Studying, getting homework and assignments done and sitting exams can be difficult at the best of times, and they feel even harder if you are stressed, anxious or depressed. Developing good study habits, managing your time and dealing with stress as it happens can all help you to stay on top of your study so that it doesn’t get you down.

STUDY HABITS

Good study habits can help you to learn better as well as making sure that you get everything done. A helpful start is having a study area that is well lit and away from noise and other people in the house. If this isn’t possible, it might be better to study at the library. Make sure your desk is tidy and organised – it means you can concentrate on studying and learning, not trying to find where you put something.

Knowing your preferred learning style can help you to remember what you learn. ‘Learning styles’ refer to how you process information. Everybody has different learning styles and it helps to work out which is most useful for you. For example, some people work better using text-based memory tools (like acronyms), while others find visual tools (like mind maps or tree diagrams) more useful.

Even when you want to study, it can be hard not to procrastinate. Procrastination is when you do everything except what you need to do. It’s normal to do this a little, but too much procrastination can just add to your stress and result in you not giving yourself enough time to study. Managing your time and setting realistic goals can be helpful ways to avoid procrastinating and make tasks seem less overwhelming.

Avoiding distractions like phone calls or emails is also a good idea when you are trying to study. It might help to put the answering machine on or get others in the house to take messages for a while. You can always ring people back later.

Regular breaks are also important. Getting up, moving around and away from your desk at least every 50 minutes for 10 minutes makes you concentrate and learn better.

WHEN YOU DON’T DO AS WELL AS EXPECTED

Failing or not performing as well as expected at school, uni or TAFE can be very stressful, especially if you’ve previously averaged higher marks, or are depending on high results to get into a particular course or profession. Rather than feeling bad about it, try to take some positive action.

• Talk to your teachers — If they know you are having problems, they will be more likely to organise extra help, extra time to complete tasks or special consideration when marking.

• Don’t be hard on yourself — Getting lower marks than you hoped for doesn’t mean you are a failure or that you won’t achieve your goals, but rather that you might benefit from improved study habits or reassessing your choices.

• Get help when you need it — If you feel so anxious or depressed about your results that you’re no longer able to enjoy things you used to, it’s a good idea to talk to a trusted adult, like a school counsellor or family friend.

MAKING THE MOST OF STUDYING

Visit: www.youthbeyondblue.com
Info line: 1300 22 4636
beyondblue: the national depression initiative
MANAGING YOUR TIME

Meeting deadlines for homework or assignments or preparing for exams can sometimes seem overwhelming. It can be helpful to make a study timetable so that you can balance study and your other commitments. Write down all the things you need to do each day of the week, and how long you need for each, including time for enough sleep, relaxation, and exercise.

If you have exams coming up, find out the date of each exam and work out a study timetable leading up to them. Include tests that will help you identify gaps in your knowledge. This can give you some direction and help you focus on what to study each week or day. When you sit down to study each day, it can be useful to make a ‘to do’ list. Breaking what you need to do down into small, manageable tasks makes it seem less overwhelming. Crossing each thing off as you complete it can give you a sense of achievement and help you manage the time you have left for study that day.

MANAGING STRESS

Everybody gets stressed about studying sometimes and it can help to keep you motivated and focused. But too much stress can make you feel overwhelmed, confused, exhausted and edgy. It can also lead to mental health problems like depression and anxiety. So it’s a good idea to deal with the stress before it gets to you.

Physical activity such as swimming, walking, yoga, cycling, dancing or going to the gym is a good way to reduce the tension in your muscles and your mind. Relaxation exercises that slow your breathing and relax your muscles can also help to take your mind off things. If you’re feeling overwhelmed, you might find it helpful to talk to a teacher or counsellor. It’s also important to ask for, and accept, support from your family if you can. This support might be practical, like picking you up from the library, or emotional, including advice or help. If you would prefer to talk to someone outside the situation, see the contact details for telephone and online counselling opposite.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

• Having a balance of activities in your life can help you to avoid burning out. It’s a good idea to find time each day for relaxing, being active and hanging out with friends.
• Even though you might not feel like you have time, exercising, eating well and plenty of sleep are also important.
• If you are finding it hard to stay on top of your study, it’s a good idea to talk to someone about it. A parent or adult friend can help you get things in perspective or offer advice on better ways to manage.
• Alcohol or other drugs (including lots of caffeine or other energy boosting drinks) won’t take away the pressure of study and the after-effects often make you feel even worse.
• Being organised will help you to make sure that you don’t leave everything to the last minute, and will also make you feel more in control.

MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT
You can speak to trained counsellors by phoning these 24-hour telephone counselling services:
- Lifeline 13 11 14 (cost of a local call)
- Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800 (freecall)

Information and support is also available from the following websites:
- beyondblue www.youthbeyondblue.com or www.beyondblue.org.au
- Information on depression, anxiety and how to help a friend

headspace www.headspace.org.au
Information, support and help near you
ReachOut.com www.reachout.com
Information and support for young people going through tough times

The websites below can help you to find health services in your area. They list services that are either free of charge or low cost.
Kids Help Line www.kidshelp.com.au
Lifeline Service Finder www.lifeline.org.au/service_finder

If you or a friend want to communicate with someone via email or online, Kids Help Line offers confidential, non-judgemental, emotional support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

SOURCES
This fact sheet is based on the following sources:
- ReachOut.com www.reachout.com
- beyondblue www.youthbeyondblue.com and www.beyondblue.org.au