

*You have just joined a peer counselling programme at your school. As part of your training, the school counsellor, Mrs. Tam, wants you to write a letter of advice in response to a letter from student in Secondary 2 (Refer to Longman English Edge JS3 pp.16). Write about 250 words.*

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Dear Sam,

Thanks for your letter. I'm sorry to hear about your problems. However, it's actually really common for people to feel stressed out and sleep badly. I've experienced the problems you mentioned in the letter before several years ago. So don't worry, the issues you're facing right now is completely natural. Perhaps you're seeking some solutions, so I'm here to provide some advice for you to try out and see if they'll work for you!

Initially, you told me that you'd been feeling stressed out due to homework and revision. You even have to work until midnight every night and do not have time for eating properly and relaxing. I understand that being snowed under with tons of work could be really stressful. Here are 3 good tips for you to reduce stress: exercise, take a break and be optimistic. Firstly, exercise. What I mean to exercise is to do sports regularly. Building up a habit of exercising could definitely help you relieve the stress you feel because endorphins ('happy hormones') are produced during exercising. This hormone is effective for reducing stress.

Secondly, take breaks. Always putting yourself under pressure does not only decrease your efficiency in working, but also leads to certain health issues such as insomnia and diabetes. Therefore, giving yourself a break sometimes isn't a bad thing to do and don't be too harsh on yourself. Perhaps listening to music, having some snacks, or simply going for a shower could help you chill out. Thirdly, be optimistic. Always look and think on the bright side. If you're worried about the test tomorrow, be confident and say to yourself, 'you can do it!' Research shows that optimism indeed can help people relax and perform better in tests and quizzes. Commit to memory: never work until midnight and dine improperly. This adversely affects your health so you should definitely break the habit!

In your letter, you also mentioned that you couldn't sleep well for weeks. You always wake up in the middle of the night, worrying about your studies and having nightmares about school. Also, you said that you're confused about whether or not to take sleeping pills. I'd answer the last question first: never! Do not take sleeping pills (though it might improve your sleeping qualities) Since the harm caused outweighs the benefits. Sleeping pills can bring headaches, dizziness, poor memory and even hallucinations! The real way to sleep well is to do something restful before sleep. Remember, no studying nor playing video games. Drawing, singing or just doing literally nothing before going to bed could clear your mind and reduce the stimulation to your brain. Thus, you can have a good night's sleep.

I hope the advice forementioned can really help. Write soon and let me know how things work out.

Best wishes,

Chris

Trainee Peer Counsellor