

## Managing Pressure and Avoiding Stress

A couple of years ago, a very high-achieving and busy year 13 very kindly met with a year 8 boy and me to talk about how he organised his life to avoid stress and manage pressure. What he said was so useful that I have decided to write it up!

### **It's silly to leave everything till Sunday!**

That way you won't get a break and will start the week feeling like you haven't had any time off. Keep your perspective – it's important to have fun and to be social. That's all going to help with networking, whatever walk of life you're aiming for.

If you have a lot of commitments on Saturdays, accept it and plan for it. Accept that you have a 6 day working week. Lots of people do!

### **Can you drop something?**

Work out if there is something that can be dropped – your least favourite thing or the least 'useful' and drop it! Use the time you've freed up to get some other work done so you don't have so much work to do at home.

Use travel time to get some work done, especially if you travel by train.

### **Learn to SAY NO!**

It's easy to feel pressurised into taking on more than you really can, especially if you're a scholar. Get tough about saying NO, when you need to.

### **Plan for busy times in advance and get support.**

If you're young, remember that teachers will see you that way, but you can still behave in a really mature manner, being honest about when you really are too busy.

If you're a musician, get support from the music staff who will help you explain to teachers that you have music commitments so can't do as much other stuff, at certain times of the year. The same is true if you are an actor. Get support from the drama teachers. This works much better if you plan in advance, so teachers are pre-warned.

If you're aiming to be a musician or an actor, you will need to make sure school understands that it is your priority and it takes a lot of time! As well as the practising and performing, time is needed for networking and making contacts.

### **Do 'sprints'**

Break the workload up into bits so that it doesn't look so overwhelming – then tackle it, small task by small task.

Break up music practise with other work. You'll practise much more effectively in short, intensive bursts – maximum 15 mins – unless you are specifically building stamina for a long piece.

### **Plan for the GCSE and A level workload**

Maybe you're looking ahead and panicking about the increased workload later on?

DON'T!

Instead:

- Learn new stuff as early as possible, as you go along, so you don't have masses to learn when it comes to revision time.
- Stay on top of your workload – don't let it mount up.
- Plan out when you will get work done. Think about when you will fit in big things like music/LAMDA exams and don't plan for them to clash with busy times at school
- Organise yourself with a diary, phone reminders etc – whatever works for you – but LOCK YOUR PHONE AWAY WHEN ACTUALLY REVISING.
- Get the syllabus for each subject so you know exactly what you will need to do.

**If you're older...**

You will be in the interesting position of being a pupil but also sometimes being treated like an adult, in terms of responsibility. Get used to it! Sometimes you'll be treated like a pupil and sometimes like an adult – that's just how it is!

**Generally, however old you are:**

Set yourself short-term goals which work towards your big ones

Test your system and if it isn't working, change it!