

I'm always stressed

Stressed out all the time? There are a number of reasons you might be struggling to beat stress. Find out what it looks like when stress is causing a problem for your health. If it's really serious and you can't shake the stress, there might be something more serious going on.

Some of the things this can feel like:

- ▶ overwhelmed
- ▶ can't stop thinking about something
- ▶ always numb or detached
- ▶ regular sleeping problems
- ▶ always anxious, moody or frustrated.

When it causes a problem

Stress could be causing a problem for your health and your ability to cope if you're:

- ▶ sleeping badly
- ▶ feeling irritable about yourself or those around you
- ▶ having troubles concentrating
- ▶ having issues connecting with others
- ▶ feeling depressed, panicky or anxious.

If you're having any of these signs, it is a good indicator you need to work some stress relief tactics into your life and start managing your stress.

What can I do now?

- ▶ Work on relaxation techniques. au.reachout.com/ways-to-relax
- ▶ Get help from others if possible.
- ▶ Try meditation. au.reachout.com/smiling-mind
- ▶ Download ReachOut's apps designed to assist with worry and relaxation – **Breathe** au.reachout.com/reachout-breathe-app and **WorryTime** au.reachout.com/reachout-worrytime-app.

What does it mean if you're always stressed?

Stress is our body's way of rising to a challenge, and preparing to meet a tough situation with focus, stamina, and heightened alertness. But if you're always stressed out, it could be a sign that your body isn't dealing with the day-to-day stuff anymore. You might have gotten into a habit of negative thinking that you need to break.

To help manage the stress, it may be good to get the problem out in the air. You can't fix a problem if you don't face it. Talking to the person involved, a mate, or someone else you trust, may help you work out why you are stressed out and what you can do about it.

It could be something else

If you feel overwhelmed and like you can't go on, maybe you have trouble with coping skills. If you've tried a few stress tactics and they don't work, you might also have a more serious stress or anxiety disorder.

Some people worry all the time, and may need to do stuff to change the way they deal with things. Or they are more than normally afraid of something. That's fine – it's totally manageable, but you might need advice from an expert to figure out what's going on and what to do. They can give you the right strategies for reducing the type of stress you have, and a psychologist can work with you to train your brain to get out of habits that you don't like. Get information on anxiety in one of our handy fact sheets.

How to write a study timetable

Every study guide on the planet will say ‘organise your time’ and ‘make a study timetable’. But what the flip does this actually look like and how do you do it?

Check this out if:

- ▶ you want to see what an effective study timetable looks like
- ▶ you want steps for making a study timetable.

Step-by-step plan

1. Start early.

In one term or semester, you cover a lot of material. Start your timetable waaaaaay in advance so you have enough time to revise everything. You might even need to make a few different timetables.

2. Assign each subject a colour.

It will be easier to navigate your timetable this way and you will be able to see more easily if you have a fair balance between all of your subjects. Also it looks fancy,

3. Plan first.

Don't just dive straight into it. Think things through first.

4. Break it down.

On a separate piece of paper, under each subject list all of the things that you need to know. This might be all the topic areas for that subject, what you covered each week in class or the different sections of the exam.

5. Be precise.

What exactly do you need to do in order to feel confident in all of the areas you listed in step 3? For example, if one of the topic areas is ‘trigonometry,’ list the exact page numbers and exercises that you will do to practice trigonometry. Then think about how excellent it will feel when you reach the end of your timetable and you never have to do trigonometry ever again.

6. Start with filling in one subject at a time.

This way you can be sure you've covered everything. Take all of the information from step 4 and start to slot it into the timetable making sure that you are realistic with how long each exercise is going to take.

7. Factor in time for BREAKS.

And other fairly important things like food and sleep. Everyone works differently but generally speaking, a five minute-break every hour is a good amount. Give yourself the night off every once in a while as well.

8. Practice exams probably shouldn't go right at the start of the timetable.

The idea is that when you do the practice exams, you have already revised everything. This way you will get a realistic idea of how you can expect to perform in the real exam, and the areas that need further practice. That said, don't do the practice exam the day before the real exam because you may not have enough time to revise the areas that need work.

9. Mix it up.

No one likes studying maths for 6 straight hours. Give yourself a mix of subjects each day so that you decrease your chances of losing interest really quickly. Most people are more productive in the morning, so try mixing up the time of day you tackle different subjects as well.

10. Make alterations as you go.

A study timetable is not set in stone. You might find ways to improve it as you go. Be flexible with what you've written and be prepared to move things around if you find that your estimations of time were a bit off. It's a good idea to use pencil ...

You got this. Good luck.

Visit au.reachout.com/how-to-write-a-study-timetable for more.



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How to study

Studying before exams is the best way to be prepared. You can make it easier by preparing a dedicated study area, breaking it into manageable steps, revising what you've already studied, and managing expectations and pressure.

This will be useful if:

- ▶ you're going to be taking exams soon
- ▶ you want to learn about effective study habits
- ▶ you have trouble concentrating on study
- ▶ you want to learn about revision
- ▶ you're looking to manage pressure and expectations.

Break it down

You look at the amount of stuff you have to learn for a course or exam, and it feels like a huge, unmanageable task. So, break it down. Make a list of small, achievable study steps – maybe summarising a category or chapter – and tick each one off as you do it. Then, make a list that builds on that – you'll get further, more quickly, than you thought was possible.

Make a space

Decide on an area to study in (even just a corner of your room), and don't do anything else there. This will make it easier to avoid procrastinating. Make it a clean, well-lit, comfortable space so you're not constantly getting up and walking away.

Take breaks

Don't force yourself to push on through when you're tired. You can only absorb so much in one sitting. Try to take at least a five minute-break for every hour of study you do. Also, don't sacrifice sleep to study – you need to get good sleep to be on top of your game.

Revise

Instead of just working your way from one end of the textbook to the other, take time to go over what you've already looked at. This will help it sink in and become more accessible in your memory. Go over last week's formulas, charts, essays or chapters while you're pushing on with this week's.

Take the pressure off

Working up to exams can be (and probably is) pretty stressful. If pressure's motivating you, and isn't a problem, great. If it's getting to your head though you can relieve it by:

- ▶ talking to someone outside the situation
- ▶ getting some time away from study
- ▶ revising your expectations
- ▶ talking to people who you feel are putting extra pressure on you.

What can I do now?

- ▶ Make a study timetable but make sure you take time to relax.
- ▶ Try to limit your study to a certain amount of time a day.
- ▶ Check out our fact sheet on goal setting: au.reachout.com/how-to-set-goals.

Ways to relax

Knowing how to chill out and relax is really important for your mental and physical health, particularly if you're finding something a bit stressful. Find out info on different ways people relax, learn about breathing techniques, and what to do if you're finding it hard to chill out.

This can help if:

- ▶ you're a bit stressed
- ▶ you're a bit anxious
- ▶ your life is really busy.

Why it's important to chill out

Relaxation is really important for your mental health and wellbeing. Everyone needs time in their everyday lives to chill out and enjoy themselves, but it's easy to forget this when things get busy. If you know how to relax, and make an effort to actually relax when you need to, it can be a great coping strategy to help you when you're stressed out. People who are able to relax are more likely to bounce back from tough times, tend to be happier, have better physical health and are less likely to develop serious mental health difficulties.

How to chill out

There are a lot of different things you can do to relax and chill out. A lot of forms of relaxation, like walking and sitting quietly, are really simple, easy to do, and don't take much time. Others require more discipline and some training. Everyone will find some strategies for relaxation work better than others. The best thing to do is try out some of the suggestions below and make the ones that best fit your lifestyle a regular habit.

Some relaxation activities include:

- ▶ going for a walk
- ▶ taking some time out and really focusing on what's happening around you
- ▶ listening to quiet and relaxing music, which impacts your heart rate
- ▶ going fishing
- ▶ playing your favourite sport
- ▶ taking a bath
- ▶ going to a movie or watching a DVD
- ▶ focusing your attention on a puzzle
- ▶ reading a book
- ▶ learning yoga or meditation
- ▶ practicing meditation.

Practicing breathing techniques

When you're stressed out or feeling anxious, your breathing speeds up and becomes shallow, reducing how much oxygen reaches your organs. Learning breathing techniques is a great way of preventing you from experiencing the physiological symptoms of anxiety. To learn how to breathe efficiently:

- ▶ Become aware of your breathing. Place one hand on your upper chest and one on your stomach. Breathe in so that your stomach rises, and then falls back as you breathe out. The hand on your chest shouldn't move too much.
- ▶ Get a steady rhythm of breathing. Try and take in the same amount of air each time you breathe in.
- ▶ If you've managed the two steps above, try and slow your breathing rate down. Add a short pause between when you finish breathing out, and when you take another breath.

It might not feel totally comfortable at first, as it can sometimes feel like you're not getting quite enough air. But if you practice regularly it should begin to feel comfortable and easy.

What can I do now?

- ▶ Try breathing techniques: au.reachout.com/relaxation-training.
- ▶ Learn more about mindfulness and what it does: au.reachout.com/what-is-mindfulness.
- ▶ Set aside some time each day just for you to relax.
- ▶ Download ReachOut's app, Breathe, and get direct guidance on controlling your breathing and heart rate: au.reachout.com/reachout-breathe-app.

Visit au.reachout.com/ways-to-relax for more.



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All about getting active

We all know regular exercise is a beneficial thing to do, and there are plenty of reasons why. Get some tips on how to start exercising regularly, including what to do if you need a little push.

This can help if:

- ▶ you want to start becoming active
- ▶ you want to better your exercise routine
- ▶ you've stopped exercising and need a kick-start
- ▶ you want to feel better
- ▶ you want to be stronger.

Why exercise?

There are hundreds of good reasons it's worthwhile to get active and fit. Some of these include ...

- ▶ It charges you up: 30 minutes or more of vigorous exercise releases endorphins (the good stuff) in the brain giving you energy, vitality and the most intense natural high.
- ▶ It helps your positivity: studies show that exercise is a great way to manage depression. Not only does it release those happy hormones but also it can help clear your mind of stress, confusion and worry.
- ▶ It helps your social life: exercising with others, going to the gym or playing sports can be a great way to meet new people and to keep each other motivated.
- ▶ It helps you sleep: working the body and clearing the brain puts you in great stead for a good night's sleep and can help regulate problematic sleeping patterns.

If you need a little push

It's not always easy to get the motivation to start becoming active, so it's helpful to learn ways to get that push you need. If you plan your activities and personalise them to your interests and fitness-level, as well as try to see exercise as the positive and rewarding thing it is, you'll be much more likely to keep it up. For more information on how to get that push, visit: au.reachout.com/create-your-own-exercise-routine

Getting started

Many people give up on exercise because they haven't learned the best way to go about it. Here's some help:

- ▶ Little by little: if you're just getting into it, start gently with an activity you can manage. You don't go straight into playing Mozart as soon as you start learning the piano. Start small and then little-by-little increase the length and intensity of your session.
- ▶ The ideal workout: once you're a little more fit, try and get in 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise a day.
- ▶ Work it into your daily routine: try walking or cycling instead of driving or taking public transport.
- ▶ Pick the right workout: choose something you enjoy doing. If you see exercise as a chore, it will become a chore, and nobody likes chores. Don't plan half an hour on a treadmill if you'd rather be shooting hoops.
- ▶ Stretch: the way your body handles exercise and how quickly it recovers is directly linked to how much you stretch. It prevents muscle problems and increases flexibility. All you need is warm-up and warm-down for five to ten minutes.

What can I do now?

- ▶ Talk to your doctor to assess your health first.
- ▶ Remember that just moving is exercise. Try something fun like dancing or gardening to start with.
- ▶ Start small and work your way up to a regular exercise routine.

Visit au.reachout.com/all-about-getting-active for more.

