

Do not stress about exam stress!

Virtually everyone feels under some stress during exam time. After the exams your stress level and health will return to normal – yes exam stress is seasonal! Some stress is good for you as it will motivate you to prepare for the exam (revise, practice questions, etc). Too much stress will reduce your ability to focus and concentrate. When you are so stressed that your ability to perform well in the exam suffers there are several things that you can do to get back in control.

How you are coping with the stress of exams?

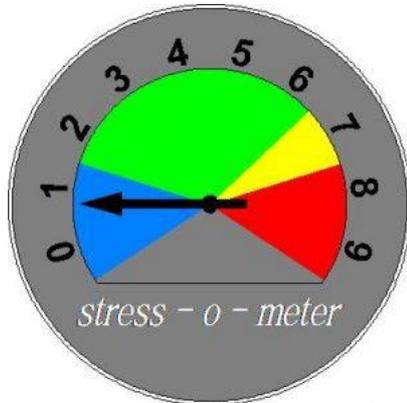


Read about each section in more detail.



These zones are **all fictitious** and are there simply to give you an idea of the amount of stress that is normal and when you might need to make a few adjustments.

Zone 1 – Stress – what stress?



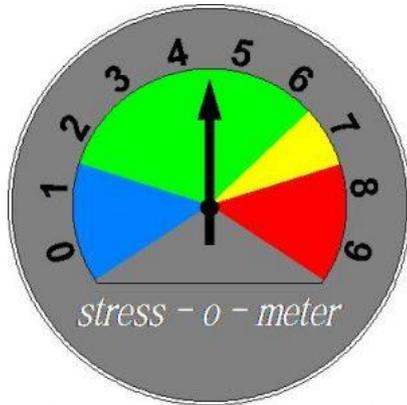
Zone 1 – too chilled?

Signs that you are in the chill zone:

- When you spend more time creating revision timetables than actually revising
- When you do a 'bit of revision' once a week – for half an hour – maybe
- Thinking that you might start revising next week

If you are feeling really chilled out and yet still preparing for the exam then continue as you are! Being chilled is good – being so chilled that you aren't bothering to do any revision at all is not ideal. You will miss out on achieving your best exam results. Enjoy the revision time and if you can – do some revision as well – it all helps!

Zone 2 - Nice Stress – safe zone



Zone 2 – safe zone

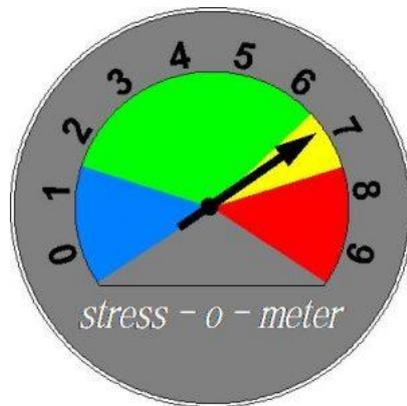
Signs that you are nicely stressed:

- You actually enjoying revising (sometimes!)
- You spend a few hours each day on revision
- You stop work before 10pm and chill before bed
- You sleep well and wake up in a good mood

In the safe zone you are concerned about doing well but not to the extent that it is affecting your health. Mild stress for a short time is good for keeping you motivated. Perhaps we could call it the 'challenge' zone – it's more of a challenge than a threat or something to get stressed over. Be aware of the signs of too much stress and take time to relax and look after yourself. This can be a good time for you to feel in control of your studies and revision – enjoy being responsible and working for yourself. Remember that you are working to get the best results from the exams coming up.

This is a case of trying to maintain a balance so that you have just enough stress to keep you clear-minded and focused. Focus on revising and learning the work ready for the exam and you will give yourself the best chance of getting good results. Once you start to focus on the **results** you will lose the ability to revise effectively. Effective revision is the only thing that you have control over that allows you to improve your grades! You may well move up and down in this zone – some days you will feel more 'stressed' than others. Stay in the safe zone – be aware of your stress levels and focus on preparation and revision. If you find yourself become more anxious check out the suggestions on 'de-stressing'.

Zone 3 – Feeling stressed



Zone 3 – feeling stressed

Signs of too much stress:

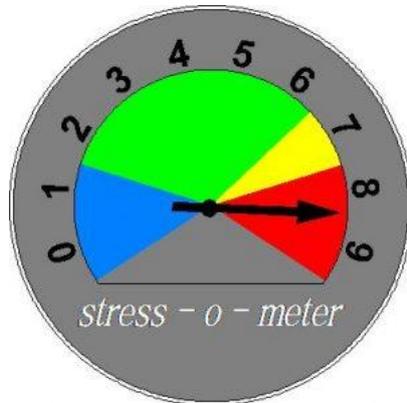
- You do not feel in control of the exam or your revision
- You are bothered about the exam **results**
- You have trouble sleeping
- You become irritable
- You have trouble focusing on your revision

Be **aware** of being stressed rather than getting annoyed with it. There are a few things to remember – first is that exam stress is temporary. After the exams you will return to your usual calm and peaceful state – whatever that means for you! Make sure that you are using the stress busting tools given on this website. Going for a walk for half an hour to an hour can make a big difference as your body is able to process stress hormones more effectively than when you are sitting still.

You need to try and reduce your stress level as this will affect your focus and concentration. Do not get stressed about being stressed! Talk to people who can support you – parents, friends etc. Take time to relax – which means you have to take a break from revising and do something completely different. Look through the stress busting tools on relaxing and 'de-stressing'. If you are still unable to reduce your stress level then get some more help.

Try and talk to your parents. Find out what their experience of exams was like. Sometimes we think that if we don't get good grades that we are letting them down. This is why talking to parents about how you are feeling could make a big difference. Although you might not think so they are more likely to be concerned about you than the grades you are stressing over. Talking about other people's experiences is good for distancing yourself from your own situation.

Zone 4 – Stressed out



Zone 4 – stressed out

Signs of being stressed out:

- Disturbed sleep – unable to get to sleep and then waking up at 4am!
- Focusing on 'what if...' instead of simply revising
- Stressed and irritable
- Unable to focus for more than a few minutes
- Stomach aches / headaches
- You will definitely know when you are in zone 4!

Exam stress is now affecting your ability to concentrate and has a negative effect on your exams. Just great! I hear you say – the last thing that you need! Do not panic! Feeling stressed is quite unpleasant and frustrating when you are in it. This is the time when other people might suggest that you 'keep calm and try and relax'. If this seriously winds you up and you feel like smacking them one you are definitely in zone 4! This is perfectly natural – it just means that your basic instincts – the primitive part of your brain, has taken over. Unfortunately this part of your brain is pretty useless at exams so you are going to have to get it to 'shut up' and 'go back to sleep'. Your stress is caused by the 'fight – flight' response and would be okay if the exam paper were going to physically attack you. As this is highly unlikely and there is no real threat of this we can tell it to go back to stand-by.

Please do not get stressed about my Stress-o-Meter!
It has no scientific basis and is entirely made up!



***Just be aware of when you are feeling stressed.
Then do something about it.
If that doesn't work – get some help.***