

*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,

I am pleased to be your listener. I'm very sorry to hear about your problems. I hope I can give you some advice which you will find useful and feasible.

Firstly, you mentioned that you have been feeling stressed. It is acceptable that you feel enormous pressure overwhelming you owing to the education system of Hong Kong, which is filled up with tests, examinations, homework, etc. I understand you have to squeeze more time for studies, such as skipping meals, neglecting social circles and lives. If you become a Form 5, Form 6 or even a university student, you will face folds of pressure that currently you are facing. Therefore, you should learn how to cope with these as soon as possible. If I were you, I would set a timetable to help organize your working schedule. Perhaps you think that this is useless, and the reason behind is you don't strictly follow your rules. If you stick to the timetable, the outcome will be unexpectedly magnificent — you will be able to complete more tasks. Once you have built up the mindset to do things on the right track, you will be more likely to keep yourself away from distractive objects, such as your mobile phone. Another tip is that you should rearrange the to-do-list. Many students have illusions that they should finish their homework first since the due date is probably the next day while there is far distance from tests or examinations. Why don't you do revision first? If you do so, you will raise your familiarity of the subject. Then, you can complete your homework with a higher efficiency led by higher familiarity. As long as you keep this habit, ultimately you can save many hours to strike a balance between your life and studies — at least you don't need to sacrifice your precious sleeping time. I strongly suggest you try a practice — taking suitable rests, or doing simple stretching exercises. This relaxes your body and mind and provides an more ideal condition for revision.

Secondly, you said that you have sleeping problems, I can imagine how you are suffering from huge stress. Poor sleeping quality may cause mental and physical problems. You imagined that you would perform badly in a test and kept tossing and turning the whole night. It's a vicious cycle. You have low sleep quality. Then, you have less concentration in lessons, causing more time needed to do revision after school, ultimately delaying your bedtime. Less sleeping duration is believed to cause more fatigue, more pressure and less concentration. If I were you, I would follow my advice as listed above to prolong my sleeping duration to solve the problem and stop the cycle. How about stopping the use of electronic luminous devices and doing revision? Research has shown that using devices before you sleep (about half an hour to an hour's time) decreases the secretion of a chemical called melatonin, which helps people fall asleep. Also, you should 'sediment' your revision before you sleep through listening to music or taking a bath, not just suddenly 'turn off' your power of brain. It's good for your health. You may want to take sleeping pills, however, I don't recommend you to do so. The reason behind is that using pills is dangerous. Studies have shown that the sleeping quality of using pills is not as good as non-pills users. The vital factor is that pills can end one's life when you overtake it carelessly. Also, if you take pills for a long period of time, you cannot stop using it since your body has already got addicted to having pills

regularly. Never take pills, Sam! Don't worry, things will work out time.

I hope my advice helps. There is light at the end of the tunnel, so you'd better not to worry. Feel free to write to me again, if you need more help! You aren't alone!

Best wishes,

*Chris*

Trainee Peer Counsellor