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# Preparing for exams & controlling exam anxiety

Outcomes:

State what anxiety is and describe the symptoms

Explain ways to help keep exam anxiety under control



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# What is anxiety?

With a partner create a definition of the word anxiety



Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe. Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life.

*What might make you experience anxiety?*

# Can anxiety ever be good?



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It depends...

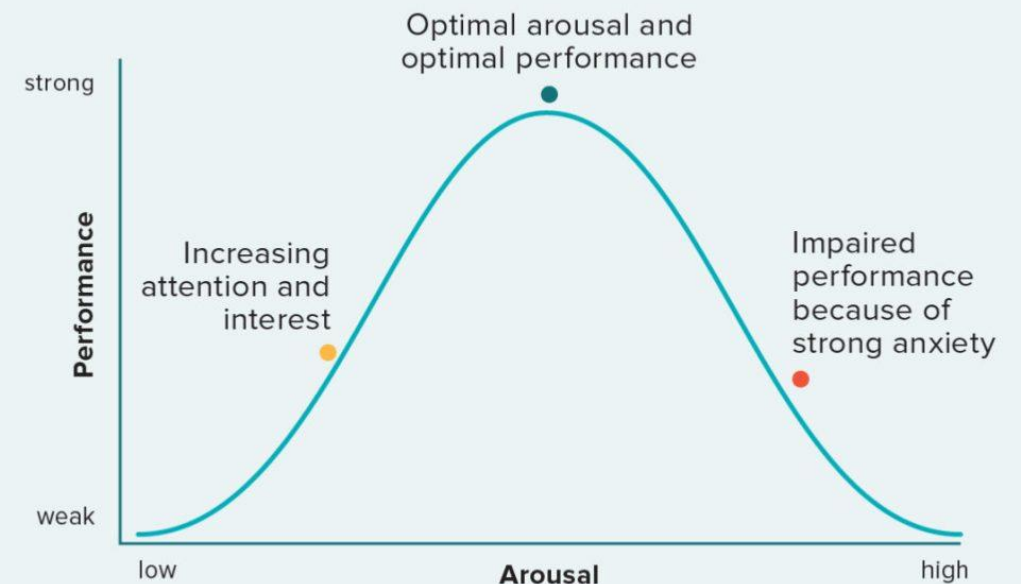
Some stress and anxiety is needed for optimal performance

Too little and you are not focused, uninterested, unmotivated

Too much – impaired performance

*Where on the graph would you have placed yourself during June mocks?*

YERKES-DODSON LAW BELL CURVE

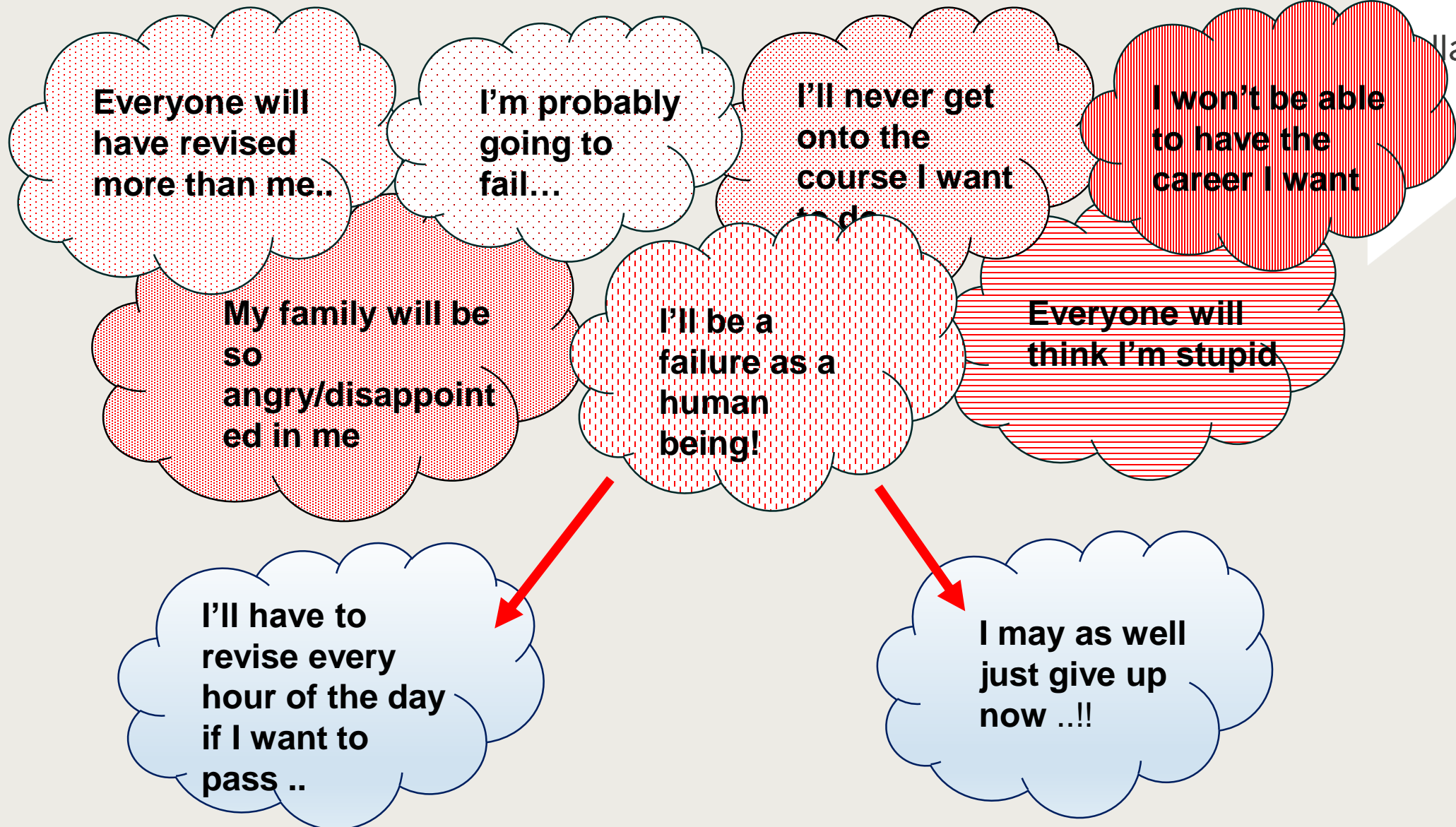


# Unhelpful 'catastrophic' thinking

*(Can lead to 'burn out' and worse performance)*



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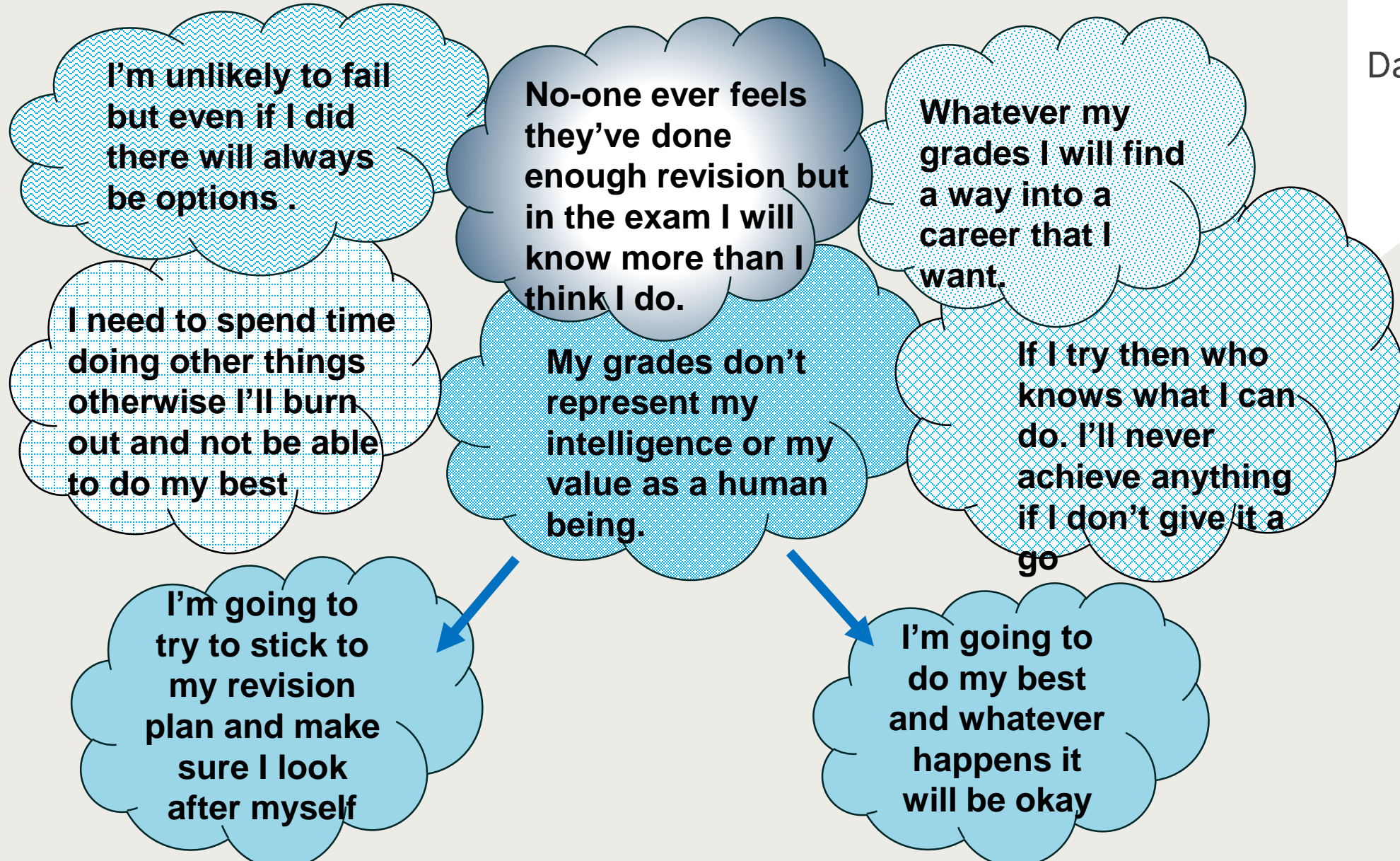


# Helpful Balanced & Realistic Thinking

*(will lead to less stress & better performance)*



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# The physical signs of anxiety



When you're feeling anxious or stressed, your body releases stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol.

These cause the physical symptoms of anxiety, such as an increased heart rate and increased sweating. The severity of symptoms will vary for individuals and between individuals.

Physical symptoms can include:

- a pounding heartbeat
- breathing faster
- palpitations (an irregular heartbeat)
- feeling sick
- chest pains
- headaches
- sweating
- loss of appetite
- feeling faint
- needing the toilet more frequently
- "butterflies" in your tummy





# Sources of exam anxiety



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Cognitive help: the 'what is happening in our head'

- How we perceive and process things

Behavioural help: the 'what is happening in our environment'

- How we react to the environment we are in

By changing the thought we change our behaviour. Changing our behaviour changes the environmental reaction, consequence. The power of positive thought!

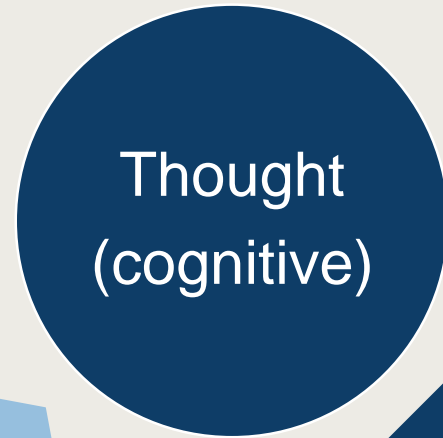
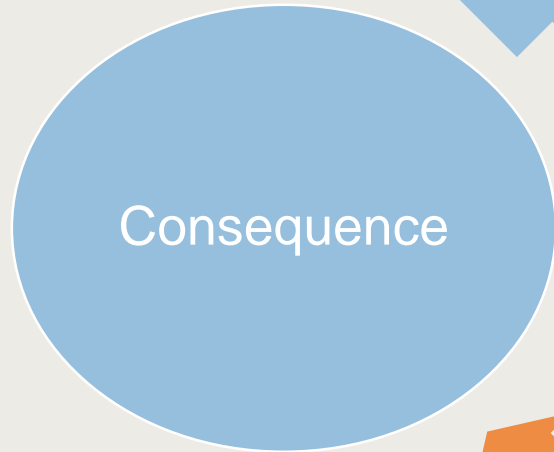


anxiety: something bad is about to happen  
me: what do you mean  
anxiety:



# Are you in a vicious cycle?

Which usually reinforces our....



Gives us a....



Which has a....



Which leads to a....



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# Watch this video

[Tackling Exam Anxiety.mp4](#)



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# Help to manage signs of anxiety



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- Self-care - diet, exercise, sleep, positive activities
- Relaxation techniques eg controlled breathing, progressive muscle relaxation
- Mindfulness – be in the present moment
- Express your feelings - talking, journaling, physical activity/ exercise, creatively (art, music, making something..)
- Reduce unnecessary life stress – what can I reduce/put to one side for now?
- Helpful and realistic thinking - challenge negative thinking and use a balanced approach to look at the facts and the evidence, rather than the worst that could possibly happen.
- Plan – use a revision timetable
- Create balance – plan in time to do other things within your timetable

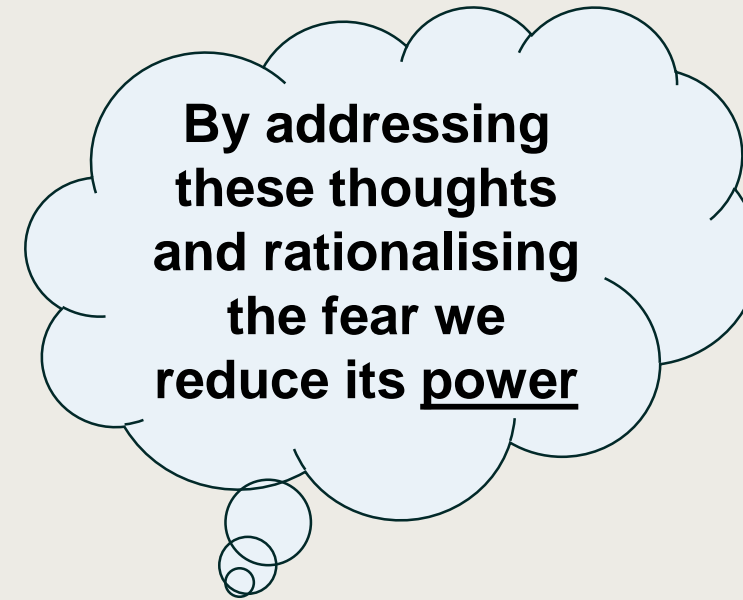
**STOPP strategy**  
Another strategy you can practice is 'STOPP'

- **STOPP**
- **Take a breath**
- **Observe**  
What am I thinking?  
What am I reacting to?  
What am I feeling in my body?
- **Pull Back**  
Put in some perspective  
See the bigger picture  
Is this fact or opinion?  
How would someone else see this?
- **Practise what works**  
What is the best thing to do for me,  
for others, for the situation?

# How likely?

It is time to rationalise your thoughts

- How likely is something to happen?
- What will you do if it does happen?



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Example: You've failed one exam out of 100 you've taken so that's actually a 99% pass rate which sounds far more positive

# Feelings and emotions



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## Acknowledging and naming emotions

- Do they have a colour?
- Do they have an image?
- Do they have a name?

(we don't have to be able to say them out loud)

Are they positive or negative?

How do they make you feel?



# Self esteem: I like myself



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Self-esteem is how we value and perceive ourselves. It's based on our opinions and beliefs about ourselves, which can sometimes feel really difficult to change.

Task 1: one of the hardest things to do is be positive about ourselves

- List the things you are good at
- What do you like about yourself?
- What are your happiest memories?
- Who are you grateful for?



Task 2: What do others say about me?

- Write one positive comment about each member of your form
- Your form tutor will collate them and give you an envelope containing yours

# Top tips for the day of the exam



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- Leave yourself plenty of time before the exam so you don't need to rush
- Have breakfast
- Avoid last minute cramming (night and morning before)
- Take a drink
- Avoid comparing exam prep and stress levels with friends
- Take a moment to breathe before beginning and at intervals in the exam
- Take time to read through the paper and write a brief plan/notes
- Give yourself time limits for questions and stick to them
- Don't look around at what everyone else is doing
- Avoid post exam over-analysis
- Have a reward planned in for after the exam finishes







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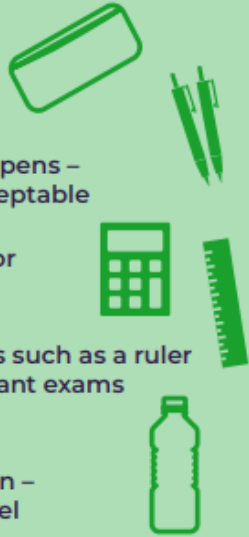


### Before sitting your exams, ensure you know:

- the date, time and location of your exams – you might find it helpful to write this information in a calendar or planner
- who to contact at school or college in case there's an emergency that makes you late or unable to sit your exam

### What you will need:

- a clear pencil case
- at least two black ink pens – blue pens are not acceptable
- an approved calculator for relevant exams
- appropriate apparatus such as a ruler or protractor for relevant exams
- a clear water bottle if you wish to take one in – it must not have a label



If you have any questions about the format on the day, please ask your teacher or exams officer.



### What you cannot take into exams:

- any type of phone
- revision notes
- any type of watch (this includes analogue, digital and smart watches)

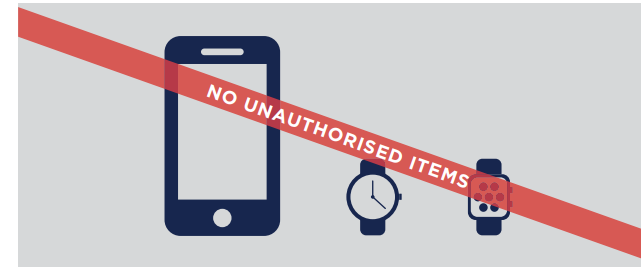


### Other important information:

- Listen carefully to the invigilator's instructions which will be specific to your exam. If you are unsure of anything, please raise your hand and wait for the invigilator.
- Fill in your details on the front of your answer booklet.
- If you need additional answer sheets, raise your hand and wait for an invigilator who will provide you with one. Remember to add your details to this booklet too.
- If you need to use the toilet or feel unwell, raise your hand and wait for an invigilator who will escort you from the exam room.
- Make sure you stay silent – talking to a fellow candidate could result in disqualification from all your exams.

## NO MOBILE PHONES NO WATCHES

NO POTENTIAL TECHNOLOGICAL/WEB  
ENABLED SOURCES OF INFORMATION



Possession of unauthorised items, such as a mobile phone or any watch, is a serious offence and could result in

# DISQUALIFICATION

from your examination and your overall qualification.

AQA	City & Guilds	CCEA	OCR	Pearson	WJEC
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### Warning to Candidates

1. You **must** be on time for all your examinations.
2. **Possession of a mobile phone** or other unauthorised material is **not allowed** even if you do not intend to use it. You will be subject to penalty and possible disqualification from the exam/qualification.
3. You **must not** talk to, attempt to communicate with or disturb other candidates once you have entered the examination room.
4. You **must** follow the instructions of the invigilator.
5. You **must not** sit an examination in the name of another candidate.
6. You **must not** become involved in any unfair or dishonest practice in any part of the examination.
7. If you are confused about anything, only speak to an invigilator.



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# Scan & read the information



Joint Council for  
Qualifications CIC



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# Exam day plan



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When we feel prepared we are less anxious

What will I do before school?

Where do we wait?

What will I tell myself when I open my exam paper?

What will I do if my pen runs out?

What if I need more paper?

What if I need the toilet?

Have a read through the frequently asked questions document.

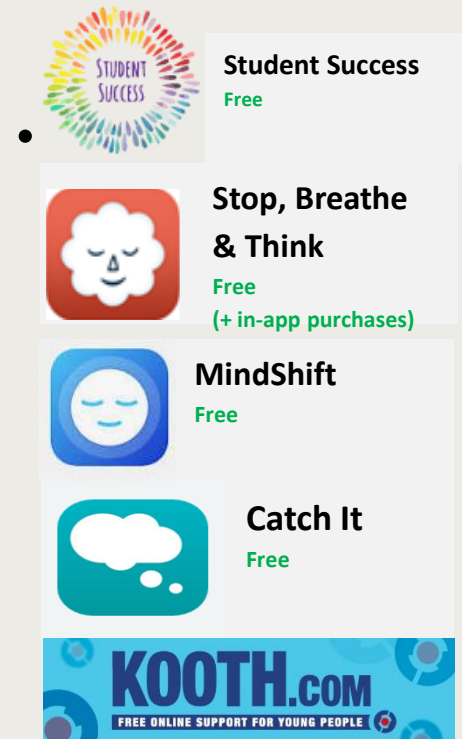
Any other questions?

# Online resources

## Articles

- [Exam Stress | How To Deal with Exam Stress | YoungMinds](#)
- [Exam Season: A stress-free study season - Source Magazine](#)
- **Mindfulness meditation for managing exam stress** [For Students: Dealing With Exam Stress | Scott Langston,](#)

## Free Apps



Helps you assess yourself and prepare for the right career by setting goals and a pathway to achieving them.

A meditation and mindfulness app to help with stress, worry, anxiety and sleep problems; check-in with how you're feeling each day, follow guided meditations do yoga and watch videos.

An app to help you understand, reflect and manage your anxiety, worry panic and/or phobias. It provides you with the tools to face your anxiety rather than avoid it.

This app teaches you how to look at problems in a different way and turn negative thoughts into positive ones.

Free, anonymous online counselling support. Create an account to access 1:1 counselling sessions, messaging chat, discussion boards and a range of helpful resources.