

The study blues

If there are holes in your study routine these will become painfully obvious during exam time, DAREN POPE discovers.



Facing your first round of Uni exams means hitting the books and chomping on the nails. Rest assured you're in good company. Assignment based assessment may play an important role across most study disciplines but the good old-fashioned final exam is likely to stay.

Plenty has been written about study technique but when push comes to shove what works for someone on the other side of the planet may not suit you and your particular study bent.

In the final year of a Degree in Consumer Science, RMIT student Andrea has something to say about exams and exam stress.

"In my course there's an exam for every subject except one so I would sit eight exams per year," she says.

"It's always stressful but the more assignments you have

before the exam the less stressed you are because you've kind of had some feedback and you know where the course is heading."

Andrea admits there's no wrong or right way of prepping for exams but has a few pointers for first year students. Top of her prep list is reviewing old exam papers.

"You can do that from week one and you can relate it back to whatever you've learned that day in class," she says.


Andrea has also made an art out of summarising her lecture notes.

"I bind them into a revision booklet so at the end of the year I've already got my revision notes and I don't have to memorise them because I was the one who wrote them."

First year RMIT Aviation student, Alex says everybody's approach to exams is different but he swears by music to reduce stress levels.

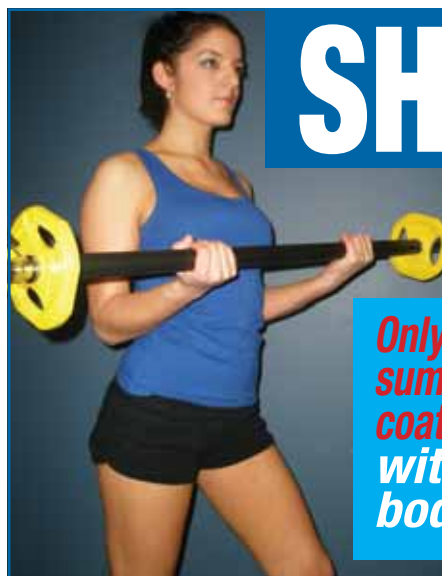
"I always have it going in the background – alternative kind of stuff," he says. "And I play in a band which is a good outlet to relieve any stress."

Alex might be onto something. Therapist claim music works on many levels as a significant mood-changer. They point out that as a baby in the womb, we were probably influenced by our mother's heartbeat and similarly the rhythm and beat of music has an unconscious calming effect. Whatever the science, hey, who doesn't want to have their favourite itune in the background.

So stay flexible and if things are not heading in the right direction and you are not getting enough done, be prepared to re-access how and when you hit the books. Remember, finding an effective study practise that works for you will deliver the best results. 

Stress busters

- To clear your mind, close your eyes and take 3-5 deep cleansing breaths.
- Be aware of how you use your time. Avoid procrastination or taking on more than you can handle. Learn to say "no" if you are too busy.
- Take a warm bath.
- To loosen tight muscles, do gentle muscle stretches for 15 minutes.
- Be flexible; if the first approach doesn't work, try a new one.
- Go for a walk, go shopping, get a haircut.
- Inject some creativity into your activities: paint a picture, play an instrument.
- Try to maintain regular sleep patterns.
- Is work piling up? Try breaking down your assignments into smaller, more manageable units. Set attainable goals for yourself on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis.
- Laughter is the best medicine. Watch *The Chasers War on Everything* or go to a movie.
- Think positive. Negative thoughts can trigger a physical fear reaction.
- Anticipate stressful situations and prepare for them.
- Stressful situations deplete your body of essential vitamins and minerals; eat healthy, balanced meals to stay in top form.
- Turn up your favourite song loud and dance.
- Limit your caffeine intake. Caffeine elevates negative stress symptoms.
- Call an old friend for a chat and all the goss.
- Get together with a friend and give each other shoulder rubs and if there's a very special friend ... well you get the picture.
- Not sleeping or eating well? Drinking too much? Feeling down? Learn to read your warning signals of too much stress.
- Stay physically active
- Set goals for yourself. Visualize future success.
- Putting your thoughts down on paper can help alleviate stress.



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