

Handout for young people **Panic attacks and stress**

The following may help you to cope with, and reduce, stress.

- Take regular exercise
- Eat regular meals
- Take time to relax/play
- Ask questions if you are not sure about a new situation
- Avoid excessive caffeine intake, which can increase anxiety
- Learn a breathing relaxation technique – inhale slowly through the nose while counting silently to five, then exhale slowly through the mouth over a count of five
- Learn a muscle relaxation technique – tense, then relax all the muscles, starting with the toes and working up the body
- Rehearse and practice situations that cause stress, e.g. class presentations
- Break large tasks into smaller, manageable sections
- Challenge negative thoughts with a positive attitude
- Feel good about your successes
- Accept your limitations – we cannot always attain perfection
- Take a break from stressful situations, e.g. listen to music, get some fresh air or exercise, spend time with a pet
- Talk to someone you trust – friend, adoptive parent/carer, teacher, school nurse, social worker – they may help put the current problem in proportion. You may find that you want to talk about some thoughts and feelings from the past

Handout for carers and adoptive parents

Panic attacks and stress

The following may help a child or young person to cope with, and reduce, stress

- Monitor children's activity levels. Is stress affecting their health or behaviour?
- Monitor your own stress levels. Children will learn coping mechanisms from you
- Encourage the child to relax if they appear to be working too hard
- Talk with the child about everyday things to help them make sense of the work
- Be aware that children can sense tension in the household even if they do not know its cause, and will worry
- Unreasonable parental expectations or ambition will cause stress for children who do not share their goals
- Prepare a child for potentially stressful situations, e.g. changing class/school, visiting the dentist, a new baby, parental illness
- Does the child need some time to talk about their past?

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Coping with exams

Tips from your school nurse and Childline

Pamper yourself

- Remember that it's important to eat and sleep well
- This is an important time for you – try to talk to your family about how they can make studying easier for you, giving you space and quiet

Don't revise all the time. Take breaks to do things you enjoy and that help you relax.

Prepare for the big day

- Have a good breakfast
- Give yourself plenty of time to get to the exam room
- Make sure you know where and when the exam is to be
- Take everything you will need, e.g. pens, ruler, maths equipment, etc.
- Remember, mobile 'phones are not allowed in exam rooms
- Go to the loo before the exam starts

If you feel really anxious, breathe slowly and deeply while waiting for the exam to start.

Phew!

- Exams over? Pat yourself on the back – it's time to relax – you can't change anything now
- If you did well – congratulations!
- If you are disappointed with your results – remember, it's not the end of the world. There are other opportunities. You may do re-sits at college or choose alternative courses to express yourself and succeed later in life

Don't bottle it up

- Before, during or after the exam, if you feel you can't cope with the pressure, or are feeling stressed, find someone to talk to. Talk to your carers, teachers, friends, school nurse (at the lunchtime drop-in) or call Childline free of charge and in confidence (0800 1111)

Good luck!

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Relax!

When you get uptight, worked up and angry, you need to stop and relax.

Find somewhere quiet and comfortable to sit down and follow the instructions below.

What to do:

- You need to tense and then relax the different parts of your body
- Tense each part in the order below for 5 seconds, while holding your breath
- Now breathe out and relax the tense part of your body while telling yourself to 'relax'
- At each stage, concentrate on what you are doing

The order:

1. Arms

- Clench your fists and tighten the muscles in both arms
- Hold your arms straight out in front of you
- Relax

2. Legs

- Lift your legs up about 30 cm
- Point your toes and straighten your legs so that all the muscles in your legs are tense
- Relax

3. Main body

- Pull your shoulders back and bring your shoulder blades together
- Push your chest forward and out
- At the same time, pull in your stomach
- Relax

4. Neck

- Press your head against the back of the chair
- Relax

5. Face

- Raise your eyebrows up as far as you can towards the top of your head
- Screw up your eyes tightly and at the same time wrinkle your nose
- Press your lips together
- Clench your jaw, as though you are chewing hard, and push your tongue against the roof of your mouth
- Relax

Remember

With each part of your body

- Breathe in and tense
- Breathe out and relax
- Concentrate