

STUDY LEAVE ANXIETY & EXAM FEAR

WHAT TO DO. WHEN YOU BLANK. IN AN EXAM.

WHY WE BLANK

Fear is a healthy human response to imagined or real danger.



It just comes up.
We don't choose it and we can't control the first wave.

It's not our fault and it's not a problem.

Fear temporarily freezes the Executive Function part of the brain.

This temporarily reduces our memory, attention and reasoning.

So we blank.



AT THIS POINT, WE CAN PANIC AND ESCALATE THE FEAR. LIKE THIS:

Worry about the fear:

'Oh no! If I get scared, my Executive function will freeze and I won't be able to perform! Now I have to worry about fear too!'

Catastrophise:

'I've blanked! I'm going to fail!! I won't get into sixth form! I'll have no future!'

Panic about the symptoms:

'My heart is pounding! I'm sweating! My head is aching! Something is terribly wrong!'

Panic about the brain freeze:

'I don't understand this question! My brain has blanked! I CAN'T DO THIS!!!'



OR WE CAN SOOTHE THE FEAR.

Soothing fear re-opens the Executive Function.

All our brain power comes back.

This can be a quick process. Here's how to do it.



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HOW WE SOOTHE FEAR

STEP 1: Welcome the fear



The fastest way to let fear go is to let it come.

'This is fear.

Hello, fear!

It causes tension and freezes my brain.

That's ok. It's normal and it's temporary. It will pass and my brain will re-open.'



STEP 2: Notice the symptoms calmly

'I notice my heart pounding. I'm sweating. My stomach is cramping.



That's ok.

It's a normal part of fear.

I can soothe it.'



STEP 4: Refocus on the questions

Leave the scary questions. Try some easy ones.

Your brain will see it CAN do this.

You can return to the harder ones later.

Keep closing your eyes and taking breathing breaks if the fear symptoms return.

You can always soothe them.



STEP 3: Breathe out the fear

Close your eyes (yes, in the middle of your exam!)

Breathe in slowly, counting to 4.

Breathe out slowly, counting to 4.

Keep breathing until you find calm in your body.

Feel the tension in your head and stomach relaxing. Your brain is opening up again.



PSYCH TIP!

COMPASSION REDUCES FEAR

(Subtly!) tap your opposite arms in a self-hug and think 'This is so hard. This is scary. This is a hard situation. I'm doing really well to attempt it.'
Self-compassion reduces fear and opens your Executive Function again.



PSYCH TIP!

SAFETY REDUCES FEAR

Remind yourself, 'It is safe for me to fail. There are loads of success routes not based on exam results.'
When you feel safe to fail, your brain reduces fear and opens your Executive Function again. You end up performing better!

CLICK [HERE](#) FOR A BREATHING EXERCISE YOU CAN LISTEN TO, SOOTHING EXAM FEAR.