**Managing exam stress**

Stress levels can be higher than usual around exam time. A bit of stress can help you to stay motivated and focused. But too much can be unhelpful.

Exam stress can be overwhelming. It can confuse and exhaust you. Having to revise a lot of information in a short space of time can be stressful. Not understanding course material may also add to your stress.

If it all seems to be getting on top of you, there are things you can do to keep calm.

**Keep a routine and take regular breaks**

It's important to have regular study breaks and make time for relaxation and exercise.

Practising [mindfulness](https://www2.hse.ie/mental-health/self-help/activities/mindfulness/) helps you focus on what's happening right at this moment.

Going for a walk, run, or to the gym is a great way to clear your head and can help you focus.

Watching your favourite TV show or going to the cinema are also good ways to take a break from studying.

[Stress - tips and self-help](https://www2.hse.ie/mental-health/issues/stress/)

[Physical activity and mental health](https://www2.hse.ie/mental-health/self-help/activities/physical-activity/)

**Limit caffeine**

Caffeine and energy drinks can give you a quick lift. But they're not good for you in the long term.

They can make you feel sick and can interfere with your sleep and your ability to concentrate.

**Manage expectations**

Pressure from other people around exams can be huge. This can be hard to deal with, especially from family and teachers. You need to remember that it's your life and your exam, with you in control.

**Tips to help you manage expectations**

* Stressful situations may cause you to worry too much and imagine the worst possible outcome. Base expectations on your past performance and doing the best you can.
* Put the exam in context. In the overall scheme of things, how important is it?
* Tell people what you realistically expect from your exams. Talk to them and find out what they hope for you. Tell them what you are thinking and feeling.
* Use the expectations of yourself and others to help you study.
* Ask for and accept support from those around you, especially family members.

If exams do not go as well as you hoped, there are always alternatives. It does not mean you are a success or failure.

Exams cannot measure these sorts of things. All they measure is how well you do on the day.

**Look after yourself**

It's easy to let exams get on top of you and forget to look after yourself. If possible, try to get good night's sleep every night. It's a good time to make an effort to eat healthily, making sure you eat plenty of fruit and vegetables.

[Eating healthily](https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-eat-well.html)

**Ask for and accept support**

If you're feeling overwhelmed, you might find it helpful to talk to a teacher or counsellor. It's also important to ask for or accept support from your family.

This support might be practical, like picking you up from the library. It could also be emotional support, including advice.

If you need to talk to someone outside the situation, you can call:

* [Childline](https://www.childline.ie/) on [1800 66 66 66](tel:1800666666)
* [Samaritans](https://www.samaritans.org/) on [116 123](tel:116123)

**Options for the future**

If you are doing the Leaving Certificate, getting the exam results you need for your first preference is great. But it's not the end of the world if you do not. There are often other ways to get into the area you are interested in studying and working in.

It may mean taking a year out and getting some practical experience or doing a further education course. You might consider repeating. If you do accept another offer, you may find that you like it or it suits you better.

**Leave the stress in the exam hall**

There's always a light at the end of the tunnel. Exams have a beginning and an end. The stress that goes along with them should end with the exam.

Once the exam is over, there's nothing more you can do about it. You should just try to relax afterwards.