



Health & Care

# Keeping your stress in check at exam time

## It's that time of the year again!

Yes, exams are just around the corner. And while you might think you're the only one getting stressed, you're not alone.

So how can you keep those stress levels in check, and get stress working for you, instead of wearing you out? The University of Melbourne Peer Health Advocates and Bupa have put together our top tips for managing exam stress.

01



### Feed your brain & body well.

When you're busy studying, eating well can go straight out the window. If you're into snacking when you study, try swapping out things like chips and chocolate for some fresh fruit, vegie sticks or raw unsalted nuts.

02



### Catch those Zzzzzs.

Most of us know we need good quality sleep to function properly, but it can be easier said than done at exam time. Try sticking to a sleep schedule of the same bedtime and wake up time each day. There's plenty of self-help resources available if you need inspiration: [www.services.unimelb.edu.au/counsel/resources](http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/counsel/resources)

03



### Be active.

Regular exercise can help take your mind off anxious thoughts, improve sleep, increase your energy levels and fire up those 'feel-good' chemicals in your brain. It doesn't take much - doing a small amount a day consistently can help.

04



### Stay social.

You might think cramming study is the best tactic during exams. But maintaining some life balance is more important than ever in preventing burnout. Call a friend, lunch with mates, or check in with family regularly. Staying in touch can help give you a boost.

05



### Plan & prepare.

Boring as it sounds, being well-prepared can help you feel on top of things and keep stress levels in check. Start with planning out your study schedule, including breaks.

06



**Schedule downtime.**

Give yourself permission to do something you enjoy after your study is done e.g. spending time in nature, treating yourself to your favourite meal or hanging out with mates.

07



**Watch your thinking.**

Negative thinking can undermine opportunities for success before you even get started! Stay focused on your strengths and be kind to yourself if you sometimes make mistakes.

08



**Set daily intentions.**

An intention is an affirmation that you say to yourself to help set the mood for the day. Doing this can help keep you focused and positive, whatever the day throws at you. Keep it simple, with something like, 'I am going to make healthier choices today', or 'I will nail my studies this afternoon so I can hang out with my friends tonight'.

09



**Start a mindfulness practice.**

Mindfulness can help focus your thoughts and shift your attention from the constant pressure of 'doing' to the joy of 'being' in the moment. Try a mindfulness app or self-compassion guided meditations and exercises: [www.self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#exercises](http://www.self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#exercises)

10



**Keep it real.**

Realistic goals can help keep the pressure down. Try creating personal best goals to help you focus on the process of exams, rather than just the outcomes or marks you want to achieve. Decide on small, practical 'mini-goals' that you can carry out comfortably to help you reach your ultimate goal of passing (or smashing) your exams!



**It's okay to ask for help**

Asking for help is a good thing - don't be afraid to seek help or support. You can chat with your friends or family, speak to your tutors or an Academic Skills Adviser if you need help with your studies, or talk to a counsellor. It always better to get help early, rather than struggle in silence.

**UoM support services**

- **Academic skills support:** [www.services.unimelb.edu.au/academicskills](http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/academicskills)
- **Counselling and Psychological Services:** [www.services.unimelb.edu.au/counsel](http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/counsel)
- **Health Service:** [www.services.unimelb.edu.au/health](http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/health)
- **Service Directory:** [www.services.unimelb.edu.au/finder](http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/finder)



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