

Top Tips for Managing HSC Stress

Have a Study Plan

With all the work that needs to get done it can feel like there's not enough hours in the day. Having a study plan will help you to feel more in control of your school work – but only if it's realistic. Sit down and figure out how much time you have to complete school work through the week and on weekends, making sure you factor in travel time to and from school, time to unwind after school, time to wind down before bed, and adequate time for sleep. If this only leaves you with an hour or so for school work through the week, that's ok. Remember that the work you do in free period's counts as study time as well.

Aim for Balance

It can be tempting to put off leisure time or sacrifice sleep to meet deadlines, but too much study can lead to burnout, anxiety, and worse academic performance. On the flip side, too much down time can lead to stress and anxiety (in the longer-term), poor academic performance, and fewer options at the end of the year. Try to have balance between school work and relaxation. If this seems impossible consider what you need to put in place to make it possible. Do you need to work fewer hours at your part time job? Do you need to use your free periods more effectively?

Break Tasks Down

When you're feeling overwhelmed with assignments and tests sit down and make a list of the tasks you have to do. Look at which tasks absolutely have to get done today, which can wait until later in the week, and which don't have to be done until next week or the week after. Break any large overwhelming tasks into smaller steps. Focusing on small chunks at a time instead of the whole task will make your workload feel more manageable.

Prioritise Your Sleep

Aim for 8 ½ to 9 hours sleep each night. Missing out on 1 hours sleep can reduce your mental alertness by up to 25%. Not getting enough sleep also increases your vulnerability to illness. If you're having trouble sleeping make sure you have at least an hour to wind down before bed, avoid caffeine after 2pm, and avoid day time nana naps.

Take Care of Yourself

Taking care of yourself will build your resilience against stress. Make time for regular exercise, it's a great way to manage stress, improve your mood, and boost your immune system. Eat regularly and eat a balanced diet. Skipping meals causes low blood sugar, which can make you feel anxious and irritable. A healthy diet will also enhance your concentration and reduce your vulnerability for stress and illness.

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HSC STRESS

There's a lot of hype surrounding the HSC and it can be a stressful year.

Believe it or not, some stress can be helpful. Mild anxiety increases motivation, but too much stress can negatively affect your academic performance and your overall wellbeing.

Signs that your stress levels are too high include:

- Irritability or being in a bad mood
- Not feeling hungry
- Eating more than usual
- Uncontrollable worries about failing
- Muscle tension
- Not enjoying activities
- Feeling like you can't be bothered
- Feeling tired and lethargic
- Trouble falling or staying asleep
- Problems with concentration
- Getting easily upset about things you don't usually get upset about
- Headaches or stomach aches
- Indecisiveness

The hype surrounding the HSC can be misleading, but it will not make or break the rest of your life.

We've written some tips to help you cope with HSC stress, but if you continue to feel stressed, speak to your GP about a referral to a clinical psychologist.