SLEEP and EXAMS

**How to stay calm, and sleep well at night, during exam time**

Almost everyone gets stressed around exam time and this may be impacting your ability to have adequate amounts of sleep. As you know, our bodies need around 7-9 hours of sleep each night to function well (and more if you are under 18), but this may be easier said than done during periods of stress.  Worrying about exams can make it hard to get to sleep and stay asleep, so you wake up feeling tired and unrefreshed.

During exam time the mind is often full of anxious thoughts. “Will I pass?” “Will I remember everything for the exam?”  These types of thoughts can affect our ability to concentrate and learn new information. What’s more, come bedtime these thoughts churn through the mind, keeping us alert and unable to relax.

While some stress is motivating and can help focus our attention, too much stress can be overwhelming. So, how do we keep stress in check? How do we accept some level of anxiety during exam time to keep us energized, yet not let it interfere with our ability to study or sleep at night?

Keep stress low with the following study tips

1. Keep a regular routine during the day, eating three meals at regular times during the day
2. Do some exercise each day, such as going for a swim, a walk or stretching in the lounge room.
3. Go easy on any caffeinated drinks (coke, coffee, tea, energy drinks). You might feel like they help you to focus but more than two a day can tip you over into anxiety and interfere with your sleep.
4. Eat lots of vegetables, salads and fruit and avoid too much junk food.
5. Once you’ve stopped studying stay off all other electronic devices, such as your phone, laptop, or TV to help you unwind before bedtime.
6. Keep the bed a place for sleep, so it is best not to bring study books, laptops or phones into the bed with you.
7. Take regular breaks from study and do some fun activities to keep balance in your life.
8. Reach out to friends, family and teachers for help when you need it.
9. Stay focused on your goal for the exam by putting aside unhelpful thoughts about failing. Try writing the negative thoughts down and imagine what you would say to a friend who had the same fears. If anxious thoughts persist, talk to a student counsellor or a teacher you trust about how to deal with exam anxiety.
10. Set up small rewards for yourself to enjoy when you have finished sections of study.  Take a shower or bath, go for a walk, shoot some basketball hoops, or enjoy a cup of tea and chat with a friend, etc.