

After Exams

‘What will I do if I don’t get the results I was hoping for?’

- Reflect. ‘Failing’ exams does not make you a failure. You may have to take a different route to achieve your goals but setbacks can increase resilience and lead to unexpected and exciting opportunities. Take time to experience your emotions instead of making a snap decision.
- Explore other options. Resitting an exam, repeating a year, appealing a grade, entering clearing, taking a gap year or considering different courses, careers, apprenticeships and internships are just some of the options available to you.
- Ask for some support. Discuss your disappointment with those around you. Consider who you can contact for more advice; a teacher or tutor, a careers advisor or service.
- Care for yourself. Regardless of your results, you’ve worked really hard and this achievement should be rewarded. Practice self-care by planning something positive for results day.

Further Support



Anxiety UK
Text Service 07537 416 905
Info line: 03444 775 774
www.anxietyuk.org.uk



Good Thinking
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Anxiety & Exam Stress

What is anxiety?

We can feel anxious when we are worried, or afraid. Anxious thoughts and feelings are often linked to fears about something that is happening, or might happen in the future. It's normal to feel anxious sometimes, especially when we are going through stressful life events or changes.

However, anxiety can become a problem if we have anxious feelings that:

- Last a long time
- Are out of proportion to the situation
- Feel so strong that we start to avoid situations and events cause us to have panic attacks, or make us feel out of control
- Stop us from leading our normal lives

When we struggle with anxious feelings we can become overwhelmed with worry, panic or fear. Sometimes we can over analyse situations or excessively worry about them.

What are the symptoms of anxiety?

Like most animals, we have evolved to protect ourselves from dangerous situations. Sometimes, when we feel afraid or anxious, our mind tells our body that we are in danger, and our body reacts automatically. This is called “Fight, Flight or Freeze” response.

When our body responds in this way it releases hormones called adrenaline, and cortisol. These hormones help us to run (flight), fight or freeze. This can be useful if you are in a dangerous situation. They make our heart beat faster in order to pump blood to the parts of our body that need it the most. However, sometimes we experience this automatic response to anxiety when we don't need to run away, fight or freeze. In these situations, this release of hormones can cause some of the symptoms of anxiety, including panic attacks.

What is a panic attack?

When we experience panic attacks, symptoms of anxiety can occur very quickly, sometimes without warning. These symptoms can include:

- A fast, racing, or pounding heart beat
- Feeling faint or dizzy
- Shaking Limbs
- Shortness of breath
- Feeling sick
- Having chest pain
- Feeling like you aren't connected to your mind, body or the world around you

Experiencing a panic attack can be very frightening. It can make us feel like we are going to die, faint or that we are losing control of our body or mind.

What can I do to help myself when I feel anxious?

Here are some ideas of other things that you could try that might help.

- Speak to someone you trust. Talk about your worries with somebody who you know will listen and who may be able to help.
- Try to take control of your worries. Give yourself a set time each day to think about your worries so that when they come into your mind you can reassure yourself that you will have time to think about them later. Writing them down when they come into your mind, and keeping them in one place, for looking at later, may be helpful.
- Take care of your physical health. Getting enough sleep, eating well and staying hydrated can keep your energy levels up. This can help you to manage when you are feeling anxious. Getting regular exercise can also help.
- Breathing exercises. Controlling your breathing can help you feel more in control when you are feeling anxious, or experiencing panic.

Treatments for Anxiety

If your anxious feelings are becoming overwhelming or difficult to manage you should go and speak to your doctor for advice and support. Your doctor might suggest trying:

- Talking Therapies – Such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), or Counselling. These therapies can help you to understand what is causing your anxiety and give you techniques to manage your symptoms of anxiety.
- Medication – Medication can help to manage the symptoms of anxiety. Your doctor will work with you to find out which medication will suit you best. Your doctor might also suggest a combination of medication and talking therapy.

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Coping with exams

For most people, exams are stressful. Whether you are worrying about your workload, anxious about performing or fearful about the future, it's not unusual to feel this way.

When under pressure our bodies respond by producing adrenaline - the 'fight, flight or freeze' hormone. While this reaction is perfectly natural, and often necessary, too much adrenaline can cause unwanted symptoms such as sickness, dizziness and headaches. Stress can lead to trouble sleeping, a loss of appetite and can also affect our mood causing us to feel irritable, unhappy and even hopeless.

You may hear people say 'it's not the end of the world' but for some young people it can certainly feel like it is.

Before Exams

'What can I do to reduce stress before exams begin?'

- Organise your workload. Prepare for your exams by setting yourself realistic targets to work towards and finding a revision style that suits you.
- Pace yourself. Give yourself plenty of time and revise in short bursts. Remember to take regular breaks between study sessions.
- Talk with family, friends, tutors or teachers - share your worries with anyone that you find supportive.
- Recharge by drinking water and fuelling your body with healthy food. Exercise can also help to release some of that extra exam tension.
- Rest. Make sure you are getting enough sleep and spending time relaxing. Try breathing techniques and practice mindfulness to keep calm and refreshed.
- Socialise with friends. Remember that you have a life outside of studying. Allow yourself some time out with others to have some fun!