

ANXIETY AND EXAM STRESS



ROTHERHAM MAST

PROVIDING EMPATHETIC TRAINING FOR
SCHOOL LEARNING COMMUNITIES.



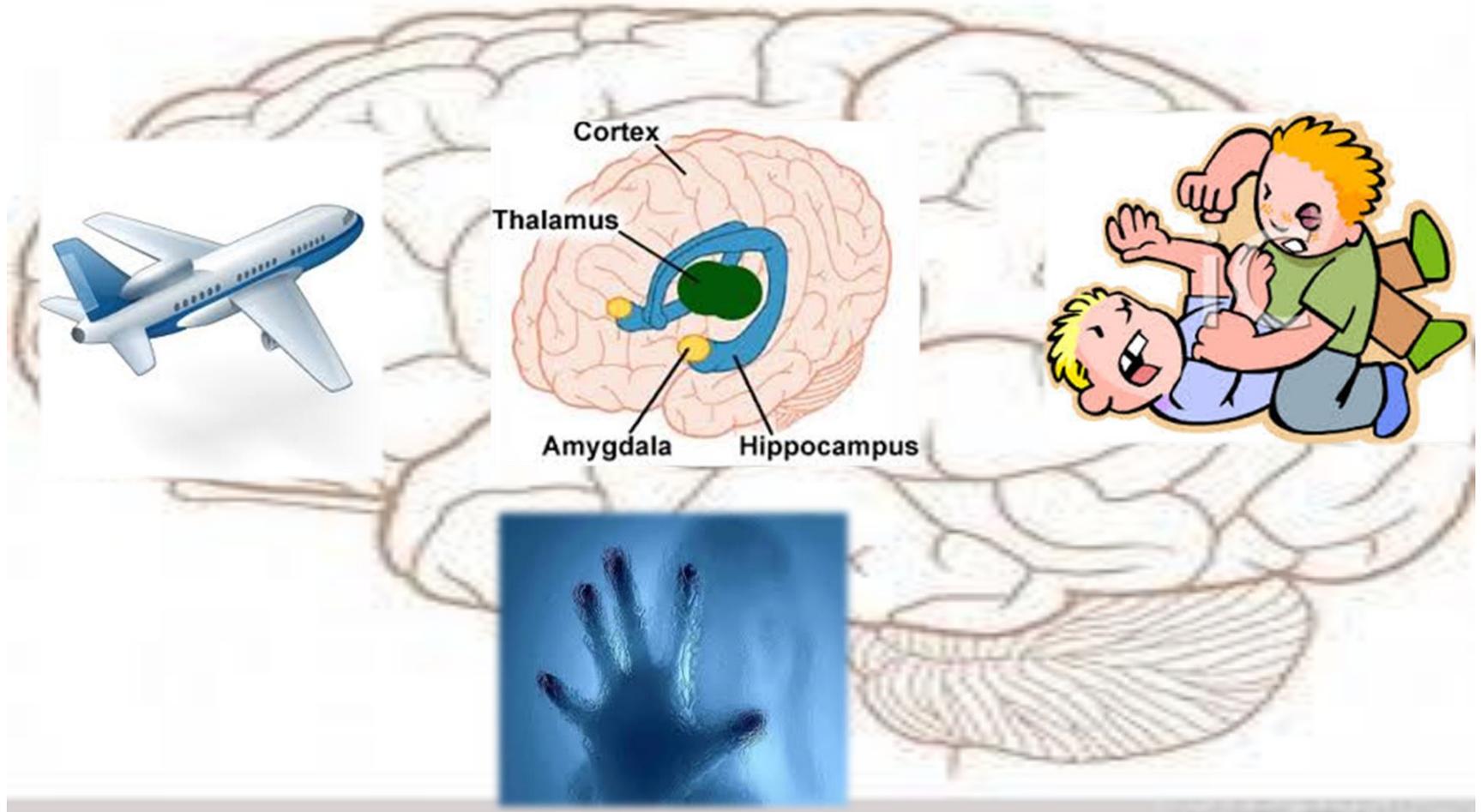
BEING BUSY

‘In today’s rush, we all think too much — seek too much — want too much — and forget about the joy of just being.’

- *Eckhart Tolle*



PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSES



FAULTY THINKING

- **Exaggeration**- exaggerating anything negative but minimising anything positive.
- **Overgeneralisation**- taking one bad experience and using it as a generalisation for everything. Thus, everything will be bad.
- **Catastrophizing**- imagining that the worst will happen.
- **Polarization** - all or nothing thinking.
- **Emotional reasoning** – thoughts about self/something is muddled up with how they feel, e.g. *You feel stupid therefore you are stupid and will fail.*

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Headache, back ache and neck pain
- Depletion in energy stores
- Flare up of diseases like eczema, psoriasis, arthritis
- Difficulty in concentrating and/or memory disturbance
- Nervousness / high anxiety
- Heightened emotions – angry or tearful (mood swings)
- Lowered self esteem and/or depression
- Weight loss
- Eating related problems
- Difficulty relaxing
- Sleep related problems
- Relationship difficulties

TIME OUT

‘There is virtue in work and there is virtue in rest. Use both and overlook neither.’

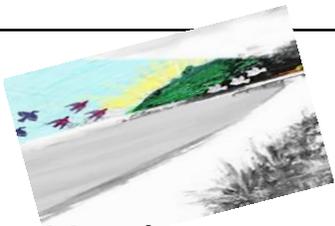
— *Alan Cohen*

- Take a 15 minute break every 90 minutes (minimum)
- Boosts creativity, productivity, memory, concentration and mood!



BREATHING





VISUALISATION

Having a special place, even if it's just in your head can give you somewhere to escape to when you are feeling upset

- Close your eyes and breathe deeply
- Imagine you are standing on a hillside and can see a place in the distance where you would like to go.
- What does it look like?
- Imagine you are slowly walking barefoot on a path towards it.
- What sounds can you hear? Are there animals, birds, running water?
- What does the ground feel like underneath your feet?
- What does the air smell like? What does it taste like?
- How do you feel as you are walking on this path?

Slowly open your eyes and pay attention to your breathing.

METAPHOR



BUG ON A WINDSHIELD

- Imagine that the anxiety provoking situation is a bug that has smashed on the windshield of your car. No matter how much you try to remove it with your wipers, it still stays smeared on there. All you can do is put up with it, ignore it as best as you possibly can and concentrate on driving the car safely.

PICTURE IN A PICTURE.

- Imagine you are watching a programme on a wide screen TV with a smaller screen in the corner. Think about all your anxious thoughts as being on the 'anxious channel' in the corner. Although you can't turn it off, imagine making it as small as possible. Concentrate on the main programme but notice when your attention is drawn back to the anxious channel; be aware that it is there but try redirecting your attention to the main programme and treating this as an annoyance.

SIMPLE YOGA



- Sit upright on a chair. Allow shoulders to relax. Breathe slowly in and out 5 times. This is the starting position
- Let your head fall slowly forwards; bring your chin down towards your chest.
- Roll your head slowly to the left until your ear is over your shoulder (doesn't have to touch!). Repeat on the right. Return to start.
- Lift the chin slowly towards the ceiling, feeling the stretch in the neck. Return to start.
- Look straight ahead. Slowly send the chin forwards, keeping it parallel to the floor. Keep shoulders relaxed.
- Slowly draw the chin back as far as you can. Return to start
- Slowly turn your head to look over the left shoulder as far as is comfortable. Shoulders relaxed. Return to start
- Slowly turn your head to look over the right shoulder as far as is comfortable. Shoulders relaxed. Return to start



SLEEP ROUTINES

- Plan a bed time
- Switch off electronic devices an hour before bedtime – while light interferes with melatonin production
- Have a warm bath or shower
- Make a hot drink – avoid caffeine
- Relaxation exercise – breathing/yoga
- Read for fun – before or in bed – or listen to music
- Write down any worries or thoughts for tomorrow
- Don't lie awake – repeat some of the above after 30 minutes of sleeplessness



COPING STRATEGIES

- Reflect on how much pressure young people are under – ie ‘secondary’ or lifestyle pressures.
- Know the warning signs.
- Avoid catastrophizing or other forms of faulty thinking.
- Avoid exam post mortems!
- Encourage regular exercise
- Sleep – avoid using this time for revision!
- Nutrition – don’t choose this time to change to a ‘healthy eating regime’
- Avoid caffeine and/or alcohol
- Find appropriate support network
- Consult GP if necessary
- Keep it in perspective.

ANXIETY AND EXAM STRESS



ROTHERHAM MAST

PROVIDING EMPATHETIC TRAINING FOR
SCHOOL LEARNING COMMUNITIES.