

Looking After Our Wellbeing:

A grab pack for young people to support study skills at home during the Covid-19 response

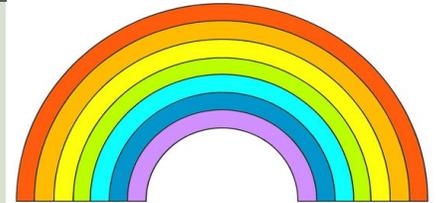
Psychology and Wellbeing Service

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First steps: What to do if you are worried about the Coronavirus

If the current news about the coronavirus (Covid-19) is making you feel worried, concerned or stressed here are some of the things we can do to help us feel better...

- **Talk to someone:** If the news has upset you, talk to someone you trust about it. It's important to share what is worrying you. It could be an adult at home or a teacher at school. It's important to remember it's normal to feel sad, worried or angry when things that happen in the world are out of our control, and you won't be the only one who feels this way. No matter what your age, we all have these same feelings and this is normal too.
- **Learning the facts of coronavirus:** There is lots of information out there and false reports might cause you a lot of worry! If you want to learn more about the facts use reliable sites like www.gov.je. Try to read the facts only and not rely on social media posts about the virus as it can be hard to know if this information is true. Don't overexpose yourself to the news!
- **Stick to a routine:** With so much uncertainty, sticking to your routine can help maintain normality. Try to add extra activities that make you happy or calm, yet stick to your daily schedule.
- **Do things that make you happy!:** This can help you feel better. Watch your favourite film, make a playlist of your favourite uplifting songs. Read your favourite book. If you can go out then have a walk. If you are self-isolating then pick a fun exercise routine to do either from YouTube or a DVD.
- **Things to help you feel calm:** Consider a 'toolbox' of activities you can do when you feel worried. Stop and focus on your breathing and practise a technique such as square breathing (find a square in the room and breath in on the going up side and long breath out on the across side) continue for a few minutes. Or 7/11, breathe in for 7 seconds through your nose and out through your mouth for 11 seconds. Continue for a few minutes. Doing something you enjoy can take your mind off your worries and make them feel less intense –such as having a bath/shower, dancing to a song, cleaning your room, drawing/colouring, baking something yummy. Make a soothe box full of your favourite things, such as something to touch, smell, positive affirmation, photos of nice places/people and use your box when you need a boost.



During this unique time we are all considering the changes we need to make to keep ourselves and our families safe. Check out our range of wellbeing grab packs online, offering helpful tips on a range of subjects including the importance of sleep, parenting children with ADHD, wellbeing for children and many more.

In this grab pack:

- First steps: What to do if you are worried about the Coronavirus.
- What helps you focus when taking care of your mental health and studying at home?
- Revision and study skills: supporting yourself.
- Useful resources
- Useful websites

What helps you focus when taking care of your mental health and studying at home?



With the current lockdown restrictions in place, studying from home can be difficult. Being at home instead of school can make it harder to focus, below are some tips that may make it easier... good luck!

1. Get a routine

With the current situation our normal routines have been paused and this can cause stress. Establish a new routine, a visual timetable can help you remember what you need to be doing at what time and make you feel a little more in control. Include a start time, break-time, meal-times and finish time.

2. Set goals

Create a realistic schedule for getting work done in defined periods. Having something to aim for will give you a purpose for your day ahead. If you find focusing hard, then breaking tasks down into manageable chunks can help you focus on the goal. Focus for 15-30 minutes then take a brain break for 5 min or so and reward yourself with something relaxing.

3. Don't forget the basics

Keep a consistent sleep routine with predictable times to wake up and go to bed, eat healthy meals, drink enough water, take regular showers and exercise. This is especially important for maintaining a positive mood and ability to focus on school work.



4. Quiet space to work

Find a nice quiet place where you can work. A space that does not have distractions, such as the TV, gaming devices, other family members talking. Some young people like to have music in the background whilst they work. Find what works for you but remember that what works might change during the day.

5. Staying connected

Seeing your friends is hugely important and the current situation makes this harder to do. Make sure you schedule time in your routine to connect with friends. Seeing their faces on a video call can lift your mood and make you feel less isolated. It will also brighten up their day too.



6. Exercise

Making sure you schedule exercise into your routine is really important. It could be helpful to go for a walk in the fresh air to get you out of the house as well as releasing feel good endorphins. Yoga can help you exercise and help you relax which can boost your mood. There are lots of YouTube videos for all abilities.



Revision and study skills: supporting yourself

If you are using the Covid-19 lockdown as an opportunity to catch up with some studying, or find yourself having to prepare for an assessment e.g. online test, the following study tips might help.

Revision and study skills

How Do You Feel About Preparing For Exams?

1. I find it difficult to begin revision while we are still covering new issues.
2. I sleep badly the night before an exam.
3. I'm always certain I'm going to fail exams.
4. I can't draw up a realistic timetable.
5. I can't concentrate on my revision for long enough at a time.
6. I seem to forget things.
7. Other people seem so confident.
8. I can't get down to revision until the last moment.
9. I don't think I work hard enough.
10. Sometimes I feel like giving up.

If any of these things apply to you then don't worry, as almost certainly most people will agree that at least one of these issues applies to them – you are not alone, and there is plenty that can be done to put yourself in the best position possible when facing exams and revision. It's important to reflect on what exams involve and what the purpose of them are.

What do exams involve?

What Do Exams Require Of You?

1. Organise your knowledge for revision:
 - sort through your notes
 - check areas you are less sure of in the library and with friends
 - get an overview of your subject by reading the appropriate sections of reference books
 - read summaries
2. Recall what you have learnt:
 - memorise information sufficiently
 - recall under exam conditions
3. Restructure your knowledge in response to a particular question:
 - know what the examiners require from you
 - shaping it into the form asked for by the exam

Most exams are not just memory tests which require you to write everything you know about a given topic. Instead, they require you to organise your knowledge for revision, recall the information that you have learnt and studied, and restructure your knowledge in an organised and coherent manner.

Study skills and revision strategies

1. Start early

The earlier you start, the more prepared you will be. Starting early allows you time to really learn the material and understand it – and it means you can cope with any factors that may unexpectedly disrupt your revision. Also, “cramming” is just not effective for everyone, and will often only create more stress. Spend a couple of hours figuring out the material you will need to know for each exam and map out a revision timetable that takes into account when each of your exams is.

Make your revision timetable as detailed as possible, writing exactly what you need to do each day, for how long, and make sure you schedule in regular study breaks too. Without regular breaks you could be headed for stress and burnout, which definitely won't contribute to exam success.

2. Work out what type of learner you are

Everyone learns in different ways. Some like colour-coded spider diagrams, others will be able to learn simply by reading and copying. Some people like to learn through listening to others speak. Revision can be a highly personal process and it's worth testing out a few different methods before finding an approach that suits you. This will make sure that you are working smarter, not harder. There has been some fascinating research into the use of visuals and 'doodling' as part of revision note taking:

- People who doodle when they are exposed to verbal information retain 29% more than their non-doodling counterparts.
- Historically doodling has been seen as something that happens when you lose focus whereas in reality it is more of a pre-emptive measure to help you hold focus.
- Refining doodling skill can improve creative problem solving and deep information retention/retrieval.
- For more information see the book written by Sunni Brown: *The Doodle Revolution*. See her TED talk at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fx0QcHyrFk>

3. Create the optimum learning environment

There will be loads of people who will tell you that working in a library is more productive than working from home. Others will say that locking yourself in your room is the only way to revise. This will vary based on how you learn best and, again, it is worth experimenting to find what works for you.

There are people who find that coffee shops are a great place to sit and make revision notes, and those people may say they could “never be able to revise in their rooms”. There are others who couldn't revise anywhere other than their room and actually find working from bed most effective. Varying your environment can also be argued as helping to keep your revision interesting too. Unfortunately, the current lockdown and social distancing rules mean that many places are now restricted. You may have to be creative in finding different places to revise where you live but it's still worth considering mixing things up a little.

Noise is a heavily debated topic. Most revision guides will tell you that music or the TV is too distracting, but this is entirely down to personal preference.

If speech or songs with lyrics are too distracting for you, try film scores or instrumental music. For others, pin-drop silence will be the only thing that works. The only way to know for sure is to test this out. As a side note, make sure you wear comfortable clothes and have plenty of water and 'healthy' snacks to hand.

- Avoid distractions - it can take 26 minutes to re-focus after an interruption (on average we self-interrupt every 3.5 minutes).
- Switching between too many subjects in one session can cause confusion.
- Take breaks – treat yourself!

4. Be strict

No matter how you dress it up, revision isn't the most enjoyable of pastimes and I'm sure there are millions of things you would rather be doing. But you have to be strict with yourself. Eliminate all distractions and stick to your revision timetable as best as you can. Keep your phone away from you, switch off the Wi-Fi on your laptop if you don't need the internet, and make sure you have everything you need before you begin, to stop yourself having to get up.

If you must have your phone near you, download an app that stops you from continuously checking your social media. Forest is a particularly innovative one. It plants a seed when you lock your phone and a tree continues to grow until you quit the app. To make sure your tree keeps growing, don't go on to any other apps on your phone. If this doesn't work for you, there are plenty of other productivity apps that can stop you unnecessarily checking your phone.

5. Practise, practise, practise

It is important to ensure that all this revision doesn't go to waste and that you are able to apply the knowledge in an exam situation. Past papers are a revising student's best friend, and if your school doesn't provide them, ask a teacher or lecturer to write a couple of questions down for you. The more you do, the more you can work out what the exam board is looking for and you can adapt your revision accordingly. Remember, it is not uncommon to fail the first couple, so don't be disheartened. As with anything, practise makes permanent, so keep at it.

6. Essay Plans

Get into the habit of having a concise structure to your essay plans if you have to write a big piece in your exam... take the first 10 minutes of the exam planning exactly the content and the order that you want to write things. This approach also works well when you're working on assignments without the pressure of time.

If you have information you need to offload, do that at the start – dates, years, names etc.

7. Some more unorthodox revision methods that might work for you:

- Record yourself reciting key dates, quotes or equations and listen to them as you are doing other things. You won't feel like you're revising but you will be amazed at how much you retain.
- Wear a particular perfume or aftershave while studying different modules and then make sure you wear the same one on the day of the exam corresponding to that module. Similarly, have different mints or sweets while revising different modules and then take those into the exam (if allowed). Associating certain smells and tastes with one area of study could help to jog your memory.
- Read things out loud in different accents or voices. Then when you are trying to recall the facts, you'll remember the accent and then hopefully the fact too.
- Write down your revision notes in different formats. For example, write one subject as a news story, another as a letter to a friend or relative, compose them into haikus or draw them as a comic strip. Be careful not to waste too much time on this though. It doesn't need to be a work of art, just a different way of presenting the information.
- Find a friend who is on a different course to you and teach each other about your courses. The act of having to explain things to help someone else understand something will help to highlight what you yourself have learned.
- Stick Post-it notes everywhere. Literally everywhere. Just being surrounded by your revision notes will mean that something may sink in.

Ineffective revision

The following boxes contain information relating to ten common pitfalls that people may do when they are revising. Therefore these ten issues are listed so that you can see, at a glance, the things which you should **avoid** when revising.

1. Leaving Revision until the Last Minute.

- When planning and reading for a part of the course, write alternative essay titles on separate pages, jot brief notes, or page references to material, under each title.
- Make your notes readable, attractive and visually compelling as you go through the course – this builds the memory.
- If possible, start to over-learn names, dates and key details from index cards at odd moments early in the term. Even if you forget them, they will be easier to learn a second time round.

2. Reading Notes Over and Over Again.

- Use creative and interactive strategies keeps your mind alert, and helps to integrate information.
- Instead of just reading, read in order to find out. The best way to do this is to look for material related to possible exam answers. Ask in the library for past exam papers for your course, and invent your own questions.
- Discussing past exam questions with friends makes this process more interesting.
- Time yourself writing some essays without looking at your notes not only shows you which areas need more work but helps to increase your handwriting speed and your ability to think and write under pressure.

3. Writing Notes Out Over And Over Again.

- Working to different essay plans develops your thinking about the subject.
- Some people find that rewriting notes interferes with visual recall of their original set of notes. For them, it is preferable to develop a good complete set of notes, plus a series of index cards.
- Reduce information to a series of memory triggers. Reduce a set of triggers to one key word or image.

4. Writing Out Essays And Learning Them Off By Heart.

- This is time-consuming and counter-productive – it is unlikely that the identical question will come up in your exam.
- It is better to spend time reflecting on, and practising, a range of answers, so that you over-learn the material.
- You will then be able to work with it flexibly during the exam, selecting exactly what you need for the exact title given.

5. Finding Ways of Putting Off Revision.

- Make a revision timetable which leaves empty spaces to cater for emergencies.
- Do a spell of revision before each 'urgent task'.
- Use watching television or other distractions as a reward – put them in your timetable.
- You may be missing company. Try revising with other students, or involve others in your revision.

6. 'I can't force myself back to study'

- Check your motivation.
- Rather than 'forcing' yourself, encourage and entice yourself through short-term goals, challenges, creativity, and company.
- Check that your timetable has sufficient breaks for rest.

7. 'I Start To Panic. I Feel I'm Never Going To Get Through It All or Remember It'

- Work with positive-minded people.
- Work steadily to small goals.
- Speak to a professional counsellor at the university.

8. 'I can't cope with the boredom of it. I start to daydream or wonder why I am bothering.'

- Work in a lot of shorter spells.
- Boredom suggests that you are not using a variety of interactive learning techniques or your creativity.
- Look for ways of introducing variety into your study sessions.
- Look for unusual angles on the material you have, or images that sum up the material.
- Invent an essay or a test for yourself.

9. 'I have too many responsibilities for sufficient revision'

- Make use of short spells of time.
- Break the work into small pieces.
- Always carry some work with you.
- Carry an exam question in your head and scribble down ideas in odd moments.

10. Stopping Revision Before The Process Of Over-Learning Is Complete.

- It is important to keep checking back what you have learnt, reduce your material to shorter, key memory triggers.
- Keep asking yourself: 'How can I use what I have learnt to answer other questions that might come up?'
- Over-learning takes time – use spare moments well.

Resources

[5 Day Happiness Challenge](#)

Meaningful May - <https://www.actionforhappiness.org/meaningful-may>

[For movement and mindfulness](#)

Newsround video <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51342366?fbclid=IwAR3CyZq5rzXVoyGCgWjjpx6YqoetuZ1tP16y7wMjUR6uwgWyhRmf0aFTrAs>

Useful websites

<https://youngminds.org.uk>

<https://www.yes.je>

<https://sleepcouncil.org.uk>

<https://www.themix.org.uk/>

<https://www.headspace.com/headspace-meditation-app>

www.kooth.com

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.keep-your-head.com

