Mental Health Support

NHS
Mersey Care
NHS Foundation Trust

Exam Success

For ages 11-16

Aims and goals:

- To understand stress
- To explore emotional wellbeing and how we can stay well
- To learn strategies to better manage our stress
- Revision tips
- To explore the use of relaxation and mindfulness.

Introduction to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)

This workbook can help young people learn to take care of their own mental health using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), which will help children to break unhelpful thought patterns that may be making them feel more anxious or sad.

CBT is a type of talking therapy that has been proven to help people of all ages to focus on how thoughts and emotions can affect our behaviour.

Throughout the book there are exercises (where you see the pencil diagram) for you to complete.

If you feel at anytime that you need further support, please see the numbers at the back of this workbook or contact your GP or school nurse.

If you are having any thoughts of hurting yourself please tell a safe adult immediately.

What is stress?

Everyone feels stressed from time to time, this is a completely normal part of life, but we can often experience it in different ways. Stress can be motivating to help us achieve things in our daily life, and can help us meet the demands of home, school and family life.

Stress is the body's reaction to feeling threatened or under pressure.

But too much stress can affect our mood, our body and our relationships; especially when it feels out of our control. It can make us feel anxious and irritable, and affect our self esteem.

Exam time, for most young people is very stressful, as we often have many pressures making us feel like we have to do well or we're a failure. Experiencing a lot of stress over a long period of time can also lead to a feeling of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion, often called burnout.

If you feel stressed, you may experience the following:

- Difficulty getting to sleep or waking up in the morning
- Forgetfulness
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Poor appetite
- Loss of interest in activities
- Increased anxiety and irritability
- Increased heart rate
- Migraines/headaches
- Blurred vision or Dizziness.

The five areas

The five areas show how our thoughts, feelings, behaviours and physical sensations link together. Using this method we can help you identify what is happening and where you may be able to make changes.

These feelings and thoughts are normal when experiencing exam stress

Here is an example:

Thoughts

I'm bad at maths

I will fail

Body sensations

shaking

heart pounding

sweaty hands

Situation

Taking an exam

Emotions

Stressed

angry

anxious

frustrated

Behaviours

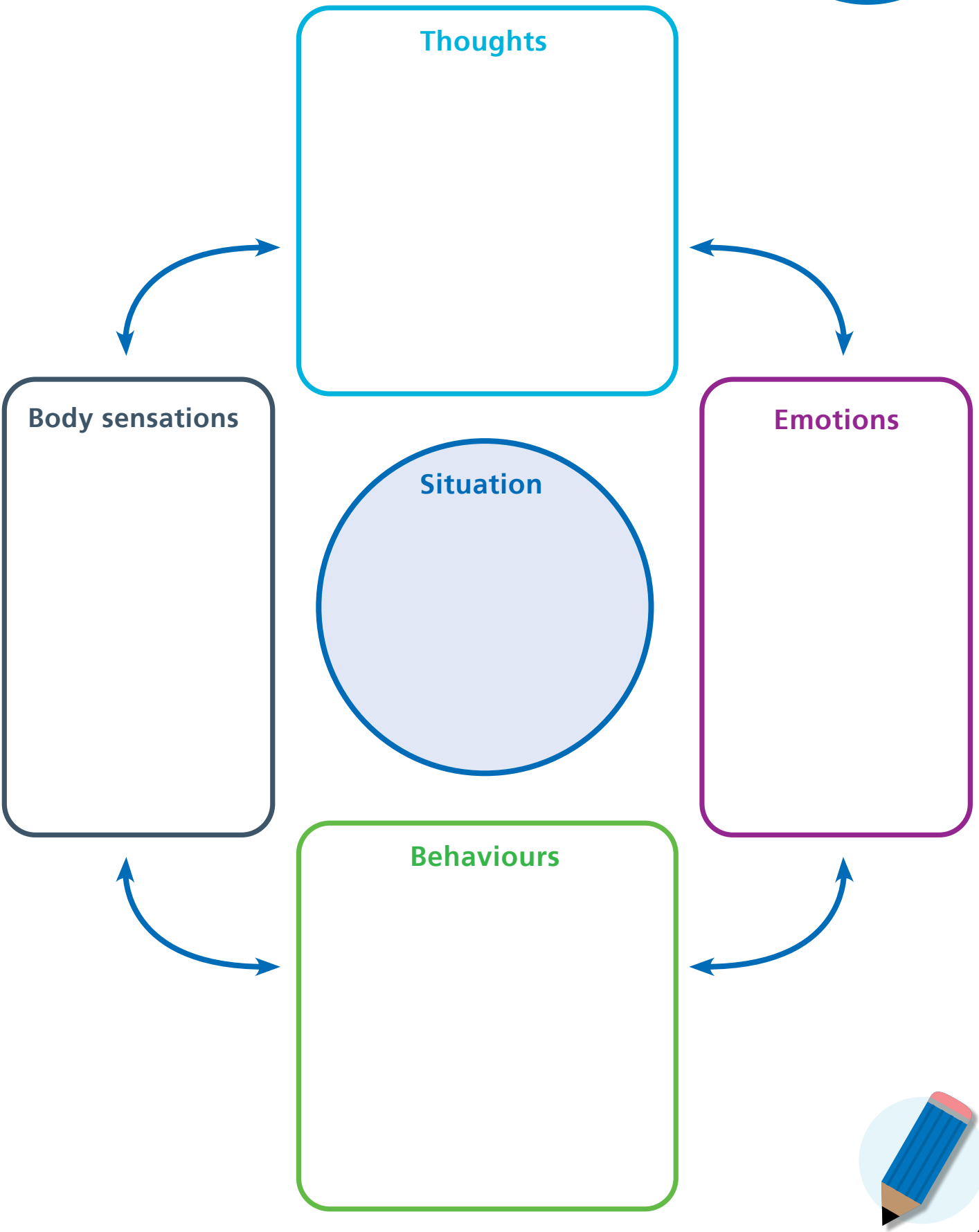
Avoiding school work

grumpy

arguing more with family/friends

The five areas can become a 'vicious cycle' so it's important to identify what is impacting on you and find a way to break the cycle, by either managing / challenging your thoughts or changing what you do (behaviours).

Try creating your 5 areas



The Fight, Flight or Freeze response

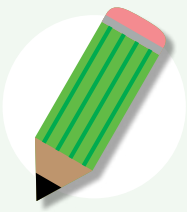
Anxiety or stress is one of the body's natural responses to a perceived threat.

When we are faced with danger our bodies release adrenaline into the blood stream, increasing our heart rate and breathing.

This then leads blood and oxygen to be pumped around the body to our muscles which enables us to 'fight, flight or freeze'.

We can often misinterpret everyday situations as a threat or something to be scared of which falsely activates the fight or flight response. The key is to recognise the symptoms when they occur eg. heart beating faster and use these physical signs as a way to know you need to try and find a way to calm your body and mind back down.

What physical sensations occur in your body?
Write them around the image below



Temporary Stress

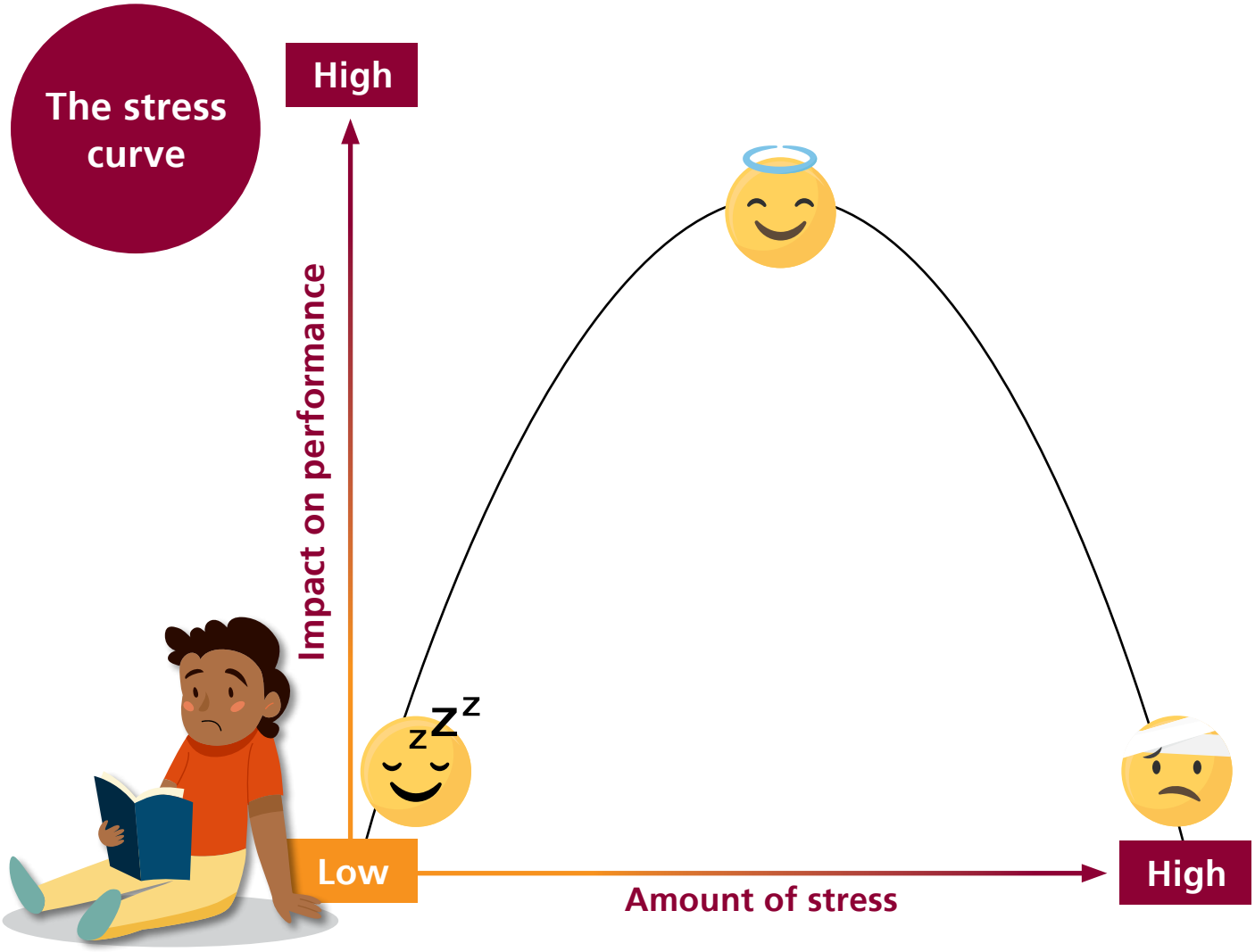
Stress can be really motivating, can make us stay on track. However, if we have too much stress it can affect our concentration.

Don't lose sight of the fact that there is life after exams, your exams are only a short period of your whole year and best of all you have all summer to look forward to once they are over.

Remember:
A little bit of stress can be a good thing as it motivates us to knuckle down, work hard and think faster and more effectively.

But exams can make stress levels get out of hand, which can stop us from performing our best. So, it's important to address it and get it back under control and most importantly once you've done an exam, try to forget about it. There's nothing you can do about it, and worrying won't change your mark.

When you are feeling stressed, try to check in with yourself and work out where on the stress curve you are feeling. Do you feel full of energy and ready to revise? or do you feel full of stress and in the need to re focus and take a break?



Diet, sleep and exercise

Snoozing!

Sleep is an essential part of your physical and mental wellbeing. It allows you to concentrate better and to store things you have learnt that day, improving the efficacy of your studying and revision for exams.

Most young people need 8 to 10 hours sleep per night!

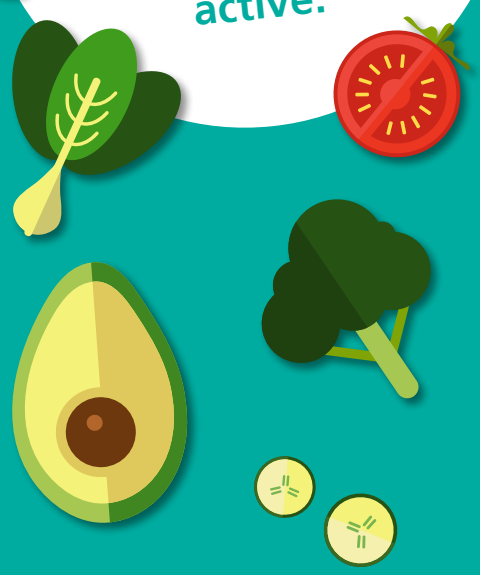
- Get into a good routine. Have a regular bedtime and waking time, even at the weekends. Sleeping in at the weekend disrupts your sleeping pattern because it has a knock on effect on what time your body is ready to sleep
- Have a bedtime ritual to give your body a sign that it is time to settle and fall asleep
- Make your bedroom 'sleep friendly'. It should be cool, quiet and dark. Make sure your mattress and pillow are comfortable
- Take a warm bath before bed to help you relax and clear your mind
- Try to exercise regularly and go outside for some time every day. This can help you fall and stay asleep more easily.

A healthy and balanced diet is important to keep your body healthy and your mind active.

Consuming!

Eating a range of healthy foods will help you to concentrate, be more productive, have more energy and improve your mood.

Top Tip: Each day also try to rate your mood, sleep and energy levels on a scale of 0 - 10 (0 = Not very good and 10 = Excellent).



Moving!

Exercise is an important part of a healthy lifestyle in two ways: it helps keep your body healthy by building muscle and by keeping your cardiovascular system and immune system strong and it is good for your mental health.

Exercising can help you to sleep better and to make you feel happier during and after sport due to the endorphins that are released.

The NHS recommends that young people up to the age of 18 should exercise for 60 minutes a day

How to achieve a balance?

Use this space to create your own revision timetable , make sure that you add time for breaks and activities you enjoy

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7am - 10am							
10am - 1pm							
1pm - 4pm							
4pm - 7pm							
7pm - 10pm							

Smart goals

When creating a timetable it is important to create **SMART goals**.
SMART Goals are:

S

Specific

What topic do I need to study?

M

Measurable

How much exactly do I need to study?

A

Achievable

Do I have the resources I need?
the time / the workbook / the notes

R

Realistic

Am I putting too much pressure on myself?

T

Timely

Ensure revision is spread out, not leaving it all to the day before.

Make time to enjoy yourself!

Create a list of things that you enjoy doing, this might be spending time with friends or family, watching TV or playing with a pet

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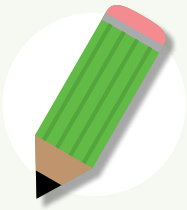
Problem solving



There are seven steps to help you to try and solve a problem you are facing. Why not give it a go below.

Step 1: Identify the problem you want to focus on

Choose a problem that you would like to try and solve

Step 2: Identify Solutions

Identify as many potential solutions as possible. At this stage nothing should be rejected, no matter how ridiculous some solutions may seem.

Step 3: Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of each solution

Make a note of the main advantages and disadvantages of each solution. This may include the possibility of being able to undertake the solution, the resources you have and how you feel about carrying it out.

Step 4: Select a solution

Now choose one of your solutions to try out.

Step 5: Develop a plan

The solution you have chosen may require careful planning.
Try to stick to the 'Four Ws' – what, where, when, with whom.

Step 6: Put your plan into action

Now that you have developed your plan, it is all about putting it into action.

Step 7: Review your plan

Maybe it worked a little or not at all. The advantage of problem solving is that other options always exist. If the plan worked then continue to use it, if not then pick another solution to try.

My learning style: Quiz!

There are three basic types of learning styles, visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic.

Most people tend to use one of their senses more than the others. This quiz will help you determine which of these learning styles you rely on the most.

Here are 16 questions that are related to the three main learning styles. Read the question and select the answer that is the closest fit.

After you answer each of these questions, calculate your total number of a's, b's and c's. Refer to the 'How did you do?' page for your results!

When you study for a test, would you rather

a	Read notes, read headings in a book, look at diagrams and illustrations	☐
b	Have someone ask you questions, or repeat facts silently to yourself	☐
c	Write things out on flash cards and make models or diagrams	☐

Which of these do you do when you listen to music?

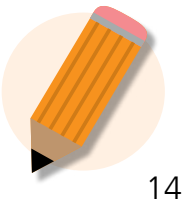
a	Daydream (see things that go with the music)	☐
b	Hum along	☐
c	Dance to the music	☐

When you work at solving a problem do you?

a	Make a list, organise the steps and check them off as they are done	☐
b	Make a few phone calls or text your friends or someone you think may know	☐
c	Make a model of the problem or walk through the steps in your mind	☐

If you are trying to concentrate what puts you off the most?

a	An untidy room	☐
b	Noises	☐
c	People moving about	☐



Having watched a film or television programme, what do you remember the most?

a The scenes and what people looked like ☐
b What was said and the music ☐
c What happened and how the characters felt ☐

How do you prefer to relax?

a By watching TV or reading ☐
b By listening to music ☐
c By doing physical activity such as sports or going for a walk ☐

In your English lesson you are learning a new story. How do you remember it?

a You draw pictures or a mind map ☐
b You tell the story to a friend ☐
c You make up actions as you go over the story in your head ☐

You are learning to count in another language, what is best for you?

a Looking at cards and posters ☐
b Singing the words ☐
c Playing a game with the words ☐

You need to remember a telephone number. What do you do?

a Imagine the pattern of numbers in my head ☐
b Repeat the numbers aloud ☐
c Learn the pattern the numbers make on the keypad ☐

In a history lesson you are learning new facts. Which is the best way for you?

a Watching a video ☐
b Listening to a tape or radio programme explaining what happened ☐
c Taking part in a role play and acting out what happened ☐

In a science lesson you are learning about the effects of a chemical. How do you prefer to find out?

a	By looking at a diagram	☐
b	By listening to your teacher telling you	☐
c	By completing an experiment	☐

When you meet new people how do you remember them?

a	Mostly on how they looked and what they wore	☐
b	Mostly by what they said or their name	☐
c	Mostly by things they did or how they made you feel	☐

In a PE lesson you are learning a new move on the trampoline. What is best for you?

a	You look at diagrams of moves on flash cards	☐
b	Your friend explains how you do it	☐
c	You let the teacher support you through the movements so that you can feel how to do it.	☐

You have made a cake before with help. This time you want to do it on your own how do you do it?

a	You follow a recipe	☐
b	You ask someone to tell you what to do	☐
c	You just get started and remember what to do as you go along	☐

If you have to learn a list of facts/things in order, which is easier?

a	You read over the list several times	☐
b	You make up a song or rhyme	☐
c	You act or dance them in a sequence	☐

Now add up how many A's, B's and C's you got.

Number of A's		Number of B's		Number of C's	

Go to the next page to find out which learning style you are!

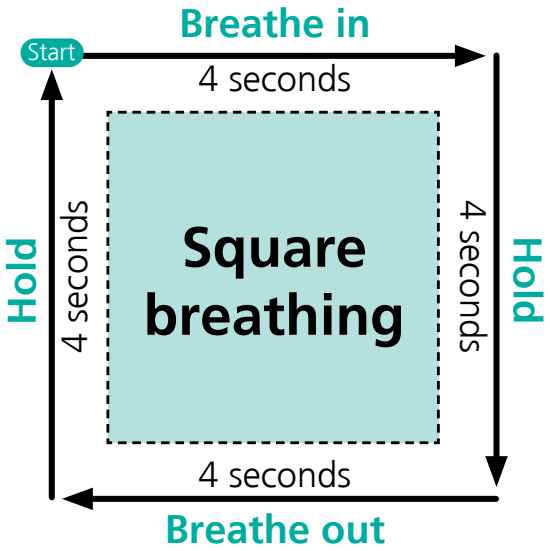
How did you do? Quiz answers!

Mostly A's Visual learner	Mostly B's Auditory Learner	Mostly C's Kinaesthetic Learner
Visual learners learn best when information is presented in a written language format or in another visual format such as pictures or diagrams.	Auditory learners learn best when information is presented in a spoken language format.	Tactile / Kinaesthetic learners learn best when they can use their sense of touch and can move about.
Study Tips!	**Study Tips!**	**Study Tips!**
• Create diagrams and concept maps that use visual symbols to represent information • Include illustrations as you take notes in class • Use highlighter pens of contrasting colours to colour code different aspects of the information in your textbooks • When using flashcards, limit the amount of information on a card so that you can form a mental picture of the information • Watch videos about topics you are studying in class • Working a quiet place free from visual distractions • Write things down you are trying to learn.	• Participate in study groups in which you can talk things out • Try using a recording device in lessons or when reading your textbook so you can listen to the information as much as you like • Work out problems aloud • Repeat facts and definitions of words over and over to yourself with your eyes closed • Try studying with a friend • Create musical jingles or songs to remember information • Look for books on tape or other audio materials when learning about a subject • Be certain that your study place is free of auditory distractions.	• Be physically active while you study. Walk back and forth as you read the information out loud • Study in short blocks of time with frequent but short breaks • Do something physical as you study such as tapping a pencil or squeezing a stress ball • Use your finger as a guide while reading • Act out things you have to learn • Construct models of things you have to learn whenever possible • When trying to memorise, try closing your eyes and writing information in the air. Picture the words in your head • Make use of the computer, touching a keyboard will keep your mind active.

Relaxation

We can use relaxation methods to help calm strong feelings and re focus our minds to the here and now.

Try these techniques to help you relax!



Square breathing

Step 1: Starting at the top left hand corner of the square, sit upright and slowly inhale through your nose for a slow count of four. Pay attention to the feeling of the air filling your lungs.

Step 2: Hold your breath for another slow count of four.

Step 3: Exhale slowly and deeply through your mouth to the count of four. Feel the air leave your lungs.

Step 4: Hold your breath for the same slow count of four before repeating this process until you feel calm.

Grounding

When you begin to feel strong emotions, it is important to bring yourself back to the here and now, by distracting your mind.

Try using your 5 senses to name five things you can see, four things you can hear, three things you can feel, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste.

When doing this try to notice things that you hadn't previously seen or give a brief description.

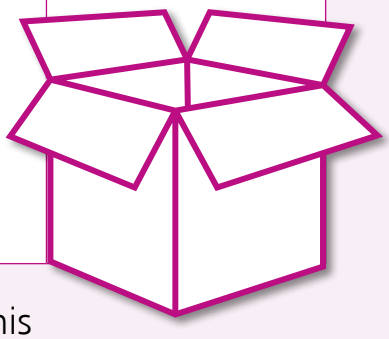
The Self Soothe Box

Try making your own box

A self soothe box is a useful tool to use when you are feeling lots of emotions including sadness, anxiety and anger. It is personal to you and can be kept throughout your life!

Here are some ideas on what to include in a self soothe box.

Sensory Items	Photos	Hobby items	Notes	Relaxation
Things like: fidget cubes / spinners or stress balls. These items can help restlessness.	Pictures of loved ones / friends / pets etc. These can help to remind you of your close relationships and who is around to support you.	Things like: music, books, games, colouring, books. These can help to relax and distract you.	Supportive notes from yourself or people in your support network. These can help provide reassurance and place things into perspective.	Things like: breathing and other relaxation techniques, that you may have found useful.



We recommend finding a shoe box and taking time to decorate this how you like, to make sure it's personal to you. Collect together items that are meaningful to you, or you know will be helpful. Make sure to keep it somewhere you can easily access it.

Why not have a go at making your own?
Write some ideas below of what you would include…

....

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....

....

Progressive muscle relaxation

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position

Shut your eyes if you're comfortable doing so.

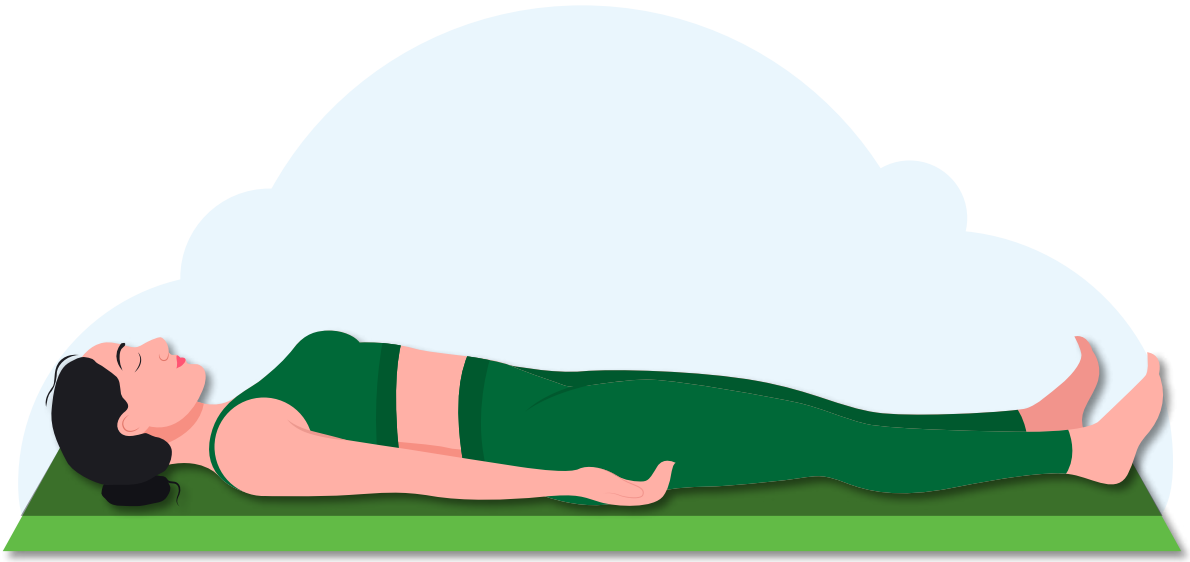
During this exercise pay special attention to the feeling of releasing tension in each muscle and the resulting feeling of relaxation. The idea of this technique is to intentionally tense each muscle, and then to release the tension.

Let's practise with your feet.

1. **Tense the muscles in your toes by curling them into your foot.**
   Notice how it feels when your foot is tense. Hold the tension for five seconds.
2. **Release the tension from your toes. Let them relax.**
   Notice how your feet feel differently after you release the tension.
3. **Tense the muscles all throughout your calf. Hold it for 5 seconds.**
   Notice how the feeling of the tension in your leg feels.
4. **Release the tension from your calf.**
   Notice how the feeling of relaxation differs.

Follow this pattern of tensing and releasing tension all throughout your body. After you finish with your feet and legs, move up through your torso, arms, hands, neck and head.

When you have finished slowly bring yourself back to the here and now, opening your eyes and stretching your muscles.



Handy exam and revision hacks!

Revision hacks!

Plan your revision.
Switch between subjects to avoid becoming bored. Use Red, Amber or Green to colour code your confidence on the topics you need to cover. Start by revising the red topics, when you feel more confident with these move to amber topics, then the green.

Set yourself a timer.
Use a timer to help you stick to your revision timetable, I will revise maths for 30 minutes. These timers will let you know when it's time to take a short break.

Smellivision!
Spray yourself with different scents for each topic you revise (including your clothes, revision cards etc.), when it comes to sitting your exam spray yourself with the same scent. The scent will trigger your 'smell memory' and will help you remember things you learned associated to that scent.

Exam hacks!

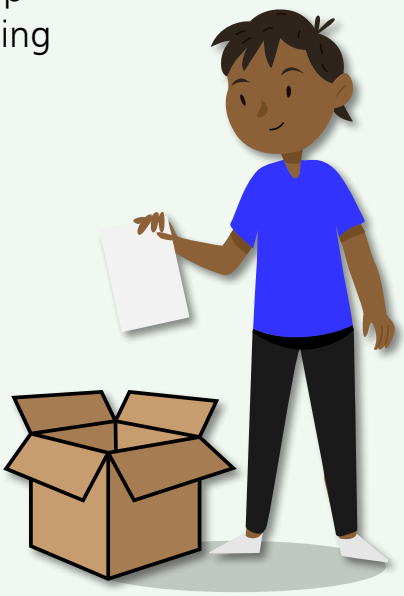
Read through the questions.
During the exam, have a calm read through the exam paper to find a topic you know well. Start by answering that question, to bolster your confidence, then move on to the trickier stuff.

Breathe
Remember your breathing techniques to calm your brain and body.

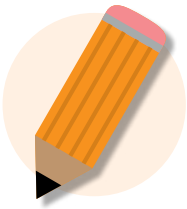
Sleep.
Get a good night's sleep the night before an exam, this will help concentration the next day. Try taking a calming bath or watching your favourite film the evening before.

Bin it!
Keep a box or suitcase in the corner of your room. Every time you complete an exam remove all revision items or books and place them in the box. Do this for each subject.

As you place items in the box you'll be able to see the change in achievement and how close you are to reaching your goal (end of exams!), once all your exams are finished screw your timetable up and place it in the box.



Keeping a positive mind



It is normal to have negative thoughts during stressful situations, like during exams. Positive affirmations are positive thoughts we can use to raise our self-esteem and support us when our thoughts are negative.

I CAN do this

I am doing my best and that is enough

If negative thoughts arise, write them down in the table below and try to create a positive alternative to challenge that negative thought.

Negative thought	Positive alternative
"I'm going to fail my exams"	"I will be proud of myself if I try my best"

If you have tried the strategies in this booklet and are still worried about exams, please speak to your school as they will be able to give you some more support.

Useful websites and numbers

SPEAK UP, GET HELP

Do you need urgent help with your mental health?

CALL 111

Call 111 and select a mental health option

HOPELINE247
0800 068 41 41

Are you, or is a young person you know, not coping with life?

For confidential suicide prevention advice contact HOPELINE247.

Call: 0800 068 41 41
Text: 07860 039 961

www.papyrus-uk.org

THE MIX
Essential support for under 25s

Essential support for under 25s. Get advice about relationships, drugs, mental health, money and jobs.

0808 808 4994
4pm to 11pm Monday to Friday

One to one chat and message, visit
www.themix.org.uk

LISTENING EAR
someone to talk to

A charity to help those who've been bereaved, suffered loss or experienced separation.

0151 488 6648
www.listening-ear.co.uk

YOUNGMINDS
fighting for young people's mental health

www.youngminds.org.uk

kooth

www.kooth.com

SAMARITANS

116 123

childline

0800 1111

Additional info

We have other workbooks available.
Please ask your local mental health support team.

We really appreciate your feedback to help us improve our service for you.
Please fill out a short survey once your have completed this workbook.

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