

The logo for carecoins, featuring the word "carecoins" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. The letter "o" is replaced by a colorful icon consisting of several small, overlapping circles in shades of red, orange, yellow, green, and blue.

carecoins

UNiDAYS

Exam Season Survival Guide

Because your mental health
matters – especially now.

Exam Season Survival Guide

Let's be honest: exam season can feel like a lot. There's pressure from all angles – to revise, to perform, to stay motivated, to somehow balance it all without completely burning out. Maybe you're already running on empty. Maybe you haven't started yet and you're stuck in that guilt spiral.

Whatever stage you're at – this guide by Carecoins is here to remind you that you're human. Exams are important, yes. But your wellbeing matters too. You deserve to get through this feeling okay, not just scraped together.

Why Exam Stress Hits So Hard

You're not imagining it – exam stress is intense, and it's something most students face.

It's no surprise really. You're trying to retain loads of information, meet tight deadlines, and perform under pressure – all while managing daily life, maybe a job, and social expectations. It's a lot. And your brain, quite understandably, might start sounding the alarm bells.




85%
of students experience
exam-related anxiety



68%
say their sleep gets
worse during exam
season



50%
admit to skipping
meals because of
stress



80%
turn to quick fixes like
energy drinks or sugary
snacks to cope

What's Going On In Your Brain?

When you're stressed, your brain switches into "survival mode." That's the fight-flight-freeze response. You might notice your heart racing, your chest feeling tight, or your thoughts speeding up – or going totally blank. It's your body's way of trying to protect you, even if there's no real danger.

You might experience:

- ☞ **Trouble sleeping** (your brain won't switch off)
- ☞ **Feeling wired, jittery or restless**
- ☞ **Mood swings** – snapping at friends, crying over "small" things
- ☞ **Physical symptoms** – headaches, stomach aches, or muscle tension
- ☞ **Avoidance** – suddenly cleaning your whole room instead of revising (we've all been there)

These reactions are common, and they don't mean you're failing. They mean you're under pressure – and that your nervous system is doing its best to cope. Luckily, there are ways to help your brain (and body) feel a bit safer and more steady.

Tips to Make Exam Season More Bearable

You don't have to overhaul your life – small, doable shifts can make a big difference.

1. Get Organised (But Be Kind About It)

It's tempting to avoid everything when you feel behind. But planning can help cut the panic – if you keep it realistic. Make a rough weekly plan, and break your work down into chunks. Focus on one task at a time, not the whole mountain.

Try this:

Instead of "Revise everything for biology," break it into:

- 🕒 Re-watch lecture 4
- 🕒 Make flashcards for Chapter 6
- 🕒 Quiz myself on key terms

This makes it feel achievable – and ticking things off gives your brain a little dopamine hit.



2. Ditch the All-Nighter Mindset

You might feel like staying up late is productive – but your brain doesn't learn well when it's exhausted. Sleep helps consolidate memory, improves focus, and keeps your mood stable. All-nighters might give you more time, but they'll likely leave you foggy and anxious the next day.

Try this

- ☀ Aim for 7–9 hours of sleep if you can
- ☀ Wind down with a warm drink, a low-stimulus playlist, or a shower
- ☀ Avoid doom-scrolling – your brain needs gentle signals it's time to rest

Even if you can't sleep, resting is still helpful.

3. Feed Your Brain (Even If You Don't Feel Like It)

When stress hits, eating habits often slip – but food is fuel, especially when your brain is working overtime. Skipping meals or relying on caffeine and sugar will leave you drained, anxious, and less able to focus.

Try this:

- ☞ Keep easy, quick meals on hand: instant oats, toast and eggs, pasta and frozen veg
- ☞ Snack mindfully – nuts, fruit, or crackers will keep you going better than sugary energy drinks
- ☞ Don't forget to drink water – dehydration can make stress and fatigue worse

Think of food as part of your revision toolkit – not an afterthought.



4. Take Breaks That Actually Help

You're not a robot. You can't revise for hours without breaks and expect to retain anything. Short breaks actually help you focus better and stop burnout from building.

Good breaks include:

A walk outside –
movement + fresh
air = mood boost

A power nap
(20 minutes max)

Stretching or a
quick workout

Something that
makes you laugh
(silly videos count)

Avoid using every break to scroll

– it can keep your brain in “input mode” rather than “reset mode.”

5. Lower the Bar from “Perfect” to “Enough”

You don't need to know everything. You don't need to get every answer right. What you do need is to do your best with the energy you have. That's enough.

Try reframing your thoughts:

Instead of:

“I'm not doing enough.”

or

“I should have started earlier.”



Try:

“I'm doing the best I can in tough circumstances.”

“I'm starting now, and that's what matters.”

Compassionate self-talk isn't fluffy – it's effective.

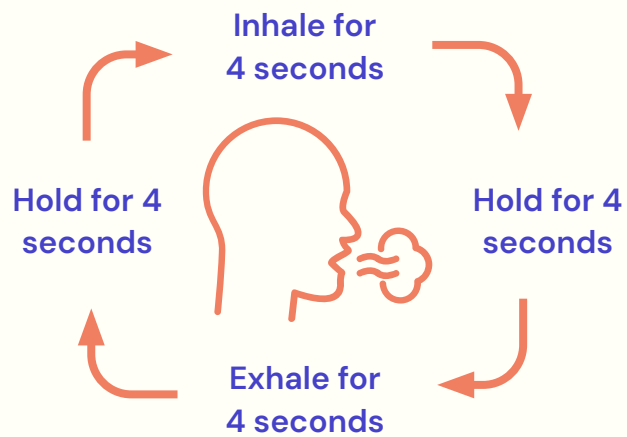
Don't forget to celebrate yourself as well! The small wins are still wins, so be kind to your brain to keep it wanting to work hard (e.g. “I successfully revised one topic today”).

Feeling Overwhelmed? Try These Grounding Tools

When anxiety spikes or you feel like you're spiralling, grounding helps bring you back to the present. These techniques are easy to use and can genuinely help reset your nervous system, and we mean that.

These grounding techniques will help take your brain out of the fight-or-flight response and into a cognitive, rational state - we know it's hard to believe but give it a go and see for yourself.

Box Breathing



Repeat for 3–4 cycles. Great before a revision session or exam.

The 5-4-3-2-1 Technique

5. things you can see
4. you can touch
3. you can hear
2. you can smell
1. you can taste

Helps when your thoughts feel fast or panicky– great for before an exam or presentation.

The “Name It” Trick

Say to yourself:

“I’m feeling overwhelmed because I care about doing well. That’s okay.”

Naming the feeling makes it easier to sit with and move through rather than fight it.

Protecting Your Mental Health

(During Exams and After)

It's tempting to avoid everything when you feel behind. But planning can help cut the panic – if you keep it realistic. Make a rough weekly plan, and break your work down into chunks. Focus on one task at a time, not the whole mountain.



1. Make time to check in with yourself

When you're in go-go-go mode, it's easy to ignore how you're actually feeling until things boil over. Try checking in with yourself at least once a day – even if it's just asking:

“How am I, really?”

“What do I need right now – food? rest? a stretch? a chat?”

You're more likely to notice when things are slipping – and take action sooner – if you check in regularly.

2. Prioritise your recovery, not just your revision

Pushing through constantly without rest doesn't make you stronger – it makes you more likely to crash. Your brain and body need recovery time to function well. That means rest days, early nights, short breaks, slow mornings... whatever helps you feel a bit more human.

Tip: Build rest into your plan the same way you plan revision. That makes it part of your success strategy, not a reward you never get around to.

3. Speak up if you're struggling – even a little

You don't have to be "at breaking point" to reach out. Whether it's talking to a friend, messaging your tutor, or accessing support services, you're allowed to say: "I'm finding this hard." That small moment of honesty can open the door to real help – and some relief.

4. Don't bottle it up

It's easy to withdraw when things feel overwhelming. But keeping everything inside only adds pressure. You don't have to go into full detail – even just telling someone "I'm not doing great this week" can be a big release.

Letting things out doesn't mean you're burdening anyone. It just means you're being human.

5. Reflect – and reset

You don't have to be "at breaking point" to reach out. Whether it's talking to a friend, messaging your tutor, or accessing support services, you're allowed to say: "I'm finding this hard." That small moment of honesty can open the door to real help – and some relief.

6. Be gentle with yourself in the aftermath

Once exams are done, it's not uncommon to feel... weird. You might feel flat, emotional, or even more anxious than before. That's normal – your body and brain are coming out of survival mode, and that can take time.

Give yourself space to decompress. Celebrate your effort, not just your results. You made it through something hard – that matters.



Where to Get Support

Whatever you're facing – whether it's something overwhelming or just a quiet feeling that something's off – you don't have to go through it alone. Support is there for you, no matter how big or small things might feel. Reaching out doesn't mean you're failing – in fact, it takes a lot of strength to say, "I'm not okay right now." Your mental health matters just as much as your grades, your goals, or anything else you're juggling and you're allowed to put yourself first. There are people ready to listen and help when you're ready:



On Campus:

- 🕒 **University counselling services** (waiting lists can be long — reach out early)
- 🕒 **Student union or welfare officers**
- 🕒 **Personal tutors and academic advisors**
- 🕒 **Peer support groups**

External Resources:

- 🕒 **Student Minds:** [studentminds.org.uk](https://www.studentminds.org.uk)
- 🕒 **Mind:** [mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk)
- 🕒 **Papyrus:** For suicide prevention in young people [papyrus-uk.org](https://www.papyrus-uk.org)
- 🕒 **Samaritans:** Call 116 123 anytime, for free

Self-Help Tools:

- 🕒 **Apps:** Headspace, Calm, MoodTools, Student Health
- 🕒 **AppTogetherall:** A peer support community available to many students
- 🕒 **Podcasts:** “The Mindful Student”
“Happy Place”
- 🕒 **Speak to friends and family**



If you need the extra support...

We know that taking the first step can feel overwhelming — but you don't have to do it alone. Through our partnership with **UNiDAYS**, students can now access personalised, high-quality mental health support at an exclusive discount:

carecoins

40% off your first 3 Carecoins –
Covering your initial consultation and first hour of therapy

20% off all future sessions –
Because support should be sustainable

Whether you're struggling with stress, feeling stuck, or just need someone to talk to, our carefully matched therapists are here to help you feel heard, supported, and empowered — every step of the way.

Learn more or book your session now at:

t: **0300 002 0061**

e: **care@carecoins.co.uk**

Because **your wellbeing** is worth investing in — and we're here **when you're ready**.