

# Beating Your Hendon School Exam Stress

We recognise that at this time of year, many of our students find themselves weighed down by expectations. Comparisons, parental expectations and peer pressure can cause students to feel stress and anxiety. The term 'exam stress' can be broadly defined as a feeling of total anxiety over the performance in exams, the results and reaction of parents and friends etc.

During this time, students should learn how to breathe properly. We are currently teaching the Year 11, 12 and 13 students the '7 7 7' technique – breathe in deeply for 7, hold your breath for 7 seconds, and breath out for 7 seconds, and as you are doing so, try to visualise a place where you feel happy and secure. Students are encouraged to breath like this as many times during the day as possible. It is a technique called 'Heartmath' and it is, quite simply, a quick way of getting oxygen to the brain and for inducing a sense of calm.

Here are our exam tips to minimise the stress:-

- Develop a timetable to monitor your progress. Make sure you allocate adequate time for fun and relaxation as well.
- While revising a subject, always practice writing. Do not just read. If you are reading then take notes and make your reading active.
- Working on your writing for the purposes of the exam is a helpful actual simulation of the examination itself. Plan your revision and complete it in time. This will give you a sense of achievement and build your confidence.
- While revising, vary subjects and their difficulty to make sure you don't get bored or disheartened. Set realistic targets of what you can achieve in the time available.
- Work on your memory techniques. Spend as much time on **recall** as on reading. Practice by writing answers as you would do in the exam. This will help you remember the important points when you answer each paper.
- Practising writing answers under exam conditions really helps. This will help your body clock adjust the examination time and conditions.
- Take time out to prevent mental fatigue. Take a short break as soon as you notice your mind losing concentration. Stick to activities that do not break your study momentum.
- Avoid television and loud music.
- It is important that you know how to relax. Remember your mind and body perform at its best only if you get adequate rest.
- Maintain a regular sleep pattern. Do not alter your sleeping cycle. It is not important whether you study late or get up early, as long as you get into the habit of being at your most alert at the same time as that of the exam. Try

and stop working an hour before bedtime. You will find it helpful to do some muscular relaxation which is particularly effective in relieving stress.

- What to eat – food rich in vitamins and proteins such as green leafy vegetables and fresh fruits are a must. The nutrients will help your brain stay sharp. Avoid food with high fat content – no more KFC and McDonalds! Do not drink too much coffee, tea or fizzy drinks. Caffeine will keep you up and reduce the clarity of your thinking. Remember too much caffeine can bring on panic attacks.
- No distractions! Keep all unimportant issues at bay. If you have a boyfriend/girlfriend then try to be disciplined in relation to the times that you see them. Right now, your only real focus should be **you** and your exam success. Stay away from distractions which could cause loss of concentration or unwanted anxiety.
- The power of positive thinking! Try to spend time with people who have a positive effect. It will rub off on you. Avoid negative thoughts, such as ‘everyone else seems better organised, while I am struggling’. Challenge such negative thoughts with positive thinking, for example, I have done well in exams before and I can do this if I try my best.
- Memory techniques really help. Some people make up rhymes. Some people have secret codes, some people even use song to learn formulas etc. Always try to link concepts together. Try and use all of your senses in relation to remembering things. Come up with vivid pictures, feelings and images to bring information together.
- Teach it – find someone who doesn’t understand the topic and teach it to them. This exercise forces you to organise your ideas and to explain a challenging concept.
- Leave no islands! When you read through a text book, every piece of information should connect with something else you have learned.
- Mind maps and visual drawings always help. Mind maps help you to connect ideas and to think deeply around concepts. Try and explain your thinking through a mind map. It is a great way forward for the visual learner.
- Don’t force. Forcing information during the last few moments is incredibly difficult and incredibly inefficient. Become an expert by slowly interlinking ideas as they come to you so studying becomes a quick recap rather than a first shock attempt at learning.

And finally...

Remember all learning is simply in your head. Having beautiful notes and a perfectly highlighted text book doesn’t matter if you don’t understand the information in it. Your only goal is to understand the information and work hard on how you are going to be tested on it.

Don't be afraid to get messy when scrawling out ideas on paper and connecting them in your head. Time is the greatest gift that you can give yourself. This is the right time to study as hard as you possibly can. The very best of luck, may the force be with you.

This is your journey. Make it exciting and enjoy it!!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin McKellar". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

**Kevin McKellar**