



Exams: Managing stress and study tips

Hyndland Secondary

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Statistics

- NSPCC's Childline reported carrying out 3077 counselling sessions about exam stress to young people in 2016.
- While waiting for their exam results, one in five young people said that the worry was affecting their health, one in six said they had experienced panic attacks and more than one in 10 said they were unable to sleep at night. (Prince's Trust, 2013)
- 92 per cent of young people feel anxious about revision and exams. (cited in Young Minds, 2016)

'First class' student died after taking anti-depressants bought online to combat exam stress

Student > News

Exam results 2015: Parents are 'causing stress and worry' in pupils waiting for their GCSE and A-level grades, survey finds

The Student Room representative advises parents and students to 'research ahead of time and be prepared for all options to avoid panic'

Exam stress affecting children according to the NUT

'Teacher stress and exam pressure: why I blame Michael Gove for the mental health crisis in schools'

Natasha Devon

18th January 2016 at 18:02

stress
emic
ers.

Reasons?

Martyn Denscombe (2000) suggests 4 common reasons for exam stress:

1. Educational and Occupational consequences associated with outcomes - competition for places/ employment
2. Self-esteem with regard to outcomes and grades
3. Judgement from parents and friends in relation to performance
4. Past experiences of exams

Is it like any other stress?

- What is stress?

Impact of stress - Stress can be positive when it motivates and energises. However when it gets too high it can impair the ability to preparation and impair speed of memory retrieval.

Just like any stress it is brought about by our **thoughts around the stressor**. In exam stress those **thoughts** revolve around our exams and the meaning we give to them.



So...

If I don't do well then
I'm a failure/my
parents will be
disappointed in me

Panic/ cortisol levels
increase so can't think
clearly

Feel worried, anxious,
desperate,
overwhelmed

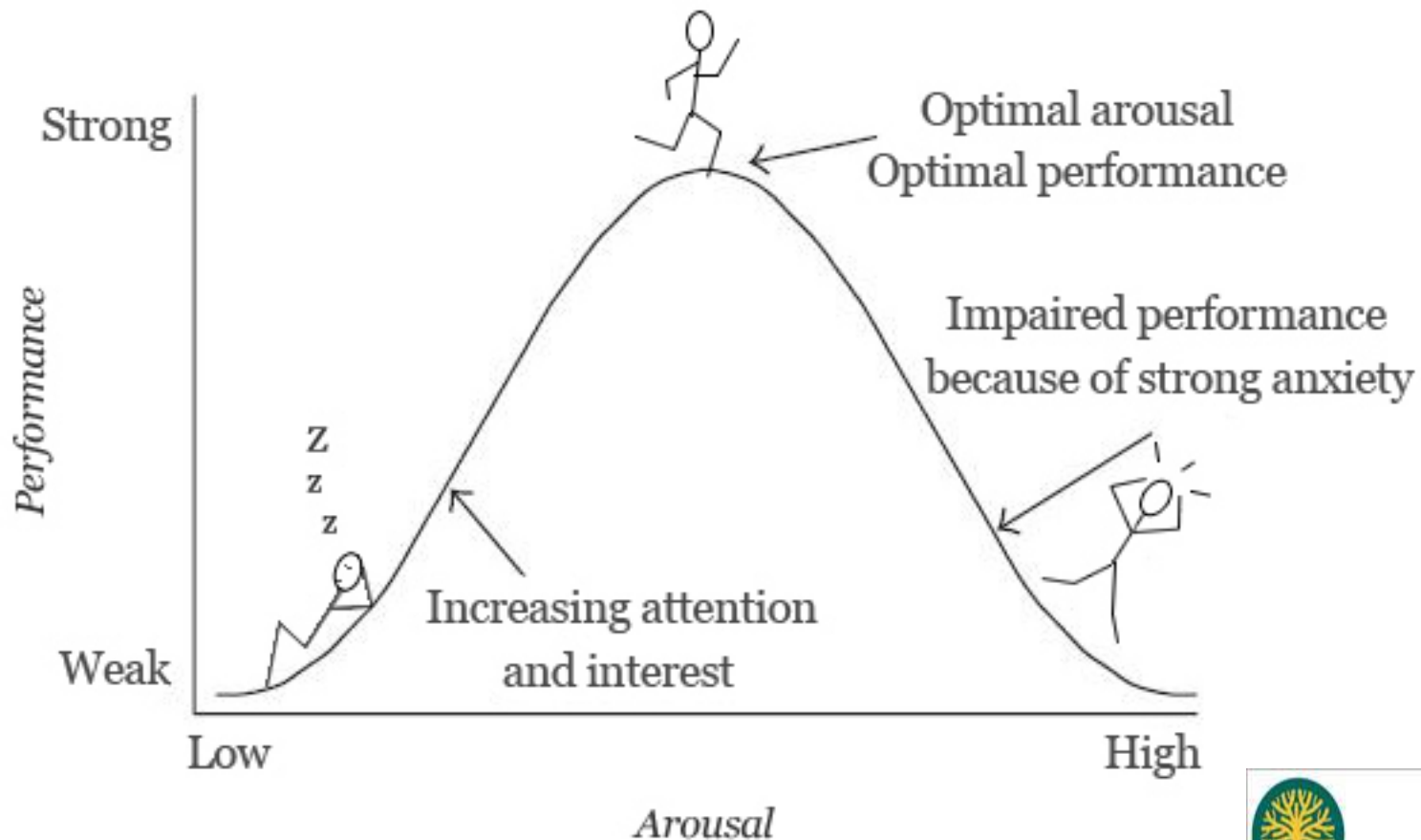
Or alternatively-

I can only do my best/
my parents are proud
that I have worked hard

Calm, able to think
clearly

Nervous, excited,
energised

Relationship between anxiety and performance



How to identify stress

Like other forms of stress there are 'tell-tale' signs for parents and teachers to look out for:

- Irritable
- Worrying a lot
- Not eating/ over-eating
- Not sleeping
- Depression/ low mood
- Hopelessness about the future

American Psychological Association

- Negative CHANGES to behaviour
 - including changes to interactions with others
- Reports of feeling sick
- Listen and translate



What can young people do?

- Work smarter, not harder. Have a study plan so that you find time to revise all subjects & not just the ones you like
- Recognise how long you can hold your concentration and plan breaks accordingly.
- Eat and sleep well 8 – 10 hrs.
- Take exercise
- Talk to your friends and family about how you feel
- Don't multi-task – focus on one thing at one time
- Keep it in perspective- there are many different pathways that can lead to your goal

What can parents do?

- Encourage healthy eating- not too much caffeine or junk food
- Encourage sleep- you think better when you are not tired. Check out sleep patterns – is it hard to fall asleep or stay sleeping? 8 -10 hrs optimum.
- Provide a quiet place to revise.
- Help to create a study plan
- Talk about exam stress
- Rewards for working hard
- Keep perspective



Some relaxation ideas

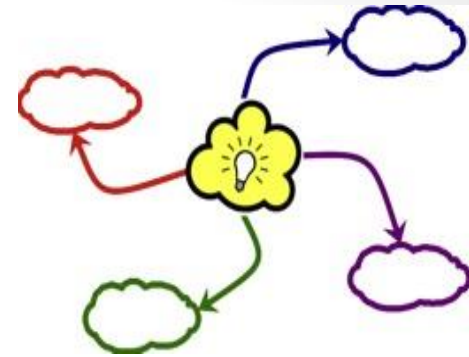
- Encourage **exercise**- produces 'happy' hormone! Currie (2010) pupils reported they were more focused and able to study following participation in exercise
- **Meditation** and **yoga** found to significantly reduce academic stress and improve wellbeing (Venkataramana et al., 2008)
- **Mindfulness** – paying attention to the present moment
 - research has indicated that mindfulness practice is associated with various positive outcomes related to well-being (e.g., Hofmann et al., 2010)

Some useful websites:

- <http://stopbreathethink.org/>
- <https://insighttimer.com/>
- <http://ayemind.com/young-people-intro/>
- Apps– smiling mind and take a break



Study tips



- Know what you need to focus on
- Learn the same information a variety of ways
 - Simplify, summarize, and compress the information.
 - Mind maps vs bullet points
 - Visual memory – image association (house)
- Mnemonics
- Listening to information as well as reading
- Music
- Revise and re-cap
- Organise time and work – have a study plan
- Self testing

Practise answering exam questions!

Study sessions

Several short study sessions revising the same topic will work better as the information goes into long term memory

Session 1

- What are the key questions you need to know?
- Scan through the information
- Note down any other questions
- Read the text again and highlight key pieces of information and make notes
- Decide whether you have enough information



Session 2

- Go back to the list of key questions from session 1 – can you answer them?
- If not go back through the process
- The more you do this the more likely the information will be stored in long term memory



**KEEP
CALM
AND
GOOD
LUCK**