According to the Pew Research Centre, 61% of teenagers stress over getting good grades. For those of us taking the IGCSE’s or IB exams, these finals can be extremely stressful. Learning how to deal with this stress is important for one's quality of life, health, and performance on exams. The Loma Linda University states that the 5 most common factors that give in to exam anxiety include;

1. The fear of not living up to the expectations of people you care about.
2. Placing too much emphasis on a single test.
3. Feeling helpless and out of control.
4. Giving in to the anxiety after insufficient preparation.
5. Believing grades are an estimation of your worth.

As young students, we’ve been told to prioritize school work and to be good students, to help our chances to get into the best college and get a stable job. And that, most times, that can be overwhelming for teenagers. The impacts on mental health here can be severe. There will be moments in school life where students receive a failing grade or receive a score that doesn’t meet expectations. For many, this can cause feelings of disappointment, helplessness, and anger - all contributors to depression or anxiety. The coping mechanisms that teenagers develop can be very unhealthy, from substance abuse to dedicating excessive amounts of time to studying. But that’s where most teenagers cross the line of good study habits and begin overworking their limits. As in reality, doing this pushes students into an unsustainable work routine that can end up in even more disappointment. It can also lay the groundwork for even more mental health issues over the long term.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that there are many benefits to taking exams. It aids with memory, time-management skills and maximizes learning opportunities to benefit students in the long run. Sustaining good grades can lead to scholarships and opens many doors for a variety of career choices. For now, exams are here to stay and students should learn how to deal with the stress that comes with them.

Loma Linda University expresses that the best way to tackle test anxiety is by identifying what is causing you stress and then taking the time to eliminate these factors. For example, if you stress over exams because you believe their purpose decides your self-worth, realize that you are so much more than a piece of paper and that the aim of exams, in hindsight, is simply to help you focus on areas that you might not be as strong in.

Particularly as an IGCSE student, this academic year has included more exam deadlines than I have ever had, and therefore I have been stressing more often. I made the mistake of letting the stress build-up, so I felt disassociated with school. I proceeded to disengage in lessons and after-school clubs, and my mental health was at an all-time low. In order to improve my well-being, I responded to the stress by stepping out of class when I needed to take a break, and by talking to teachers I trust. I also gave myself more relaxation time.

I have felt that BISB has provided sufficient resources for our mental health such as offering check-ins with our mentor or the guidance counselor. Their use of platforms like ManageBac has made it easier to keep track of deadlines and assessments. Our teachers continually remind us that they can reschedule our exams if something comes up or is affecting our mental health. As a student, this reassures me and lets me recognize that our teachers usually try to prioritize our mental health.

It is completely normal to stress over exams, especially since we’re maturing into young adults. Exams tend to negatively impact our mental health, but that does not mean we should let them take over our lives.

Study hard, take mental health breaks, listen to your body and learn to prioritize your needs.

To learn more ways that you can have better control of your stress with exams, check out this [website](https://medicine.llu.edu/academics/resources/causes-test-anxiety). It explains the main causes of test anxiety and offers tips on how to eliminate those causes, to benefit your mental health.