

STUDY STRATEGIES

Dealing with stress before a test

Prepare your body and mind

1. **Ensure you drink enough water:** Research shows that information flows more freely between brain cells when they are well hydrated. Researchers say that drinking water may also calm nerves, while those who became thirsty during test time could be more easily distracted.
2. **Have enough sleep** You must start the process with at least a full night's sleep between you and the exam. Your brain needs time to subconsciously digest everything you've put into it, so you cannot try to cram it all in an hour or two before the exam. The best time to start the process is between the morning and early afternoon of the day before your exam, a good 24-36 hours prior to the start of the test.
3. **Eat breakfast** The Food and Nutrition Action Centre notes that missing breakfast can cause visual problems and slow memory function, while eating a full breakfast leads to fewer errors and quicker figuring in number-related tests.
4. **Exercise** plays a vital part in counterbalancing the stress responses produced in our bodies by having to meet deadlines and exams.
5. **Mindfulness** Being mindful means paying attention to the present moment, exactly as it is. It is hard to be anxious if you are completely focused on the present moment – what you are sensing and doing RIGHT NOW?

A Few Simple Mindfulness Exercises

Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery but now is a gift that's why they call it the present!

"Be Present"

When you catch yourself being caught up in worries about the future or guilt and regret about the past, just notice that it is happening and simply and kindly say to yourself, "Be present." Then take a calming breath and focus on what you are doing right now.

"Three Senses"

Another helpful mindfulness trick is simply to notice what you are experiencing right now through three senses – sound, sight, and touch. Take a few slow breaths and ask yourself:

- What are three things I can hear? (clock on the wall, car going by, music in the next room, my breath)
- What are three things I can see? (this table, that sign, that person walking by)
- What are three things I can feel? (the chair under me, the floor under my feet, my phone in my pocket)

Think of these answers to yourself slowly, one sense at a time. It's impossible to do this exercise and not be present and mindful!

Dealing with anxiety e.g. before a test or a task is due

1. Find somewhere comfortable to sit
2. Make sure you are comfortable
3. Close your eyes if comfortable
4. Concentrate on you breathing by counting your breath in e.g. 6 seconds
5. Hold the breath for 3 sec
6. Breath out for 7
7. Repeat this with the aim to slow the breath and deepen the breath. This increases the oxygen to the brain and slows the heart rate.
8. Now focus on how your body feels
9. Start at the feet and clench them then relax
10. Continue focusing on your breathing
11. Repeat concentrating on hands face arms legs etc.
12. Relax the whole body
13. When you are ready, come back, slowly move your fingers, open your eyes, and get up slowly

If students are feeling overwhelmed with work, they can see their classroom teacher or Mrs Esparraga.

If they feel like they'd like some additional support regarding their wellbeing, direct them to their year advisor, or to book an appointment with the school counsellor.