

Before the Exam

It's hard to panic if you are feeling relaxed. Try to establish a pattern of revision that gives you time to relax, especially last thing at night. Experiment until you find the best way of relaxing to suit you - a long bath, exercise, listening to music, a relaxation exercise (Try out the Smiling Minds App for Iphones or Androids).

Be healthy: physical and emotional exhaustion, means your body and mind are less able to tolerate stress and anxiety. Aim to:

- get adequate rest (even if your mind is telling you to keep studying),
- eat well and drink sufficient water, exercise, and
- give yourself 'guilt free' time for social, enjoyable and relaxing activities.

Relaxation and positive stress management techniques can be learned and acquired with practice. Knowing how to relax is invaluable in the lead-up to exams, and on the day itself. If you think you are under-performing in exams due to exam anxiety or panic, do think ahead and seek help. It is vital to learn techniques to help regulate your arousal level, such as slow breathing and progressive muscle relaxation.

It helps to feel as well-prepared as possible – being over prepared means that the responses become more automatic and are less affected by anxiety. Prepare by using our [Learning Skills](#), attending class regularly and completing assessments, doing practice tests or exams from previous years, and approaching your lecturers to clarify the exam format.

As well as thinking about the subjects you are revising, it can be useful to pay attention to practical aspects of the exam. Find out where it is scheduled to take place and how long it will take you to get there. It's a good idea to go and look at the room/building so that it feels more familiar. Make sure you know the rules and regulations about what you can take into the exam room etc.

Put yourself into a positive frame of mind by imagining how you would like things to go. Imagine yourself turning up for the exam feeling confident and relaxed - try to picture it in as much detail as possible. Rather like rehearsing for a part in a play, this can replace negative, anxious thoughts with more positive ones.

Practice standing up to Catastrophic Thinking: Thoughts have a direct link to anxiety levels. Negative or catastrophic thinking regarding exams will increase anxiety. Try some of the following:

- Become aware of your negative or catastrophic thinking – jotting your thoughts down on a piece of paper can help you notice patterns in your thoughts and/or observe when your thinking is not as helpful.
- Look for the evidence for the negative thought. Challenge it. Question it. Is this thought really reality?
- Try positive self-talk or thought stopping techniques (see Anxiety Stopping Techniques)