



# How to handle exam stress during the COVID-19 pandemic

Preparing for exams can be stressful at the moment but there are some things that may help

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It's important to recognise that these are challenging times that you could not have prepared for. It's okay if this has had an impact on how you are feeling about your exams. It is completely normal, but there are some things that might be useful to keep in mind.

## Managing feelings of stress around your exams

### Focus on what you can control

In times of uncertainty it's natural for us to think about, or worry about what might happen in the future. For lots of us, this can be unhelpful as we are worrying about something that we cannot influence or control. When it comes to your exams, focus on what you can control and try to prepare for your exams as if they are going ahead. Although this is not an easy task, it is the easiest way to try and keep our minds on track and keep motivated.

Mindfulness can be a good way to become aware of our thoughts and keep us focused on the present moment. [Read more about mindfulness and tips for staying positive during COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) here.](#)

## Try to create a routine and study space

Keeping a study routine is a helpful way of staying on track. Put together a [study timetable](#) with time slots to focus on different subjects and schedule regular breaks. This can help manage feelings of stress as you know you have a plan in place with time given to each subject you are studying. If you have a place in your home where you can make your own study space this can really help. Research has shown that when we study in an environment similar to the one where you will do your exams, it can help us when trying to remember information. If possible try to study somewhere with little noise or distractions and away from where you would normally relax.

## Ask for support from those you live with

Due to [social distancing](#), you are probably spending a lot more time, possibly in limited space, with your family. Spending time with the same people for a long period of time can be difficult, especially while trying to study. If you are finding that there is tension at home, you can [read some of our advice on reducing arguments here](#). Try explaining to your family how important it is for you to have a quiet space without distractions. Ask if they can help you to create a study space away from others in the house. During these times we may need to be creative about how or where we study - even if that means setting up a homemade desk for yourself.

## Take breaks

If we are feeling stressed or anxious about exams we can sometimes get too focused on the amount of time we are sitting at a desk studying. No matter how motivated we are, there is only so long we can focus on and actually take in information. Taking regular breaks is critical for us to be able to process and remember new information. When you do take a break, move away from the space you are studying as much as possible, so you recognise and feel that you have taken a break. Getting out and getting fresh air or doing some exercise, even if it is for a short time, is good for our wellbeing. [Read our tips here for keeping active at home while social distancing](#).

## Don't be too hard on yourself

Remember that you are in a situation that you could never have prepared for when it comes to doing exams. It's understandable if you have days where you feel stressed, or unmotivated or unsure how you feel. These are all normal feelings to have. Try to do as much as you can to stay focused and doing a little each day should help you to feel less stressed in the long run. Many young people across Ireland will be feeling similarly. [Read about how our volunteer, Anna, is coping with exam worry](#).

## Talk to someone

If you feel you are becoming overwhelmed with feelings of stress around your exams it's important that you try to talk to someone. Sharing this with someone else can help you feel better and it means that you will have the support of that person over the next few weeks and months when it comes to exams. If you feel like you need some professional support, [here is the list of online mental health supports available during COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#).

Jigsaw has [online group chats](#) on managing stress which may be helpful.

## Feeling overwhelmed or anxious around your exams or the current pandemic?

- Get anonymous support 24/7 with our text message support service
- Connect with a trained volunteer who will listen to you, and help you to move forward feeling better
- Text **SPUNOUT** to **086 1800 280** to begin
- [Find out more about our text message support service](#)

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