

5. Action Plan to Counter Exam Stress

Expect the Presence of Stress Hormones:

- We need stress hormones to be attentive and ready for the challenge of exams. However, if stress stays around for long periods, you can do something about it.

Physical Exercise:

- Keep going to the gym, walking, cycling etc.
- Exercise helps switch off the production of the stress hormones, relaxes tense muscles, enables us to think more clearly, and provides time when you are not concentrating completely on exams.
- It doesn't have to be strenuous or overly time consuming; try walking vigorously from your accommodation to university.

Sleep:

- Get as much sleep as you can.
- Try to resist working late into the night fearing there are not enough hours in the day to study effectively.
- It is important to protect your sleep hours as the right quality and quantity of sleep is essential for our physical and emotional health.
- Leave space between revising and going to bed so you don't take exam pressures with you.
- Have some time for yourself before going to bed – talk to friends, listen to calming music, use relaxation techniques, read a book.

Relaxation Techniques:

- Find a relaxation technique that works for you.
- [Consider attending our Meditation Group](#), you might also want to try the MP3 downloads on our website.

Hobbies and Interests:

- Spend time on interests not related to your course or exams; allow yourself a night out with friends or a few hours at the weekend to relax.
- This will allow you to realise there is life beyond exams and help you return to study feeling more refreshed.

Reward Yourself:

- Exam preparation is tough – give yourself a reward every few days like watching your favourite programme or eating your favourite food – try including it as a part of your revision timetable!

Support Networks:

- Take time out to talk with friends and family.
- Arrange to meet in natural breaks such as during lunchtimes or evening meals.
- Agree to not talk about exams. This will allow you to think about other concerns and interests.

Plan Accordingly:

- Know how you study best and plan accordingly.
- Be honest and realistic about how long you can effectively concentrate for, 45 – 60 mins, and allow short (10-15 min) breaks between each period of study.
- This helps build a 'wall of knowledge' with each study period being a brick in the wall. [Or try the Pomodoro Technique.](#)

Time Management Skills:

- [Look at the training available from Skills@Library](#)

Alcohol and Caffeine:

- Avoid large quantities of alcohol and caffeine as a means of dealing with stress or keeping going.

Diet:

- Often, during stressful periods, we are tempted to reach for the fast food like pizzas, chips and chocolate.
- Your body, however, needs the restorative power of proteins, complex carbohydrates, vitamins and fibre.
- See also Headstart Card 7 on Food and Mood.

[Visit the Student Counselling and Wellbeing Website for helpful online resources on Exam Stress](#)