



Be at
your best
this exam season

ABOUT NOT GOING TO UNI



Not Going To Uni showcases the alternatives to the standard university route, to school and college leavers. Our company is built on supporting young people in finding future careers, and we believe in educating students on all post-16 routes, ensuring they have the knowledge to understand all options available to them. We work with a variety of Enterprise Employers, Training Providers, FE colleges, Gap Year Providers and SMEs, advertising their early careers vacancies to our audience.

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PHYSICAL WELL-BEING DURING EXAM SEASON

Why is it so important to stay physically healthy and active during exam season?

It is super important not to neglect your physical health during exam season as this will have a knock-on effect towards your mind, productivity, and efficiency. In this blog, we will discuss why your physical well-being is essential during exam season.

• Cognitive Functioning

Exercising regularly and maintaining a healthy diet can significantly improve cognitive functioning, which is essential for academic success. Exercise has been shown to improve memory, attention, and concentration, which are crucial skills for exams. A balanced diet that includes nutrients such as omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals can also improve brain function, memory retention, and information processing.

• Stress and Anxiety

Exam season can be a stressful time, which can cause anxiety and other mental strains. Physical activities such as yoga, running, and swimming can help reduce stress and anxiety. Exercise stimulates the production of endorphins, which are chemicals that promote feelings of happiness and well-being. Engaging in regular physical activities during exam season can help manage stress levels and reduce anxiety, leading to a more positive attitude towards exams.

• Sleeping Habits

During exam season, it's very easy to get into the habit of staying up late studying and stressing about what lies ahead, which can disrupt sleep patterns. Sleep is essential for physical and mental health, and a lack of sleep can cause fatigue, memory impairment, and decreased cognitive function. Regular exercise and a healthy diet can improve sleep quality, leading to better concentration, alertness, and memory retention.

• Increased Energy & Motivation

Maintaining physical wellbeing during exam season can increase energy levels and motivation. Exercise and a healthy diet provide the body with the necessary nutrients to function properly, leading to increased energy levels and improved mood. When students feel more energised and motivated, they can focus better on their studies and perform better in exams.

In conclusion, maintaining your physical wellbeing during exam season is essential for academic success and overall wellbeing. Regular exercise, a healthy diet, and sufficient sleep can improve cognitive functioning, reduce stress and anxiety; as well as increase energy levels and motivation. By prioritizing physical wellbeing during exam season, students can perform at their best and achieve their academic goals.

Good luck ahead of your exams, take these tips on board and you will excel!

Written by Kiera Todd
- NGTU Ambassador and Procurement Associate at Multiverse



MY EXPERIENCE OF EXAM SEASON

I'm not really an exam person. I struggle with sitting still for extended periods of time, I have a short attention span and don't retain lots and lots of knowledge for extended periods of time. This means for me, exams were a very stressful and difficult time. I have put together some of my top tips and some of my experiences to help you through.

Long hours of revision do not equal success.

It has been proven that sitting down for hours on end trying to remember facts from a textbook doesn't work as a method of revision. The human brain is unable to sustain a high-level of unbroken attention for more than 1 hour at a time. For me it is even less. To make sure I was making the best use of my time and resources, I broke my sessions up into bitesize chunks. I would revise for 45 minutes and then take a 20 min break. This way I always knew how long I was revising for and knew I had a break coming up. I would highly recommend this method for everyone but especially those who struggle with their attention like I do.

I made my revision sessions fun.

As I mentioned earlier, information struggles to enter my long-term memory if I am just reading it from a textbook. For me, the tool that I used that made the biggest difference was Quizlet. I used this throughout my GCSE's and A-Levels. It is a great tool to use if you struggle with the large amounts of facts you have to remember because it packs it all into fun mini games. This means you are more likely to remember it, I don't know the exact science behind it but it works. The good thing about Quizlet is that you can create your own set of flashcards, or use those already made for your subject and exam board. This is a great way to make revision more fun!

My Exam Day Experience

As I said, I struggle to remain focussed for long periods of time, especially in silence. So, exams are my worst nightmare. Stuck in the same seat for 2-3 hours, no talking, no background noise, eyes on your own paper. I hate them. For me the first time walking into an exam hall for a formal exam was for my first A-Level Mock, as my GCSE's were cancelled. This only added to the pressure, however, after walking out of that first exam, I was no longer scared of the experience, I was nervous about how well I would do on the paper, of course I was, but I was not scared of the process of taking the exam. No matter, how you do in exams, whether you can keep your attention or not, exams are nothing to be scared of, the school system is simply using this opportunity to see how much knowledge you can retain. EXAMS DON'T DEFINE THE REST OF YOUR LIFE. I know it feels like they do now. But I promise they don't.

Good Luck, Stay Calm, There is no such thing as being over prepared.

Written by Ethan Woolsgrove
- NGTU Ambassador and Digital Marketing Apprentice at Accolade Wines



TACKLING EXAM DAY

Exams might feel like the be all and end all, but it is important to maintain some perspective in exam season – and don't let stress affect your ability to perform during exams!

Your exams help you to reflect on what you have learnt and how you present your learning in a time-bound environment. It is vital to remember that it's not the end of the world if it doesn't go to plan.

We know exams are stressful, and how you're feeling on the day is important to help you feel and perform at your best. Let's discuss some key pointers to help reduce anxiety on the exam day itself.

Before the Exam

- This one's a no-brainer: **get at least 6-8 hours of sleep to help retain information and ensure your body has the energy you need to perform well.** Maintain good sleep hygiene in the run up to your exams by having a regular bedtime and keeping your phone out of reach. Don't be tempted to pull a revision all nighter!
- **If you are worried about last minute revision, try to create some concise revision cards that cover a few key topics.** Practice mind mapping the important concepts before you go to bed and have these ready to look through again ahead of your exam.
- **Have a good breakfast (with plenty of protein) that keeps you energised and full for the day.** It doesn't have to be complicated – but some eggs and toast or Greek yoghurt with fruit or other protein and healthy fat rich foods will help fill you up and fuel you for the day ahead. Don't forget to hydrate too and don't overdo the caffeine.
- **Make sure you're prepared for exam day, be efficient and avoid unexpected hiccups that may stress you out or affect your confidence.** Double check there are no expected strikes or journey interruptions, give yourself extra time to get where you're going. Set alarms to remind you to leave in plenty of time.
- **Pack what you need the night before** and double check any guidance about what you can and can't take into the exam room.
- **Plan something fun or relaxing to do afterwards.** Whether it's buying yourself a small gift, hanging out with friends, enjoying some downtime gaming or with a book or TV show that you love, make sure you carve out some time for a break and look forward to it!
- **If you struggle with anxiety, practice breathing exercises or short meditations to help you stay calm.** There are some great free resources online, such as this [pre exam meditation](#) or this [breathing exercise](#).

TACKLING EXAM DAY CONT.

During and After the Exam

- During the exam, **make sure you read your instructions and questions properly**. If you feel overwhelmed, tackle questions that you feel most confident with first. Make sure you read the questions fully to avoid any misinterpretation!
- After the exam, **relax and celebrate your achievements**. Exams are daunting, especially if it's your first time taking formal tests! Even if you've got more exams in the coming days, take at least an hour to chill out when it's over. This will help your body to relax and reflect better - being in a constant state of stress and anxiety does more harm than good. Get those cortisol levels down by having a nap, taking a walk outside, journaling or speaking to your friends. Indulging in activities to de-stress should bring clarity and allow you to celebrate your wins.
- **If you're worried about how it went, remember that it's okay to feel that way**. Try not to overthink it, especially if you're going to be waiting a while for the results. You might find it helpful to spend some time talking it through with a friend or writing down why you're feeling anxious - or you might find it easier to put it behind you and not think about it anymore at all. Most importantly, remember that nothing is the end of the world!
- Even if you don't get the grades you hoped for, **you have options**. Talking it through with a teacher, older sibling, parent or other trusted adult might help. Lots of people don't get the grades they hope for and go on to have amazing, fulfilling careers - and if you want to, you can always resit a test if you think it's going to be a blocker to your uni or job applications.

Remember, an exam result is a snapshot of what you knew and how well you performed on one day. What you got in your exams is **not the most important or interesting thing about you** - you are so much more than your test results.

Written by Aroma Sharma at GoodWork
- NGTU Strategic Partner



GoodWork is a non-profit, supporting businesses taking bold, progressive and decisive action to make early careers fairer, more inclusive and more meaningful - all whilst supporting the young people who need it most to access and succeed at work.



MY EXPERIENCE OF EXAM SEASON

This one pager covers some top tips to help you get through your exams, whilst being motivated and organised.

What I did to help me through Exam Season

Be Organised:

- ✓ Suitable study space
- ✓ Separated folders
- ✓ Right equipment
- ✓ Clock nearby

Screentime:

- ✓ Set a limit on how long you should go on your phone for
- ✓ Take breaks in between
- ✓ Avoid going on your phone just before you sleep

Timetable:

- ✓ Suitable and accessible location i.e. screensaver, whiteboard, school locker
- ✓ Colour coded according to subject
- ✓ Prioritisation of topics (make a list from hard to easy)
- ✓ Timings i.e. having a set revision pattern during the day, breaks in-between study

Sleeping:

- ✓ No ridiculous late nights
- ✓ Get good hours of sleep
- ✓ Take naps during the day if that helps you gain more energy and re-focus

Healthy eating and drinking:

- ✓ Vitamins
- ✓ Good nutrients to give you energy
- ✓ Keeping hydrated
- ✓ Healthy snacking on breaks

Support:

- ✓ Use your support network if you are struggling
- ✓ Teachers, family, other students

Revision Methods

- Mind maps
- Blurting
- Online Resources
- Voice Notes
- Exam Papers
- Group Collaboration
- Flash cards
- Rhymes, stories or mnemonics

Each method is suitable for different people. There is no harm in sometimes adjusting your preferred method, you should choose what works the best for you!

How to stay motivated?

1. Know that you aren't in the exam season alone. Many other students are facing the same pressure as yourself. Speak to others if you are stressing, or take time to do an activity or hobby you enjoy doing to give you 'a change'.
2. Keep on top of your revision and do not mess up your timetable or plan of study if you have one.
3. Switch up revision methods. If you are struggling at first, start revising a topic you enjoy to get you going.



MANAGING ANXIETY, FEAR AND STRESS DURING EXAM SEASON

The exam season is nearly upon us and if you are like any normal human being, you are probably starting to feel an undercurrent of anxiety, fear and stress. It is totally normal to experience these feelings! The good news is that this article, will help you gain new and simple strategies to help deal with those exam nerves, find new motivation and understand how to master your mindset on the big day.

Human Brain 101

Before you learn a new strategy to help you with exams it is useful to understand your brain, how it works and how your mind responds naturally to danger. It is important to understand that your brain has evolved to keep you safe and comfortable.

In the past, when your ancestors would experience a threat, like being chased by a Sabretooth Tiger, their bodies would react by shifting into fight, flight, or freeze. Their palms would get sweaty so they would have improved grip, their pupils would dilate so they would have effective vision and their body would pump full of adrenaline and cortisol to help them battle the tiger or run. The problem is our minds associate an exam or test as the same as the sabretooth tiger, it produces the same response. This is great to run away from a prehistoric beast, but it is not so good if you about to sit an exam. This fight, flight, freeze response is known as our animal brain and dates to the early evolution of humans.

Once you can understand this, then you are can start to notice and acknowledge that before an exam your body and brain are simply responding to a threatening situation. If you can pause, breathe and acknowledge this then you will be able to access your human brain called the pre-frontal cortex (PFC). The PFC intelligently regulates your thoughts, actions and emotions through extensive connections with other brain regions. This is the best place to be before a big exam or test because you are coming from a place of control, not chaos.

Confidence is Created from Calm

It is natural to feel under confident before an exam even if you have spent months revising. If you have experienced this feeling then you might decide to cram right before the exam to make sure you have learned everything about the subject. However, cramming before the exam just adds more noise and clutter to your brain that is already a little anxious. As a result it is important to understand that confidence comes from having a quiet and calm mind.

The best sports players that perform well under pressure learn that confidence comes from this place of a quiet and calm mind. As a result, before the exam starts, take some mindful/deep breaths, go on a walk, listen to music and most importantly make sure you relax. This will put your brain into a state of quiet and calm which will allow you to access your PFC and gain new insight and wisdom. This is a perfect state to be in before an exam and will allow you to do your very best.

MANAGING ANXIETY, FEAR AND STRESS DURING EXAM SEASON CONT.

Language Creates Your Reality

The language that you speak and the words that you use, define and create your reality. For example, if you are constantly repeating the fact you are "worried, panicked stressed or anxious" then your brain will find evidence to prove that correct and you will become those things. You have to be a policeman for your brain be mindful of using or letting in any negative language that will alter your reality. Therefore use and reinforce positive statements, language and words to create a reality of opportunity and growth.

You could focus on what you are grateful for, what you are proud of or what you have already achieved in your life. Remember; where your attention goes, your energy flows. So be mindful of where you place your thinking before the exam. Repeat after me... I am proud of getting this far, I will do my best, I have got this.

Noticing Your Thoughts

Your brain is amazing and can create up to 80,000 thoughts a day. But as previously mentioned, many of your thoughts are negative (around 80%) because they are hardwired to keep you safe. Consequently, before you do anything scary your brain will do anything possible to keep you safe. Think back to a time when you got on a roller-coaster, gave a presentation or even put your hand up in class. Your animal brain started to think about all the potential negative outcomes that might happen.

Just before a presentation you might have thoughts like; 'what if people laugh at me?' 'what if I freeze?' 'What if I can't do this?' If you see your thoughts as reality, then you give them weight and you will sink down with them. But imagine if you noticed your thoughts instead of seeing them as fact. The thought of 'I will fail this exam' might enter your mind. If you see it as reality it will cause you to freeze before the exam. However, if we place the phrase; 'I notice I am having the thought that I will fail this exam' we start to create some distance between ourselves and the thought. As a result your stress levels go down, you feel less anxious and your mind is clear. Start to notice your thoughts and realise that your thinking is not reality.

Action Over Motivation

Many students struggle with motivation for revision for exams in general and almost 'wait' for motivation to appear so they can complete their work. However, motivation never appears, is requires action to get started and build momentum. If a car runs out of petrol you can't just wait for the car to start moving, you need to take action and refuel the car so it can start moving. It is the same for motivation.

Some students believe that they need to wait before they have motivation to take action and make progress. It goes something like this...

Motivation > Action > Progress

MANAGING ANXIETY, FEAR AND STRESS DURING EXAM SEASON CONT.

Action Over Motivation Cont.

What happens and separates the great from the good students is that they realise that gaining motivation and making progress starts with action. One small step, consistently taken, can lead to a massive change and build momentum. Start thinking like this...

Action > Progress > Motivation

Finally

Being totally honest, all of this information is useless if you don't go and actually implement a strategy to improve your life.

Ask yourself right now 'what is my action step from reading this?'

It takes a minimum of 21 days to change a habit, choose an action step and make it a non-negotiable commitment. There is always discomfort in growth and trying something new, but if you stick to your word, you can achieve great things.

Thank you for reading, I believe in you.

Written by by Sam Moinet, Founder of Student Breakthrough



Sam Moinet is an education disrupter and is leading the revolution in student well-being. As a teacher for half a decade, Sam found many problems within the education system and wanted to have a bigger impact on his students and provide them with essential life skills so that they can create success, happiness and well-being without pushing their problems away.

Having gained his coaching qualifications Sam created his own coaching programme that uses simple and effective tools so that students can believe in themselves, who they are and how they can achieve their best. [Student Breakthrough](#) has helped 1000's of students worldwide and trained 100's of teachers in order to bring coaching to more students and help more young people.

Sam is now Director of the [Educators Coaching Academy](#) which offers ICF coach training to teachers to improve mental health in schools.



THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH DURING EXAM SEASON

As a student during exam season, it is crucial to prioritise your mental health in order to be feeling confident, motivated and ready to sit your exams. Here are a few reasons why monitoring your mental health is so important:

Improved Productivity

When you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed, it can be difficult to focus and stay motivated. By actively taking care of your mental health, you can improve your ability to concentrate and be more productive in your revision and exams.

Increased Resilience

Mental health challenges can be tough to navigate but working on your mental wellbeing can help you build resilience and the ability to bounce back from setbacks. This can be especially important in an exam, where you may face tough questions in a pressured environment.

Enhanced creativity and problem-solving skills

Good mental health can also lead to increased creativity and problem-solving skills. When you are feeling anxious or stressed, it can be difficult to think 'outside the box' and come up with creative solutions to problems. By taking care of yourself, you can tap into your full potential and be more innovative in your revision and exams.

How can you take care of your mental health during exam season? Here are a few tips:

- **Find ways to manage stress:** Stress is a normal part of life, but it is important to find healthy ways to manage it. This could include exercising, practicing relaxation techniques like deep breathing or meditation, or finding hobbies or activities that help you relax.
- **Practice self-care:** Make sure to prioritise self-care, which can include anything from getting enough sleep and eating a healthy diet to taking breaks to relax and recharge.
- **Seek support:** If you are struggling with your mental health, it is important to seek support. This could include talking to a trusted friend or family member or seeking the help of a mental health professional.

In conclusion, monitoring your mental health is crucial, especially during exam season. By taking care of your mental health, you can improve your productivity, resilience, and problem-solving skills. Remember to prioritise self-care, seek support if you need it, and manage your stress levels to ensure that you are able to thrive in your exams and beyond.

Written Jeremie Agbeme

- NGTU Ambassador and Programme and Project Management Apprentice at Arup



MY EXPERIENCE OF EXAM SEASON

Exam season is a difficult season, there is no doubt about it. And, whilst the world keeps on turning, it can really feel like your exams are the be-all and end-all. Trust me, take it from someone who knows.

So I wanted to take you through some revision techniques that I used to walk into the exam hall with as much confidence as I could have as well as some top tips for you to take into this exam season.

The Best Revision Technique For Me.

I found the Pomodoro Revision Technique was the best way to keep motivated whilst revising. There are tons of explanations and tools out there to teach you this technique but essentially it consists of studying in blocks of 25 minutes and then giving yourself a five-minute break (top tip: be strict with this as 5 minutes can soon turn to 10/15 whilst scrolling on TikTok). Using this technique will allow you to have deep focus with no distractions (put your phone away!) to really make the most out of your study time.

After You Finish Your Exams.

Exam periods are intense both mentally & physically so make sure you reward yourself and celebrate when you reach the end. Think about planning something before your exams start so you can have something to motivate you through the challenging time. You deserve to enjoy yourself after all the hard work you have put in!

Keep thinking about that moment when you get your exam results and imagine how happy you'll be when all the revision has paid off - that should motivate you!

My Exam Season

Although my A-Level exams were cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, I learnt so much from my GCSE exams and the most useful thing that helped me during the exam period was creating a revision timetable. Create a timetable using online guidance (YouTube videos helped me!) and make a timetable that works for you and stick to it! Now, this may seem obvious initially, but it's something that many people fail to do. According to TheStudentRoom, students should revise for 15-20 hours per week. This may initially sound like a lot, but when you create a timetable that splits these hours up and allocate a certain amount of hours to each subject, they pass by really fast!

Quick Fire Top Tips For You

- Make a revision timetable and stick to it.
- Eliminate all distractions, especially making sure your phone is not in sight as you will be distracted by it!
- Sticky notes will be your best friend! Use them as memory prompts all around your house (I still remember the formula for the circumference of a circle 5 years later thanks to that sticky note next to my fridge!).
- Revise as if you're teaching the theory to someone else - this will really encourage recall and engrain the theory in your memory.
- Watch YouTube videos - there are so many great channels out there to help with whatever you're studying. Watching recap videos at any spare moment will help!

Written by Keira Penney
- NGTU Ambassador and Digital Marketing Apprentice at Girls in Marketing



STAY CONNECTED WITH US

Here at Not Going To Uni, we wish you the best of luck in your exams and beyond. Believe in yourself and stay positive!

We hope you have found our guide helpful. Please follow our social media channels, as listed below, for lots more tips, tricks and advice throughout exam season and more.



Follow us on Social Media



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Be at
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