

## IACP SHARES TIPS TO MINIMISE STRESS DURING STATE EXAMS

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The Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) has advice for students sitting state exams on how to minimise stress and maximise results. With the state exams fast approaching, IACP Chairperson Bernie Hackett has the following tips for both Junior and Leaving Certificate students.

“First and foremost, I would like to reassure students that while the state exams are undoubtedly very important, they are not everything. Even if you don’t get your first choice, there will be many other possibilities available to you. Sometimes, you will see with the passage of time, that not getting what you want can open the door to exciting alternatives. Sitting exams is incredibly challenging, but it will be over before you know it.”

Below are some helpful tips to support students during exam time.

- **Timetabling**

This might seem obvious but making honest and realistic plans as to how much study you can do, and on what you should concentrate on, will help you gain a sense of control. When you have achieved your daily tasks, tick off what you have completed. This will give you a sense of achievement.

- **Reward Yourself**

It is positive to have nice things to look forward to – even just a phone call with a friend, a lovely meal, or watching an episode of your favourite TV show. When you have done your work, you will have truly earned your reward and it will be even more enjoyable.

- **Food and exercise**

You will always feel better after a bit of exercise. Even just a short walk can be helpful in clearing your head and relieving stress. You could also stick on your favourite music and go for a short run to change your energy. Similarly, you will feel better if you eat well. This means cutting down on energy-draining sugar, highly processed food and caffeine.

- **Meditation**

There are hundreds of very good videos on YouTube how to meditate. Even ten minutes can be effective in bringing you back to your breath and back to your body, relieving tension and stress.

- **Breaks from social media**

Social media can be great fun and a way to communicate with friends, but it’s also very absorbing as well as time consuming. There are free apps such as Off time that specifically block social media. Time on social media can then be used as a reward at certain times – which will make it more enjoyable and less compulsive.

- **Gaining perspective**

State examinations, especially the Leaving Certificate, are tough. ~~But~~,But clichéd as it might sound, they are not the end of the world. There are hundreds of options and opportunities out there if it doesn’t go in the way that you had wished.

- **Get enough sleep**

It can be hard to sleep when stressed. That's why it is advisable to switch off (literally and metaphorically) an hour before bed and put your devices (which can be overly stimulating) away. Eight hours a day is the ideal time to sleep and will help you function so much better the next day.

- **Open up**

It is so important to talk to friends and family about your feelings. If you are feeling overwhelmed, it's good to share that with someone who cares, and who will be able to support you. Remember that this is a particularly testing time, but that it will pass. The IACP offers a list of fully accredited, professional counsellors and psychotherapists should you seek additional help. For a list of accredited counsellors or psychotherapists in your area, visit [www.iacp.ie](http://www.iacp.ie).

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editor:** *The Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy was established in 1981, the IACP identifies, develops and maintains professional standards of excellence in counselling and psychotherapy. IACP aims to protect the public by promoting best practice and the professional development of its members. IACP is the largest professional body of counsellors and psychotherapists in the Republic of Ireland with nearly 5000 members nationwide. IACP provides a telephone referral helpline, an information service; and an online counsellor / psychotherapist / supervisor directory. IACP is a registered Charity (CHY 6615). For further information, or to arrange an interview with an IACP Spokesperson, please contact Aoife Darmody, 089 214 2276.*