

Tomatoes for managing exam stress? Really? Bear with us...



It's normal to feel stress during important times like exam season. If you can keep a lid on it, a little stress can even work in your favour, helping you stay motivated and improving alertness.

But if stress becomes overwhelming, it can have the opposite effect, hindering your learning and impacting your performance on exam days.

One period where stress often rears its head is during the revision phase of exams. Before it gets out of hand, try this tomato-inspired method to help manage it.

The *Pomodoro Technique* is named after the tomato-shaped kitchen timer its Italian inventor used. Very simply, it's a time management tool that breaks up your study sessions into focused, 25-minute slots, followed by short breaks.

Set a timer for 25 minutes, work without distractions, then take a 5-minute break. After four sessions, treat yourself to a longer break. It's that easy.

And that's just one way to take the edge off exam stress. Here are three more simple strategies to help you stay in control:

Change your environment. Sometimes you just need a new setting. Try moving your studies to a different room or even outdoors. A shift in scenery can refresh your focus and mood.

Use relaxation techniques. Settle those exam day nerves by trying box breathing: relax your body, exhale to a count of 4, keep your lungs empty for a count of 4, breathe in for 4, and hold your breath for 4. Repeat and feel the calm.

Keep your perspective. Your exam results don't define your future success, or you as a person. They're a moment in a much longer journey that can follow several paths. Whatever happens, there are always options.

If you're still struggling, there's online mental health support for young people aged 16-18 on SilverCloud, available free through NHS Wales. You'll find help for anxiety and low mood, and all three programmes include an additional side module on managing exam stress, packed with practical advice.

Sign up via this link: <https://nhs.wales.silvercloudhealth.com/signup/>

Once you've registered, you can search for the SilverCloud Health app on App Store or Google Play and download it to your phone.