

HSC Problems

Beating exam stress

Exams are pretty much always stressful. But it's completely possible to manage some of the stress that's brought on by exams if you use different strategies. If there is stuff you're not strong on, or you're really stressed out, there are people who can help you.

Exams are a hassle

No one likes doing them, and cramming information into your brain over a short period of time is stressful. A bit of stress can get you going, but too much can make you exhausted, angry and annoyed.

Tackling exams

There are a whole bunch of things you can do to help you get through exams the best way you can.

Manage your stress

You'll be less stressed if you've got an idea of how the lead-up to your exams is going to look, so plan what you're going to study and when, and stick it up on the wall, or on your desktop. Break it down into manageable chunks and start, but it's far less stressful. Plan some break times and days off too!

Take the pressure off

Deal with pressure and expectations by realistically assessing how you think you'll go, and working to do the best you can. If other people's expectations are pressuring you, talk to them and try to get them to back off. If you're putting too much pressure on yourself, try to realise failure isn't fatal. It's likely that the worst that can happen is that you take it again, with a massive head-start from the work you've already done.

Do it together

There are other people studying for the same exam, and they probably don't like having to lock themselves away to study any more than you do. Get together with them and take the books outside from time to time. If you're not as strong in certain areas, it could help to talk to other students as well. If you are good at it, share the brain-wealth.

Go easy on the substances

All of them – cigarettes, coffee, alcohol, marijuana, Ritalin, Dexamphetamine and any other drugs. Any drug you think will help you study is actually a short-term fix that's probably make you feel much worse and cause you to underperform later.

Get enough sleep, eat good food, and keep moving

It's really important you look after your physical health when studying for exams. Make sure you're stopping to eat regular meals and try to set aside 30 minutes a day to do some exercise, even if it's just going for a walk. Having enough sleep is also really important.

If you're really stressed

If you're finding things tough, ask for help. It's your teacher, lecturer or tutors job to help you understand the subject, so if you're not understanding stuff, tell them and they should be able to help. If your study load or exams are driving you mad, there should be a counsellor at your education institution who can help with that as well.

What can I do now?

- Grab a notebook and start planning study and activity breaks
- Take regular breaks, it actually helps you study better
- Try practicing meditation to help you relax

At a glance for parents

- You don't need to be a subject expert to help your child prepare for the HSC.
- Make sure your teen is getting enough sleep.
- Good nutrition is vital.
- They can reduce stress by balancing study with physical activity, social life and other interests.
- Part-time work shouldn't be more than 10-hours a week.
- Remember there is an end in sight.
- Stay in contact with the school and speak with teachers about how to support your child.

How can psychologists help?

HSC pressure causes different symptoms in individuals. These can vary from physical to psychological.

- Physical symptoms include: sleep difficulties, nightmares, weight loss or gain, gastro difficulties, headaches, skin disorders, muscle and joint pain, hair loss, fatigue, eye sight difficulties, shortness of breath, tics, increase smoking, drinking, suicide ideation, heart palpitations, low blood platelets, incontinence, sweating, and fibromyalgia.
- Psychological symptoms include: depression, anxiety disorders, panic attacks, and disordered eating.
- A psychologist can assist with assessment and treatment of the above symptoms. A psychologist can also help managing problems associated with it such as: self-esteem and performance issues.