday - Friday 9am to 5pm

## My Doctor

Write the name of your  
doctor's surgery below:

## Who can you talk to in school?

# Exam Stress

## Other Available Support

Websites below to access further resources for exam stress

[Young Minds: Guide to coping with Exam Stress](#)

[OTR Website - lots of useful information and ways to sign up to projects/support](#)

[OTR - Stress Zine](#)

[Young Minds: coping with exam stress blog by a young person](#)

