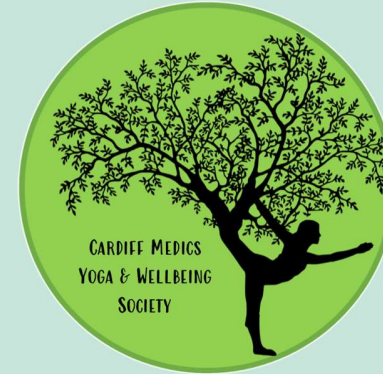


## Further Resources

- **MIND.** Mind.org.uk have fantastic resources for understanding and coping with challenging emotions. They also have plenty of self-help resources, crisis management tools and recommended contacts.
- **Samaritans.** You can contact Samaritans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to talk about anything that is upsetting you. You can call 116 123 (free from any phone) or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org). The Samaritans Welsh Language Line is available on 0808 164 0123 (7pm–11pm every day).
- **Student Space.** Access free, confidential support services by phoning 0808 189 5260, texting the word STUDENT to 85258, emailing [students@themix.org.uk](mailto:students@themix.org.uk), or via webchat support. The service is available from 4pm–11pm.
- **Papyrus HOPELINEUK.** You can call Papyrus HOPELINEUK on 0800 068 4141 if you're under 35 and struggling with suicidal feelings or concerned about a young person who might be struggling. It's open 365 days a year from 9am–midnight. You can also email [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org) or text 07860 039 967.
- **Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM).** If you identify as male, you can call CALM on 0800 58 58 58 (5pm–midnight every day) or use the CALM webchat service.

## References

1. Mind (2020) The mental health emergency: how has the coronavirus pandemic impacted our mental health? Available at: [mind.org.uk](http://mind.org.uk)
2. Student Minds (2021) Exam stress and How to: assessments and exams from home. Available at: [studentminds.org.uk](http://studentminds.org.uk)



# Dealing with Difficult Emotions

## A Practical Guide

from Cardiff Medics Yoga and Wellbeing Society



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<https://www.cardiffstudents.com/activities/society/cardiffmedicsyoga/>



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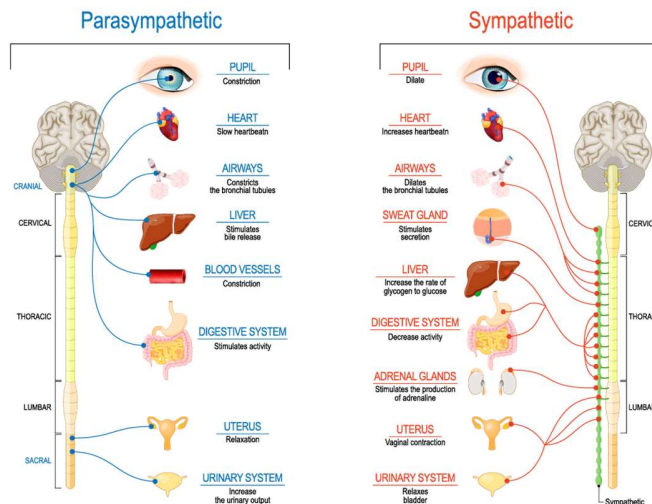
<https://www.cardiffstudents.com/activities/society/cardiffmedicsyoga/>

# Feeling Anxious

Feeling anxious, scared, or panicked in response to a stressor is **completely normal**. Examples of stressors include exams, relationship instability, the coronavirus pandemic, and lockdown! Nearly three quarters (73%) of UK students said that their mental health declined during the lockdown<sup>1</sup>.

In stressful situations, the **sympathetic nervous system** is activated, putting the body into "fight or flight" mode. This is what produces the uncomfortable feelings of anxiety – fast heart rate or palpitations, shortness of breath, sweaty palms, "butterflies" in the tummy.

The breathing exercise on page 2 will help to activate your **parasympathetic nervous system**, putting the body into "rest and digest" mode. This exercise is useful in acutely stressful situations, or if you can feel yourself spiralling into anxiety or panic.



Long term anxiety/stress (see page 3-4) can be a little harder to manage, but the breathing exercise will always help to ground you, calm you, and help you see the situation more clearly.

# Low Self Esteem

Self-esteem is how we value and perceive ourselves. It's based **on our opinions and beliefs about ourselves**, which can sometimes feel really difficult to change.

The things that affect our self-esteem differ for everyone. Difficult or stressful life experiences can often be a factor, such as:

- being bullied or abused
- experiencing prejudice, discrimination or stigma
- problems at work or while studying
- ongoing stress e.g. exams or a global pandemic
- physical or mental health problems
- relationship problems, separation or divorce
- worries about your appearance and body image
- problems with money or housing

## Tips to improve self-esteem:

- **Get to know yourself.** Try to learn more about yourself – for example what makes you happy, what self-esteem means to you and what you value in life. Writing this in a journal may help.
- **Let yourself have feelings.** It's important to remember that you're a human being who can experience a wide range of emotions.
- **Look after yourself** (see exam tips).
- **Celebrate your successes.** No matter how small they may seem, take time to praise yourself and notice what you did well. It could also help to remember past successes.  
→ At the end of every day, try thinking of 3 "wins" – even if it's as small as managing to get out of bed in the morning!

# Low Mood

Symptoms of a general low mood may include feeling:

- sad
- anxious or panicky
- more tired than usual or being unable to sleep
- angry or frustrated
- low on confidence or self-esteem

If you have symptoms of low mood for >2 weeks, it could be a sign of depression. Other signs of depression include:

- not getting any enjoyment out of life
- feeling hopeless
- not being able to concentrate on everyday things
- having suicidal thoughts or thoughts about harming yourself

If you think you may have depression, please contact your GP.

## Tips for managing low mood:

Do:	Don't:
Try talking about your feelings with a friend, family, health professional or via helplines (see back page).	Focus on the things you cannot change – spend your time and energy on helping yourself feel better.
Look after your physical health – keep moving, keep eating well, keep sleeping.	Use alcohol, drugs, or gambling to relieve a low mood. They may help in the moment but in the long run do not.
Try the breathing exercise on page 2, it helps focus on the present moment	Tell yourself you're alone – most people feel low at times and plenty of support is available.
Consider peer support – find out more on <a href="http://mind.org.uk">mind.org.uk</a>	
Try mindfulness – apps like Headspace and Calm are a great place to start.	

# Breathing Exercise



Try to get comfortable.

Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable. Try not to force it.

Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.



Some people find it helpful to count steadily:

Breathing in for 1, 2, 3, 4

Holding the breath for 1, 2, 3, 4

Breathing out for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.



Do this for as many rounds as you need:

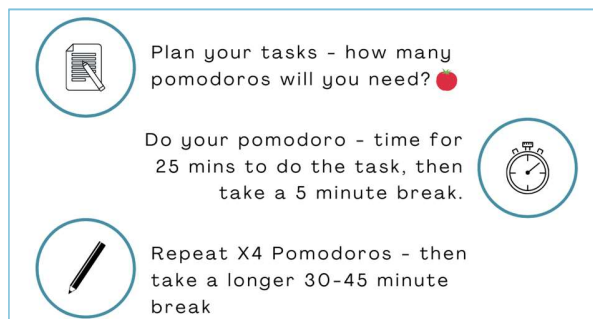
5 rounds should be more than enough to help your body switch to the parasympathetic nervous system. This will alleviate those physical symptoms of stress.

# Exam Stress

Exams and deadlines are not fun. They can be a time of immense external and internal pressure, and this can have a negative impact on your mental health.

Breaking things down and planning your time will help keep things in perspective and make revision a lot less daunting!

1. **Get into a routine.** Keeping a routine going throughout revision is vital for both productivity and mental health.
2. **Plan.** Plan your week, including specified breaks (quick walk, cup of tea) and **don't beat yourself up if you go off schedule.** Work out the basics - which exams you have, how the marks are allocated, and how much you must learn for each one. This can help you prioritise.
3. The **Pomodoro Technique** can be a really effective way of studying and helps break up your time and plan your days.
4. When working in a group, remember that online meetings can get tiring so feel no pressure to always have the camera on, or shared collaborative files like Google Docs can be a better option sometimes.<sup>2</sup>



# Tips for looking after yourself

- **Try to get enough sleep.** Getting too little or too much sleep can have a big impact on how you feel.
- **Think about your diet.** Eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can make a difference to your mood and energy levels – make sure you plan plenty of snack breaks into your revision schedule.
- **Try to do some physical activity.** Exercise can be really helpful for your mental wellbeing. Try out different activities to find something that you **enjoy**. Getting moving doesn't have to be a chore and remember that anything is better than nothing.
- **Spend time outside.** Spending time in green space can help your wellbeing. Taking a walk outside is a great way to get some physical activity too!
- **Try to avoid recreational drugs and alcohol.** While you might want to use them to cope with difficult feelings, in the long run they can make you feel worse and can prevent you from dealing with underlying problems.
- **Connect with others.** Loneliness can be really difficult to cope with – try and reach out to other students, e.g. via societies, and build your support network.
- **Relax.** Find activities that help you relax - maybe it's a hot bath, watching a TV show, or a creative activity. Schedule this down-time into your timetable.