

The Calder Learning Trust

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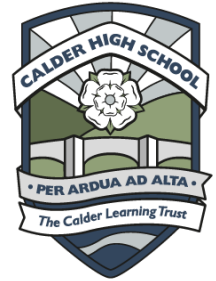
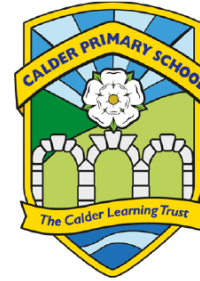
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Exam Tips for Students

It's important to look after your mental health while revising for exams, but how can you do this?

You are not defined by your exam results - you are so much more than the letters that appear on a sheet of paper.

We all know that exams are extremely challenging, not only because of what we have to learn, but also because they can affect our mental health. We're told to take regular breaks, but I find it hard to know how best to use them.

There's plenty of advice out there on study techniques, but I find that what I do when I'm not revising is just as important as what I do when I am.

These are my top tips to build self-care into the non-working parts of my day.

Five-minute grounding exercises

Try a grounding exercise. Grab a (non-academic!) book or sheet of paper and count how many letters there are on the page, or count how many blue things you can see in the room.

These types of exercises help to reduce anxiety by focusing your brain on a specific task that is unrelated to your work.

Another grounding exercise is the 54321 trick. You need to find:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell/taste
- 1 good thing about yourself

Make a hot drink, but don't take it back to your desk with you. Drink it away from your work space.

15-minute mindful revision breaks

Everybody, Everyday



- Find a YouTube video that makes you smile - I recommend dogs on trampolines and waterslides for this purpose.
- Make a hot drink, but don't take it back to your desk with you. Drink it away from your work space and turn it into a short mindfulness exercise - notice how the mug feels warm in your hands, but cools down gently, and the way the liquid feels when you take a sip. Try to bring your mind back to it if you find yourself going back into revision-mode before your break is over!
- Do something creative, like drawing, colouring or printing off funny pictures to stick on your noticeboard. You could even try to learn a new skill - I've been learning to crochet by reading blogs online.

Ideas for one-hour revision breaks

- Have a shower with a shower gel or soap that smells really good. You could try a lavender-scented shower gel or moisturiser, a smell many people find calming, so that the smell lingers for a while.
- Do something involving nature. Go for a walk, sit in the garden or buy a plant.
- Connect with other humans. Find somebody who also needs a break and have a chat with them – you might be able to help each other get through the exam period. It's easy to feel isolated when you're doing exams, so make time to connect with your friends.

If you're struggling to manage your mood or anxiety levels, don't keep it to yourself.

Important reminders when revising for exams

- It sounds obvious, but make sure you're drinking enough water and eating regular meals - it can be tempting to eat at your desk to maximise study time, but you'll work more effectively if you use meal times as a way to get away from your study space.
- Remember that everybody has different study patterns and energy levels, so try not to worry that you're not doing enough work. Keep in mind that people might exaggerate the amount of time they claim to be working for!
- If you're struggling to manage your mood or anxiety levels, don't keep it to yourself. Friends and family members can be a great source of support, and there's no shame in seeking professional help. YoungMinds have plenty of information about how to get support for your mental health, so you don't need to suffer in silence.
- Above all, remember that exams aren't everything. There are many options that don't rely on getting the top grades and in ten years' time, most people won't care or notice what grades you got when you were younger. You are not defined by your exam results - you are so much more than the letters that appear on a sheet of paper