



Stress and Relaxation...

Anxiety or nerves are caused by the body releasing too much adrenaline. Adrenaline is a very useful hormone if you can control it because it sharpens your eye-sight, makes brain function quicker and gives you energy. Unfortunately this kind of energy is short-lived and that is why you often feel exhausted after exams.

If your body produces too much adrenaline you may get sweaty palms, faster heart-rate, nausea and shaking. There is no way to stop this unless you can control the adrenaline being released by your brain other than being able to relax.

If you are aware that you are feeling overly-anxious in the exam room try this short exercise:

- Place both feet firmly on the floor and sit up straight
- Put your arms down by your sides and give them a gentle shake
- Raise your shoulders up to your ears (feel how tense they are) and then very slowly release
- Place your hands under your rib-cage and open your mouth to take a deep-breath in pushing out your stomach (your diaphragm is the muscle that controls breathing and lies under your ribcage, sucking in when taking a breath in merely constricts your breathing making you more tense)
- Hold the breath inside yourself for a few seconds and then release very slowly

If you have space before you go into the exam you can repeat the breathing exercise standing up

If your mouth is dry try to take a sip of water, suck a mint or gently bite the inside of your cheeks.

If your hands are sweaty before the exam try this standing exercise:

- Stand up straight with your arms by your side
- Raise your arms (palms facing the floor) until they are shoulder height and hold for a couple of seconds
- Turn your palms to face the ceiling and continue to raise your arms over your head (do not go this far if you have shoulder or back problems)
- Interlink your fingers and push very gently upwards
- Release your fingers and give your arms a gentle shake

Make sure you only do these exercises in a gentle way especially if you have back or shoulder problems or other medical conditions.

