

Introduction

The purpose of this self-help book is to provide information around understanding exam stress and a variety of coping and practical strategies to help support manage this.

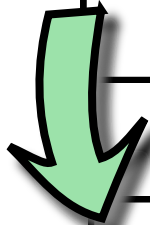
What MHST Offer:

MHST provide mental health support to children and young people in schools, through 1:1 sessions, group work and a whole school approach to mental health and well-being.

MHST provide interventions around anxiety, low mood, sleep difficulties, panic, emotions and phobias. If you think you could benefit from some support, speak to your schools Mental Health Lead or teacher.



How do you feel about your exams?



Write down your thoughts

One thing that helped you manage at that time:

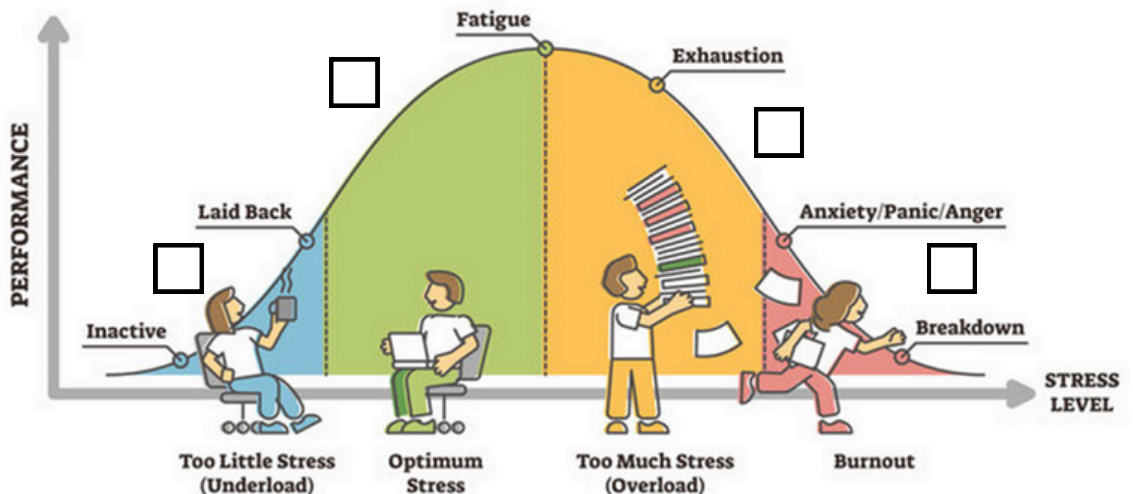
One thing you found difficult or would have liked more help with:



Tick where you feel you are on the stress curve?

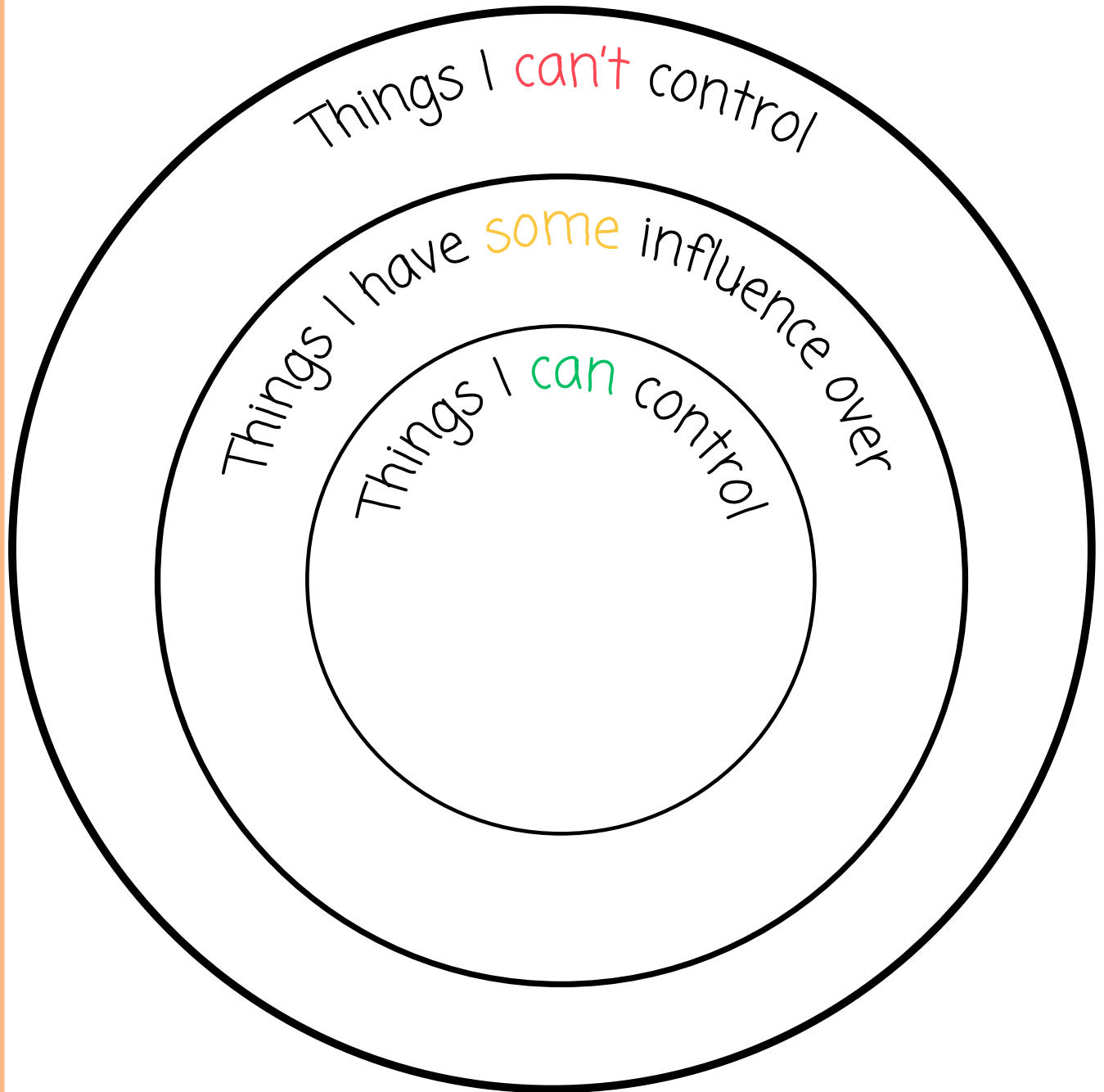


STRESS CURVE



Make Notes:

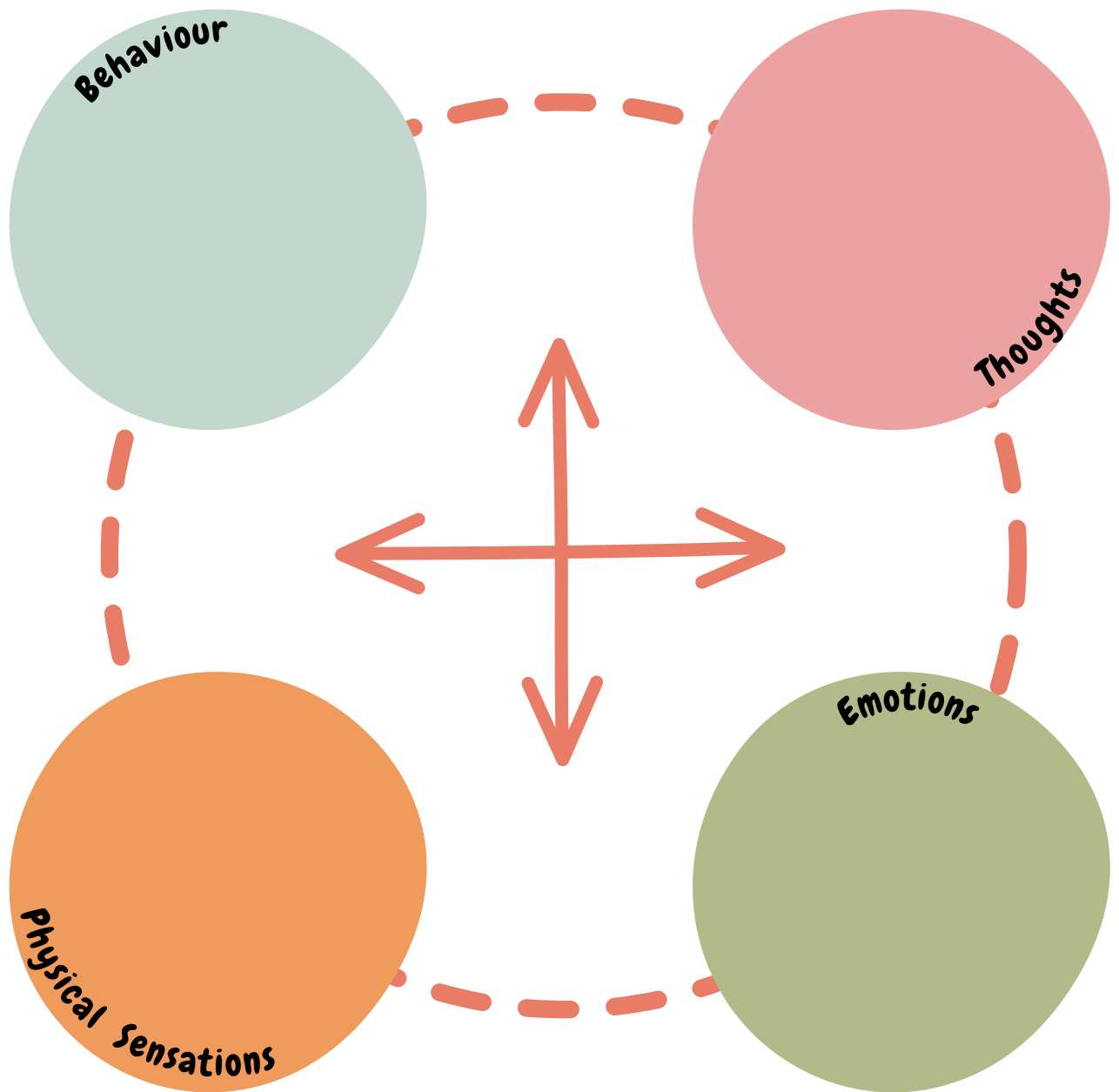
What is in your control or not when it comes to exam stress?



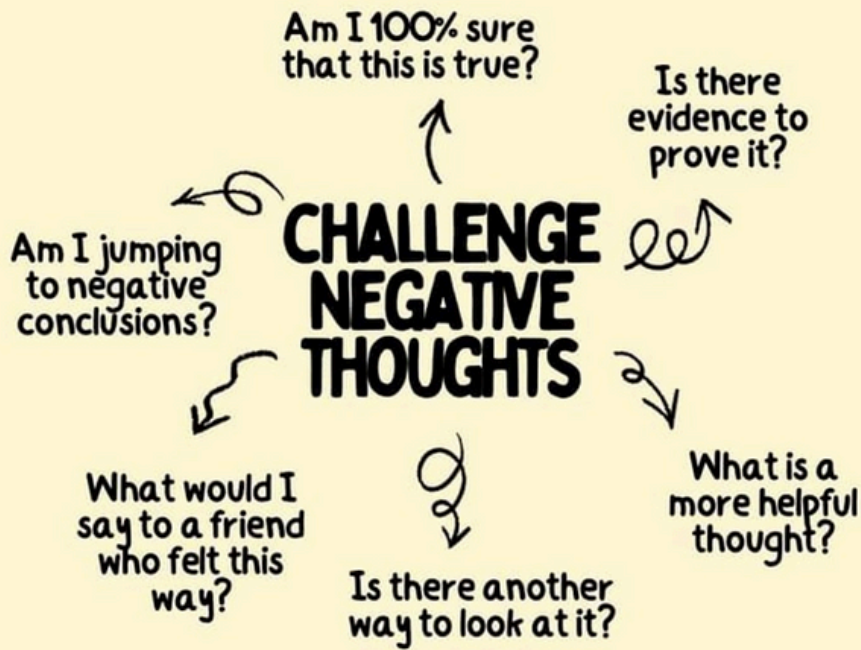
Early Warning Signs

Write down:

1. What physical symptoms do you recognise when you feel anxious?
2. What happens to your thoughts when you are stressed or anxious?
3. What behaviours do you do as a result?



MAKE YOUR MIND A GOOD PLACE TO BE



Plan & Prepare

Time

- How many hours can you revise a day?
- Are you a night owl or morning lark?
- Don't abandon your hobbies, schedule them in

Prioritise

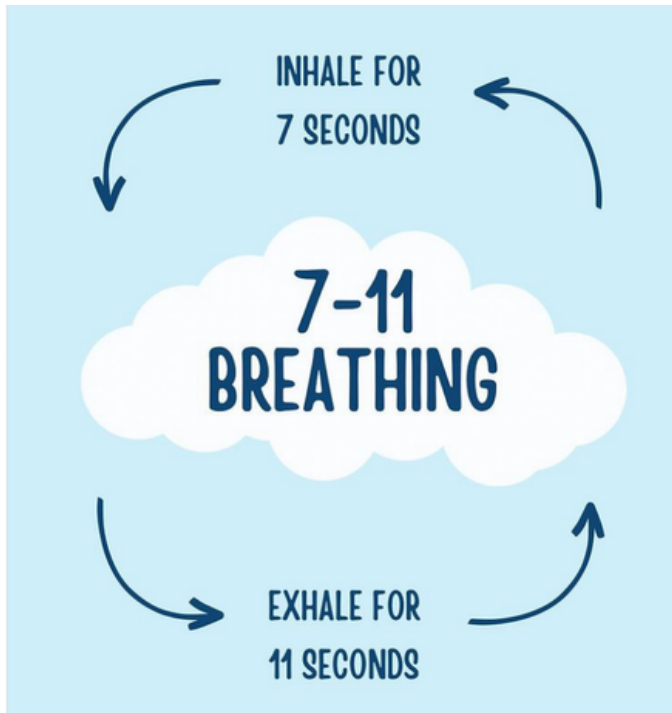
- Which exams are coming up first?
- Which topics do you feel more confident in?
- Which mocks didn't go so well?
- Tip: make a list of all the subjects/topics you need to revise

Allocate

- Position topics you're likely to find challenging when you know you tend to work best in the day.
- Use the list you created in Step 2. This will keep a nice balance between revision being a challenge and you making good progress.
- Allocate time for breaks and rewards!

Start Revising

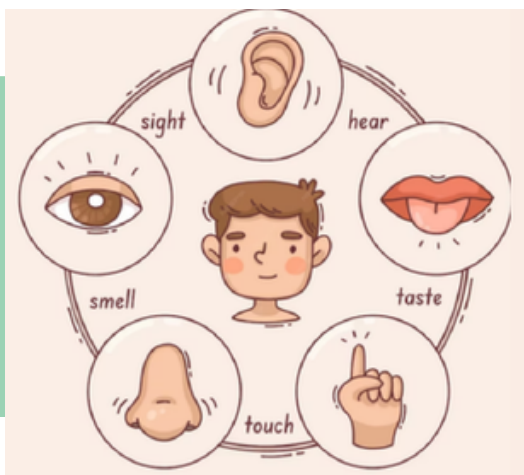




- Repeat a few times if needed.
- Notice a decrease in your breathing and heart rate.

Alphabet Search

- Look around the room and try to find an object that begins with each letter of the alphabet



5 Senses

- 5 things I can see, 4 things I can hear, 3 things I can smell, 2 things I can touch, I think I can taste

You may thrive while typing away in a lively coffee shop, or you might require the quiet ambiance of a library. Regardless of your preferred study environment, make sure to optimise your study space so you can get the most out of your revision.



Declutter your space

- An untidy desk or room can increase stress, hinder productivity, and lead to procrastination. Prioritise organizing your study area first.



Eliminate distractions

- Avoid having tablets, TVs, or phones nearby. Consider using apps like SelfControl to block distracting websites while studying.



Ensure comfort

- While studying in bed is not recommended, choose a comfortable workspace that allows you to focus without discomfort.



Adjust lighting

- Avoid dim lighting that strains your eyes or overly bright lights that cause fatigue. Opt for natural light when possible to reduce negative effects.

Control noise levels

- Find a space with consistent noise levels that suit your preferences. Headphones with calming sounds can also help.



Personalise your space

- Add personal touches like photos to create a comfortable and motivating environment. Plants and colourful decorations can enhance your mood.

YOU GOT THIS!

DON'T FORGET
TAKE A BREAK



Time management

- Keep a visible clock and revision schedule nearby for easy reference. Avoid using smartphones for timekeeping to prevent distractions.

Gather supplies

- Keep essential stationery and snacks within reach to avoid frequent interruptions. Energy-boosting snacks like raisins and nuts can help maintain focus.

Maintain cleanliness

- Regularly tidy your study space to prevent clutter. Dedicate a few minutes each day to keep your workspace clean and conducive to productivity.



How to do your first Pomodoro:

Take a longer break (30 minutes). **8**

Repeat 3 times. **7**

Take a 5-minute break. **6**

STOP when the timer ends. **5**



Get into an optimal work space without distractions. **1**

Choose ONE task to focus on. **2**

Set your timer for 25 minutes. **3**

Do your work. **4**



How to overcome procrastination

1. Write down your goal.
2. Know your why- know why this is important to you, what will you gain, how will you feel?
3. Create a deadline, this allows us to work towards a deadline and remain focused.
4. Break it down- the task can seem daunting, and sometimes impossible. Breaking your task into simple, easy-to-complete steps takes it from overwhelming to accomplishable! Write down your steps on the piece of paper.
5. Get in the right mindset- When you catch yourself having the "I don't want to do this" thoughts, reframe them into something more positive to "I'm going to feel so happy when I'm finished" .
6. Set the mood- Have a dance, sing, drink some water or go for a walk around on your street before you begin to prepare your brain.
7. Time to work.
8. Celebrate your wins- Tell yourself how proud you are of you.

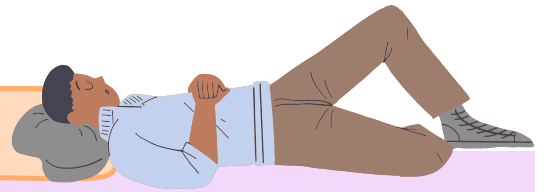




Eating

- **Ditch the Junk:** Snacking on junk food while revising is tempting but unhelpful. Choose foods like blueberries or avocado to boost memory function.
- **Cut the Caffeine:** Too much caffeine can interfere with your sleep and ability to concentrate, opt for water or herbal teas instead.
- **Breakfast of Champions:** Students who eat breakfast before exams perform better. Go for slow-release carbs like whole grain bread, oat bran, rolled oats, or apples.
- **Stay Hydrated:** Dehydration can cause tiredness, lack of concentration, and headaches. Keep a water bottle handy.

Sleeping



- Good sleep improves thinking and concentration. Most teenagers need 8 to 10 hours' sleep a night.
- If you go to bed feeling anxious, you'll find it harder to fall asleep. Avoid starting a new chapter of your revision late in the day. It'll still be there in the morning when your mind is fresh.
- Avoid revising too late in the day, have some time to relax to help your brain switch off before going to sleep.
- Screen time before bed may disrupt your sleep-wake cycle. Try putting your phone away an hour before you go to sleep.



Exercise

- Exercise helps release dopamine, which is like your motivation molecule to stay focused, and increase concentration.
- You also get endorphins, like a runner's high ... and things like serotonin, which is your feel-good hormone.
- A good 15-minute break from revision to move around, even just around your living room, makes your body produce more energy whilst also making you feel happier.

Night Before Exam Plan

