



EXAM STRESS WORKSHOP

First Steps Psychology Team

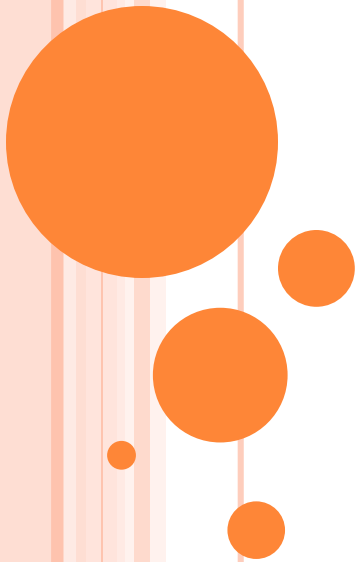
INTRODUCTIONS

- Who are First Steps?
- One thing you're looking forward to after exams are over?
- What would you like to get from this workshop?



WHAT IS STRESS & ANXIETY?

What is anxiety?



ANXIETY IS:

- Normal
- Useful



ANXIETY RISES AND FALLS



UPS AND DOWNS

Level of anxiety 



Time 



HOW DOES IT FEEL?

- Nervous
- Butterflies in stomach
- You may feel dizzy
- Alert



WHAT HAPPENS IN OUR BODIES?

- Heart rate increases
- Breathing gets faster
- We start to sweat more
- Muscles tense up
- Mind becomes alert



WHAT HAPPENS IN OUR MINDS?

- Chaos!?
- Can't think and concentrate
- Negative thoughts and predictions?
- Racing thoughts...

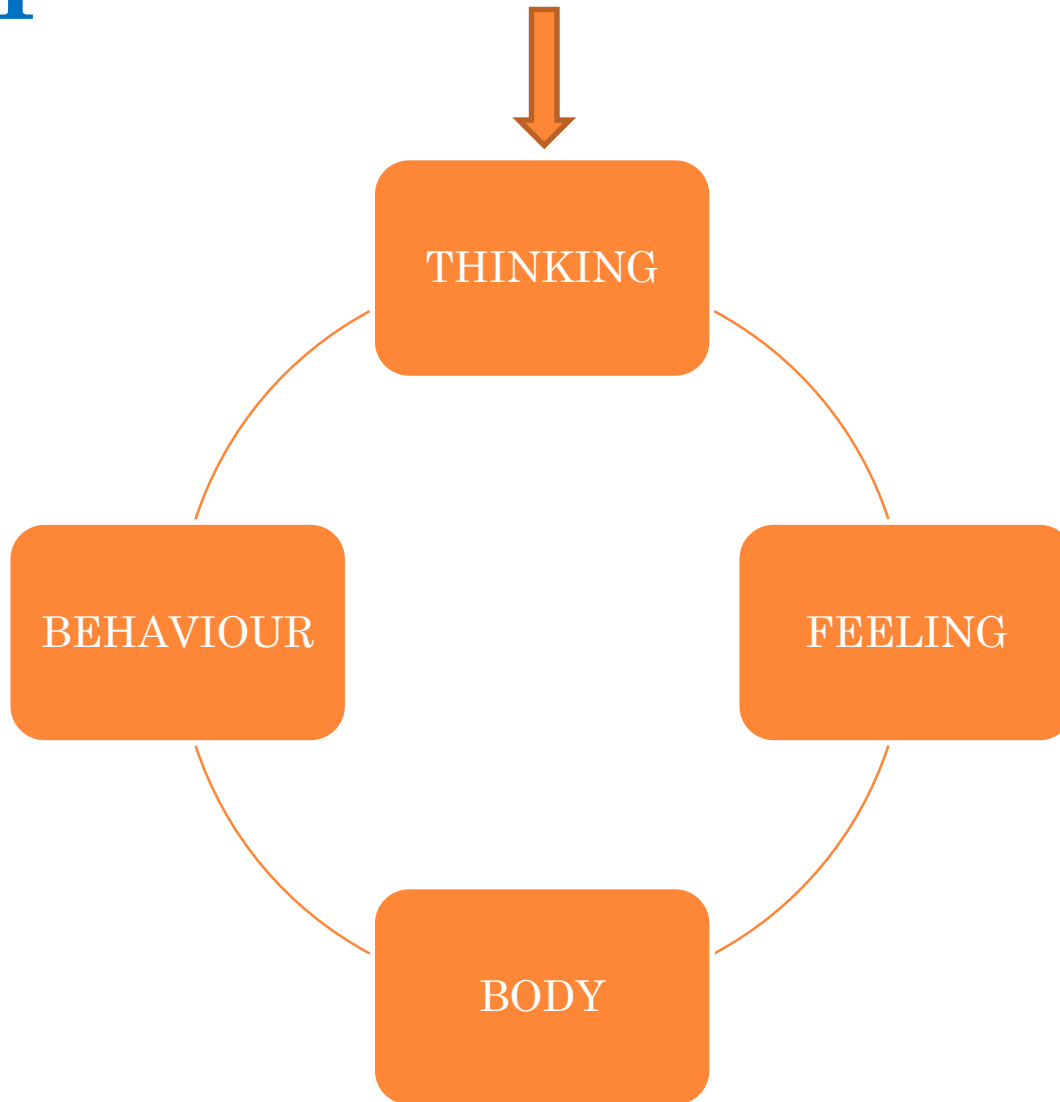


WHAT DOES IT MAKE US DO?

- Avoid?
- Procrastinate?
- Cram
- Overeat
- Oversleep



EXAM



PANIC ATTACKS

- Short, intense period of unpleasant physical sensations
- We feel like something bad is going to happen
- We may feel afraid of fainting, being sick or doing something embarrassing



PANIC ATTACKS

- Very common! 1 in 10 people
- Frightening BUT no physical harm can come from having a panic attack
- Come on suddenly but pass quite quickly
- Normally last for max 10 minutes!!



PANIC ATTACKS DO'S:

- Make a conscious effort to slow your breathing down
- Breathing in through your NOSE and out through your MOUTH
- Remind yourself: this is just anxiety, anxiety can't harm you, it will pass, I am in control
- Challenge your thoughts to make them more helpful
- Distraction-count objects around you



Unhelpful Thinking Styles

All or nothing thinking

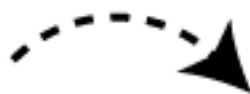


Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

If I'm not perfect I have failed

Either I do it right or not at all

Jumping to conclusions



$2 + 2 = 5$

There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

- **Mind reading**
(imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling**
(predicting the future)

Labelling



Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

I'm a loser

I'm completely useless

They're such an idiot

Over-generalizing



Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

Magnification (catastrophizing) & minimization



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophizing), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

should
must

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration



THE WORRY TREE

THE WORRY DECISION TREE

Question 1: What am I worrying about?

e.g. I'll fail my biology exam and won't be able to study it at 6th form
e.g. I'm not going to do as well as my friends

Question 2: Is there anything I can do about this?

No

*Let the worry
go and distract
yourself*

Yes

Work out what you could do
If you can do it now - do!
If it can't be done now, make a list

*Let the worry go
and distract
yourself*



THINGS I CAN DO RIGHT NOW: SETTING SMART GOALS

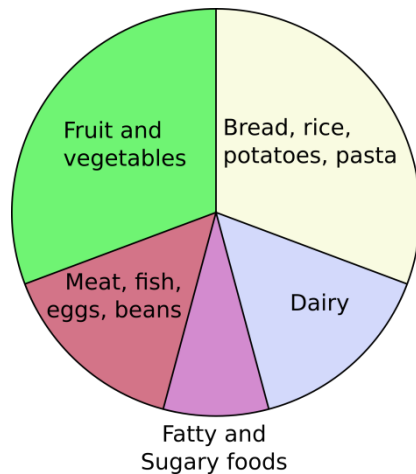
- **S**pecific – what are you going to do?
- **M**easurable – how will you know you've done it?
- **A**chievable – Be kind to yourself. Is it realistic?
- **R**elevant – Choose a goal that matters.
- **T**imely – Give yourself a deadline.



MANAGING IN THE RUN UP TO EXAMS: PRACTICAL ADVICE

- Get enough sleep – 8-10 hours.

Fun fact: Teenagers need more sleep than both adults and children



- Eat well – not too much of the sugary stuff or caffeine – affects concentration.

- Drink water – brain functions better!



MANAGING IN THE RUN UP TO EXAMS: PRACTICAL ADVICE

- Exercise – great way to relieve stress, and reinvigorate your body and mind.



- Talk to someone about how you're feeling.

- Take some time out from revising – watch TV, see friends, play Xbox etc.



- Do 45 minute chunks – 1 topic at a time



REVISION: DIFFERENT WAYS OF LEARNING

- Everyone learns differently and has a different style.
- Repetition is helpful
- Revising small chunks of material at a time – don't overwhelm yourself.
- Give yourself breaks – little and often. It helps your brain to process and memorise.
- Make connections between things (e.g. using mind maps) rather than memorising



ON EXAM DAY....

- Make sure you're well rested
- Have some breakfast
- Give yourself lots of time to get there

In the exam:

- Take some time at the beginning to plan.
- Structure – beginning, middle and end.
- Don't panic – if you're stuck, move on and come back.



POSITIVE STATEMENTS: CHALLENGING UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

- Think of a time you've struggled with stress, but things went well...
- How did you get through it?
- What skills/techniques did you use?

We'd love to hear your tips for managing with stress that we can share with other young people.

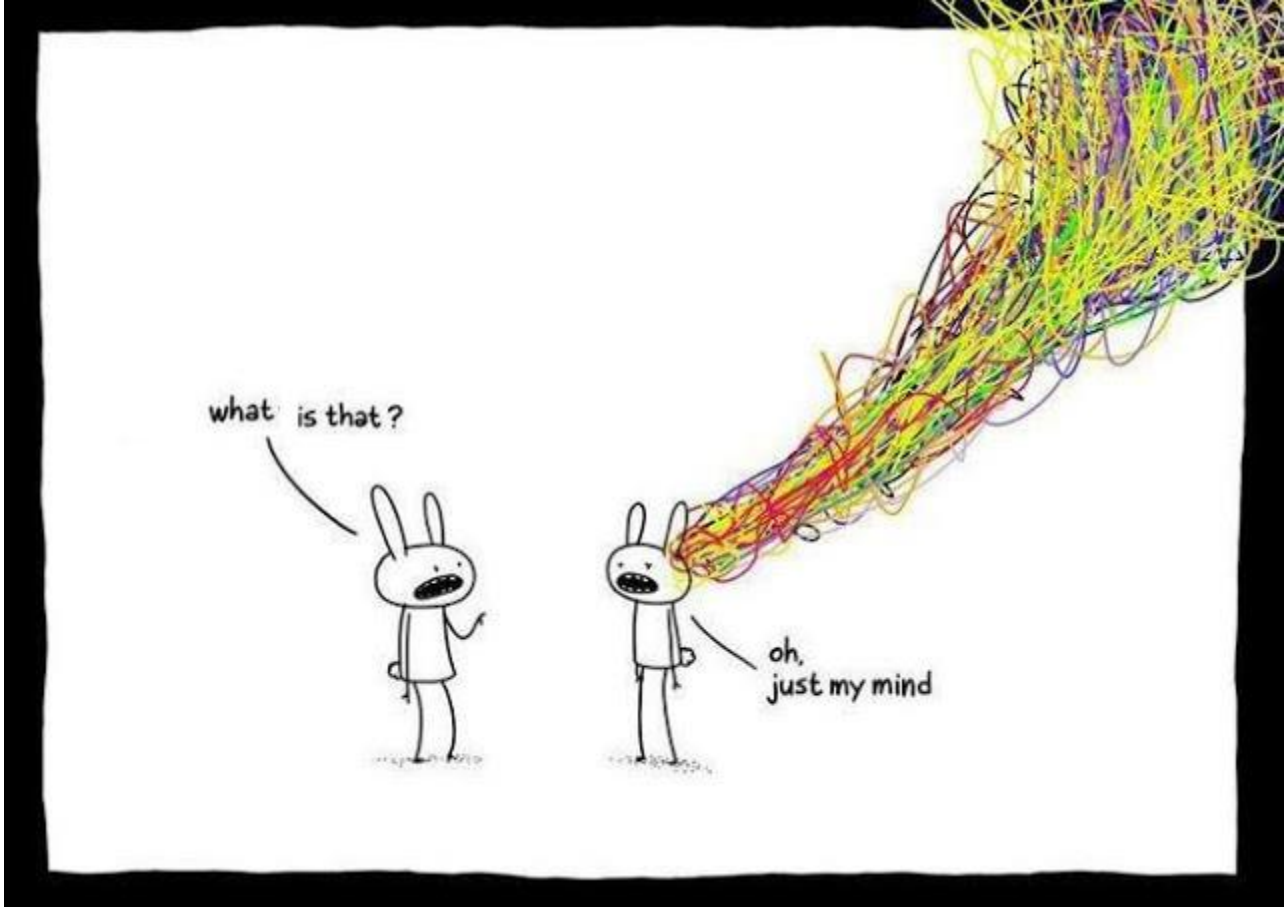


LETTING THE WORRY GO...

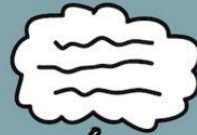
MINDFULNESS

- Noticing
- Non-judgemental
- Paying attention to the present
- Letting go

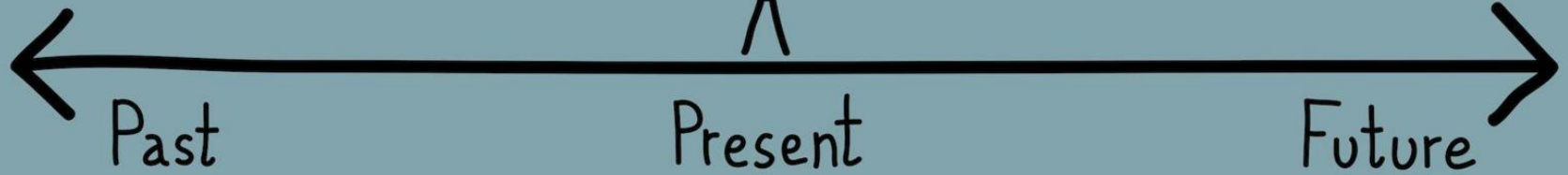




Your body is present.



Is your mind?



DOUG NEILL





Mind Full, or Mindful?

MINDFULNESS EXERCISE

What did you notice showing up for you?

Emotions, thoughts?

Did your mind wander?



REVISITING THE STRESS SCALE

- How are you feeling now?
- Any questions/comments?
- Thank you!!

