

While a small amount of stress can be beneficial, giving you the motivation that you need to accomplish essential tasks, excessive levels of stress can prove debilitating. It can be extremely difficult to cope with stress, especially if you're about to sit important exams, such as one of our interpreting exams.

Many job roles are also stressful, including Interpreting and Teaching Assistant roles and stress can cause serious problems if it is not handled correctly.

The good news is that there are effective ways to cope.

If you're feeling under pressure, here are a few top tips to help you manage your emotions and some helpful techniques to put into practice so that you can cope more easily during challenging times.

What Is Stress?

Stress is the body's natural response when exposed to pressure. There are many different life events and situations that cause stress, including when you're about to sit important exams. Often, stress is triggered if we're about to experience something unexpected or new, or if we feel as if we cannot control a situation effectively.

Everybody deals differently with stress. How well you cope may depend on your genes, your personality, your life experiences, and your economic and social situation. However, one thing is certain – from time to time, everybody will experience it.

Whenever we become stressed, the body begins to produce stress hormones which trigger the natural "fight or flight" response, activating the immune system. The purpose of this response is so that we can respond rapidly in a dangerous situation, and it can actually sometimes be useful since it can assist us in pushing through pain or fear to achieve a goal.

Once that stressful event has come to an end, the stress hormones usually return to their normal levels with no lasting side-effects. Unfortunately, though, excess stress does cause negative effects and can leave the body in an ongoing state of "fight or flight".

As a result, we can become overwhelmed and struggle to cope. In the long run, it can also impact on both mental and physical well-being.

Why Does Stress Occur?

Stress can occur for many reasons. Separation, divorce, bereavement, loss of a job, unexpected financial difficulties, or work-related problems can also result in stress. Of course, sitting exams is one major cause of stress for students who are all too [aware](#) of the importance of success.

Everybody reacts in different ways to situations, and what one person finds stressful, another person may not. Yet virtually any event may potentially cause heightened stress levels. In fact, for some people, simply thinking about one of their stress triggers causes distress.

If you suffer from a mental health condition like depression, you may be more prone to suffering from stress.

Also, previous experiences in your life may impact how you react to stressful events. A traumatic event like an accident may trigger ongoing stress, while people who have a challenging job are also far more likely to experience higher levels of stress.

Top Techniques To Deal With Stress

If you're facing a large amount of stress due to your upcoming exams, or indeed, for any other reason, you need to develop some effective techniques to deal with the symptoms that you're experiencing. Here are a few strategies to put into practice.

Don't forget to breathe. By setting a few minutes aside each day to practice some mindfulness techniques like breathing exercises, you can calm your body's response to stress and help to bring your attention back to the here and now.

Taking time out for mindfulness also gives you the opportunity to think rationally through your anxieties, to get rid of any unhelpful patterns of thought, and find new and more effective ways to focus on your goals.

Sleep, exercise, and eat properly. Stress can often leave you struggling to rest, eating poorly, and lying around on the sofa without moving. Yet, all those things can increase your anxiety symptoms.

If you can get at least eight hours of sleep each night, eat a healthier diet packed with slow-release carbohydrates and lots of water, and take plenty of exercise each day, you'll begin to feel better.

Set yourself realistic goals. Stress often comes because you feel that you're trying to achieve an insurmountable goal. It's important to be realistic about the time you have available and what you can expect to accomplish in that time.

If you accept your current situation and work within those boundaries, your productivity can be maximised without you burning out.

Pace yourself. If you panic before a stressful event like an exam, you'll find that you can't achieve as much as you hoped. If you're experiencing panic at any point, try to slow yourself down, take some deep breaths, have a drink of water, and then return to what you're doing, breaking it down as much as possible into manageable chunks.

This is often all you need to see the rational solution to a problem when you can't spot it straight away.

Talk to somebody. There's nothing to feel ashamed about if you're struggling with stress. Everybody feels this way from time to time, so don't be afraid to ask for help.

Approach a friend, family member, tutor, or a healthcare professional about the way you're feeling – a problem shared is a problem halved.

The Benefits Of Stress

Although a lot of people believe all stress is bad, that isn't actually the case. There are good types of stress and bad types of stress. Chronic stress – the negative type – will dominate your thoughts every day and that can result in tiredness, anxiety, depression, and hypertension, so it's obvious that you should take action to prevent this kind of stress and resolve it as quickly as possible when it does arise.

However, positive stress in moderate doses is something to be welcomed. The human body is actually wired to cope with normal, everyday stressors, and once your natural defences have kicked in, you find that your overall well-being improves.

It can improve your cognitive function. If you're feeling stressed before your exams, don't worry too much. That panicky feeling can potentially boost the performance of your brain. The reason for this is that moderate levels of stress can strengthen the connections between the neurons inside the

brain, boosting attention span and memory so you can be more productive.

Working under stress may help you get more done and achieve more highly – something that is extremely beneficial in an exam situation.

Stress can also help to boost your immune system and prevent you from getting ill. The fight or flight response not only protects you from perceived threats, but it also helps to keep infections at bay by producing interleukins and giving your immune system a boost.

Stress makes you more resilient overall and helps you to cope better with everyday life situations. There's no doubt about it that moderate stress can make you a stronger person who can confront a variety of challenging situations and overcome a range of problems without crumbling.

So, as you can see, although stress is never a very pleasant experience, it can be harnessed for positive purposes if you understand the basics of how it works and take steps to prevent that short-term moderate stress from turning into long-term chronic excess stress that can prove to be very damaging.

How to Use Stress For Good

Although many people who are going through a stressful situation feel as if they're the only ones who are going through a tough time, it's important to recognise that stress is actually very common, and everybody experiences it at some point in their lives.

Of course, that doesn't make it any easier to handle whenever you experience it, but knowing a few tips and tricks to help you deal with it more effectively will enable you to try to harness its power for good rather than allowing it to eat away at your mental and emotional well-being.

Facing important exam situations (or indeed, any other type of stressful situation) can be extremely nerve-wracking, there's no doubt about it. But if you take the right approach and focus on the things that matter most rather than allowing the strong emotions to overwhelm you, you can come through to the other side with no lasting ill-effects.

In fact, you can even learn how to use that fight or flight adrenaline response to become more productive, more efficient, and more successful so that you can achieve more than you ever imagined.

By learning a few techniques to cope when your stress levels rise, you'll be setting yourself in good stead to cope with other challenging situations that you will no doubt face in the future.

Conclusion

By learning a few helpful mindfulness techniques and putting them into practice when the going gets tough – by having realistic goals and expectations, and by adopting a long-term healthy lifestyle with plenty of exercise, sleep, and a sensible diet – you can give yourself the very best chance of combating stress in the most effective way while also using its full potential to bring you advantages. It is more about controlling your stress levels, not necessarily getting rid of stress all together.