

Using Exercise to Help You to Cope with Exam Stress

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During this time of the year, you will feel pressured to spend long periods of time revising for your exams. Unfortunately, this generates significant amounts of anxiety especially for those who have not developed any coping mechanisms and those that lack mental toughness or resiliency. Evidence points to increase in mental health issues among exam class students around this time of the year. The most common physical signs of stress include sleeping problems, sweating, loss of appetite, poor concentration, reduced confidence and self-esteem. Symptoms like these are generated by a rush of stress hormones in your body.

Many are clear about the numerous physical health benefits of regular exercise, but have you ever stopped to think how exercise could influence your child's mental performance? Aside from providing a well-needed break from marathon revision sessions, when our bodies engage in movement, it triggers the release of various hormones and chemical compounds in the body. These hormones and chemical compounds all have very important effects on various brain functions. For example:

- Serotonin – involved in regulating sleep cycles and boosting mood.
- Dopamine – positively influences learning and attention span.
- Nor-epinephrine – affects motivation and mental stimulation.
- Coupled with an increased blood flow to the brain, this cocktail of hormones and neurotransmitters improves cognitive function and the ability to focus for longer time periods. This means higher quality revision sessions and a higher chance of hitting target results.
- Research also shows that exercise significantly reduces resting levels of the stress hormone, cortisol, allowing you to spend less time worrying and more time getting work done.
- If that wasn't enough, regular movement has also been shown to result in an increase in the size of the hippo-campus, a part of the brain involved with memory retention.

Top exercise tips before and during Exams

1. Little and often

It is normal that you will feel like spending a great deal of time sitting and revising for the exams. Unfortunately, revising for excessively long periods of time is isn't effective, so take regular brain breaks to stay productive. A simple walk to the shops or around the block will be enough to refresh you.

2. Develop a routine

A balanced routine of work and play is essential during revision and exam time. You might feel too busy but try to maintain a regular exercise schedule - aim to get active at least every other day. Let the endorphins released during exercise do the magic i.e. make you feel good – you must avoid stimulating activity just before bed, to give your brain time to wind down.

3. Know what works for you

Plan your exercise during periods when know you generally won't study. Some students work better in the morning, some at night – aim to plan your exercise around your study schedule so you won't miss out on valuable revision time.

4. Use your feet

If your school is close to where you live, why walk there instead of driving or taking the bus? A short walk before an exam helps you to relax and focus your thoughts.

5. EduMove Active Revision Programmes

EduMove active revision programme combine exercise and revision together to provide an exciting and de-stressing revision experience particularly for Kinaesthetic learners. Emerging research supports the EduMove approach for promoting learning and health outcomes. Please contact us for details regarding our EduMove Active Revision Programmes on info@edumove.co.uk