

Managing Stress– what can we do to help?

Dr Bethan Evans
Educational Psychologist

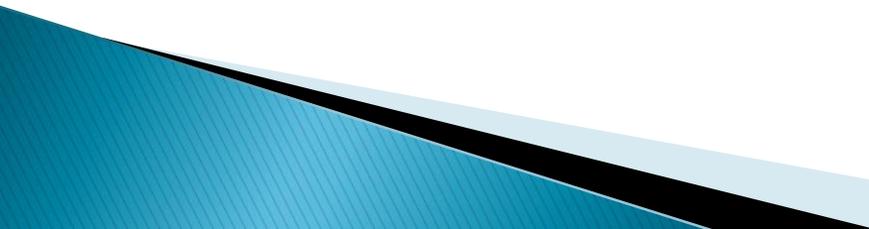
What is stress?

- ▶ Stress is caused by any situation or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, nervous or threatened. At any one time, we may be responding to several stressors, which can be difficult to identify and manage.
 - ▶ When we feel stressed emotionally, our bodies release hormones called cortisol and adrenaline. This is our body's automatic way of preparing to respond to a threat (Mind, 2015).
- 

Everyone is different!

- ▶ What's stressful for your child may be quite different from what's stressful to your child's best friend, your spouse, or the person next door. For example:
 - Some people enjoy speaking in public; others are terrified.
 - Some people are more productive under deadline pressure; others are miserably tense.
 - Some people are eager to help family and friends through difficult times; others find it very stressful.
 - Some people feel comfortable complaining about bad service in a restaurant; others find it so difficult to complain that they prefer to suffer in silence.
 - Some people may feel that changes at work represent a welcome opportunity; others worry about whether they'll be able to cope.
- 

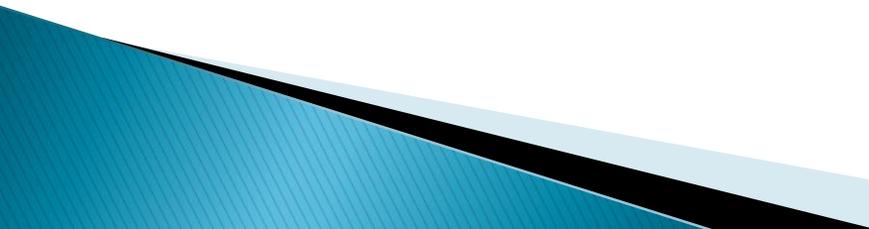
What causes stress?

- ▶ Being under a lot of pressure
 - ▶ Facing big changes
 - ▶ Worrying about something
 - ▶ Not having much control over the outcome of a situation e.g., carer for someone
 - ▶ Responsibilities that make you feel overwhelmed
 - ▶ Not having enough work, activities or change in our lives
- 

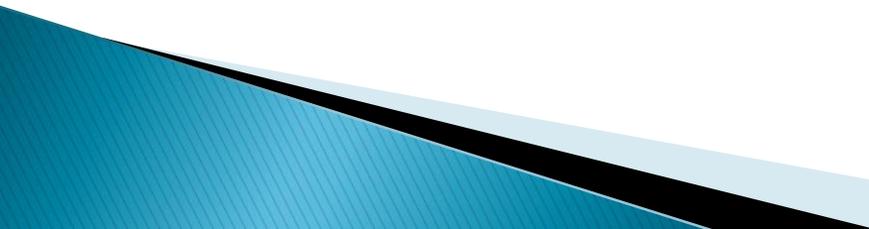
Common signs of stress– how you might feel

- ▶ irritable, aggressive, impatient or wound up
 - ▶ over-burdened
 - ▶ anxious, nervous or afraid
 - ▶ like your thoughts are racing and you can't switch off
 - ▶ neglected or lonely
 - ▶ depressed
 - ▶ uninterested in life
 - ▶ like you've lost your sense of humour
 - ▶ a sense of dread
 - ▶ worried about your health
 - ▶ unable to enjoy yourself
- 

Common signs of stress– how you might behave

- ▶ finding it hard to make decisions
 - ▶ avoiding situations that are troubling you
 - ▶ snapping at people
 - ▶ biting your nails
 - ▶ picking at your skin
 - ▶ unable to concentrate
 - ▶ eating too much or too little
 - ▶ smoking or drinking alcohol more than usual
 - ▶ restless, like you can't sit still
 - ▶ feeling tearful or crying
- 

Common signs of stress– how you might be physically affected

- ▶ shallow breathing or hyperventilating
 - ▶ you might have a panic attack
 - ▶ blurred eyesight or sore eyes
 - ▶ problems getting to sleep, staying asleep or having nightmares
 - ▶ tired all the time
 - ▶ grinding your teeth or clenching your jaw
 - ▶ headaches
 - ▶ chest pains
 - ▶ high blood pressure
 - ▶ indigestion or heartburn
 - ▶ constipation or diarrhoea
 - ▶ feeling sick, dizzy or fainting
- 

Responding to pressure

- ▶ **Identify stressors** and explore which ones can be reduced/managed better.
- ▶ **Organise your time**– with a view to helping to feel more in control of tasks your facing.
- ▶ **Make a list** of things you have to do and order them according to importance and urgency.
- ▶ **Vary activities**– balance interesting ones with more mundane ones.
- ▶ **Take breaks**– make time for hobbies, interests and friends.
- ▶ **Use relaxation techniques**– bath, listening to music, taking dog for walk, breathing exercises (mindfulness).
- ▶ **Balance your life**– ensure some of the things that make you feel good in your life don't get put on the backburner.
- ▶ **Good sleep and diet**– regular sleep and avoid over/under eating.
- ▶ **Exercise**– benefits your mind just as well as your body.
- ▶ **Friends and family**– talk to them, spend time with them.
- ▶ **Teachers and pastoral staff**– talk to them and ask for help to plan and prioritise work

Responding to pressure– planning and prioritising

- ▶ Some important questions:
 - How long will it take to revise for this exam?
 - Have I left time to read over my essay before handing it in?
 - Which piece of work needs to be handed in first?
 - Which piece of work will take the longest to do?
 - When do I have time to sit down and concentrate on this work?
 - Where will I need to be to concentrate best?
 - Am I using my time effectively?
 - What do I need to do to help me concentrate best?

Be specific and break things down

Ticking things off feels good!

To do	By when	Time	Done
Introduction to History essay	13/11/20 15	1 hour	
Read chapter on photosynthesis	12/11/20 15	30 mins	✓
Revise for English Mock Exam - Cue cards for Shakespeare	15/11/20 15	2 hours	

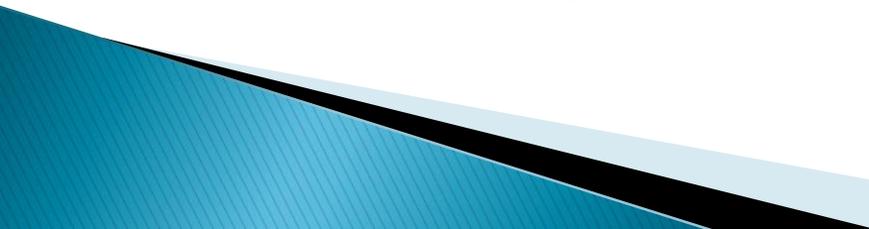
Dates help to prioritise

Timings will help to plan when you can fit this in

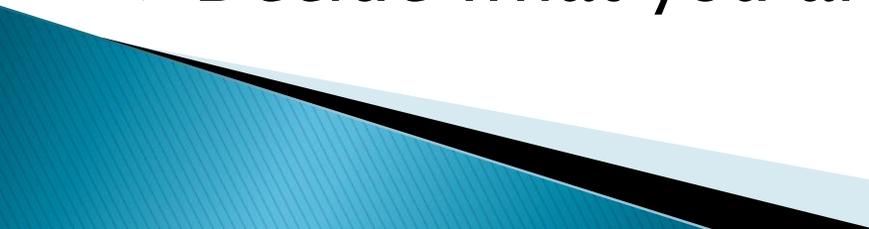
Revision Timetables

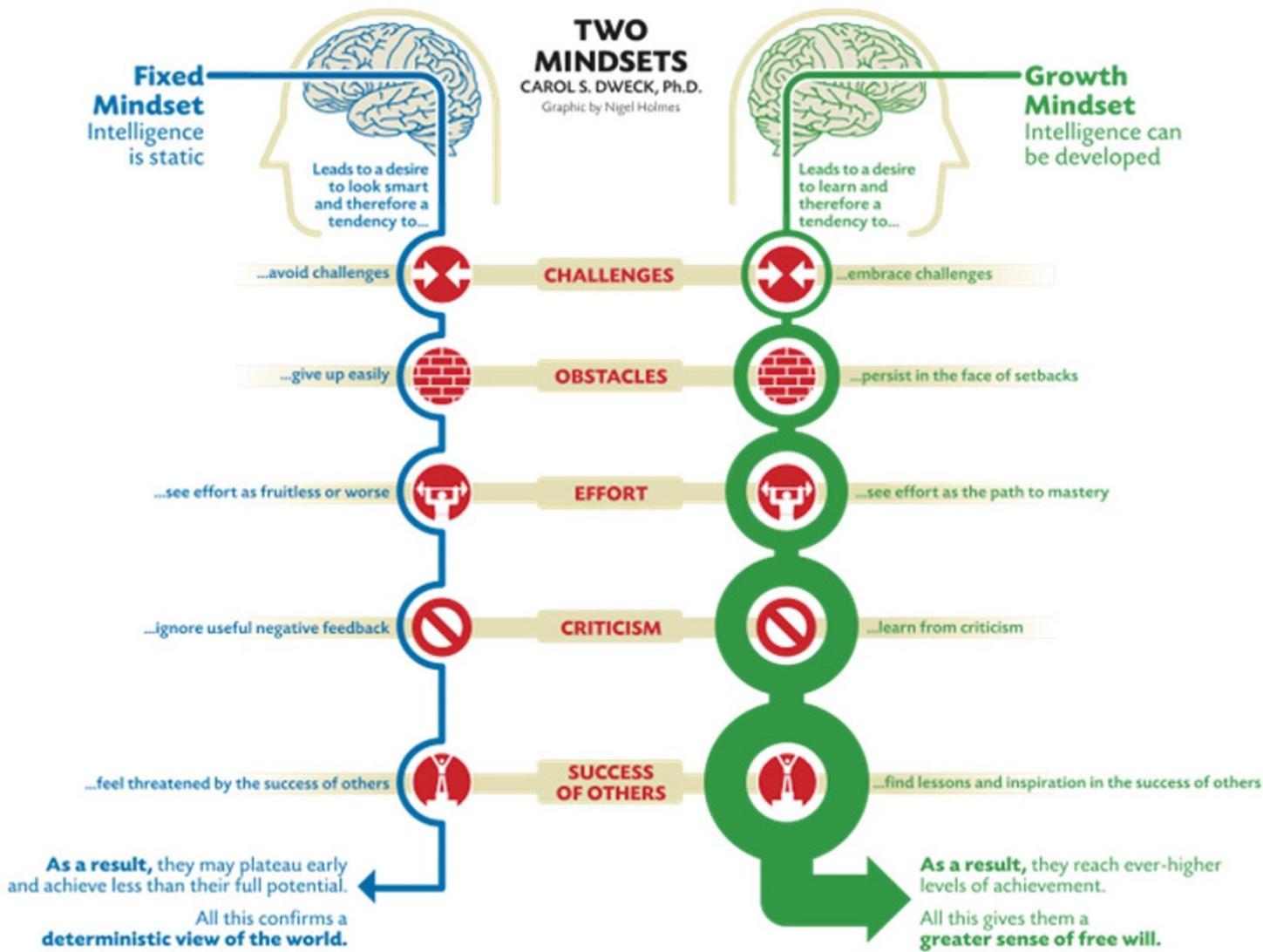
- ▶ Work/life balance!
 - ▶ When do you work best?
 - ▶ How long can you focus for in one go?
 - ▶ How are you going to switch off?
 - ▶ Who do you work well with?
 - ▶ Where do you work well?
- 

Initiating a task

- ▶ Think of the goal
 - ▶ Give yourself incentives
 - ▶ Break the task down into manageable chunks
 - Be specific
 - Set deadlines
 - Use mind maps to split a task into sections
 - Write a plan
 - ▶ Find out what works for you
 - ▶ Ask for help if you are stuck
 - ▶ “Something is better than nothing”
- 

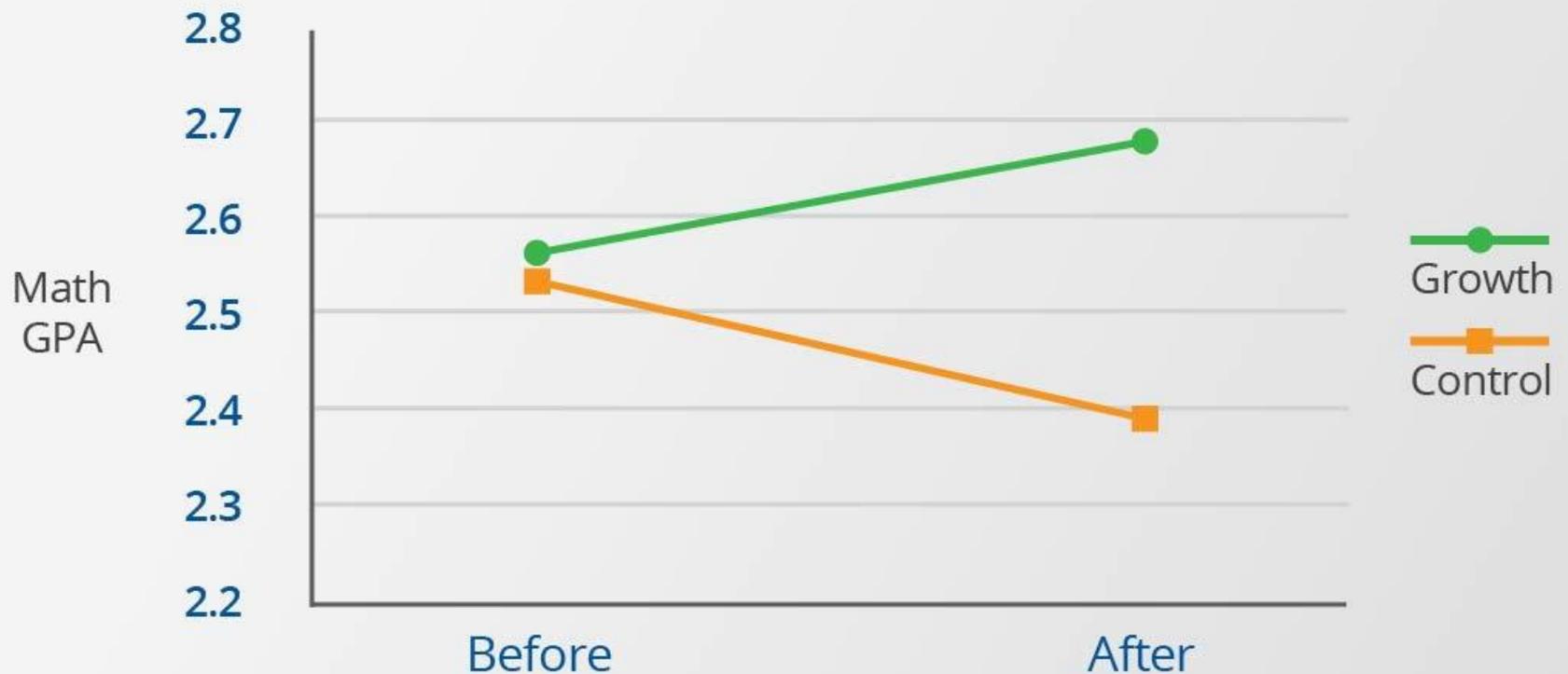
Sustained attention– how do we ignore distractions and stay focused?

- ▶ Identify the tasks you struggle to attend to
 - ▶ Break these tasks down into smaller chunks
 - ▶ Take regular breaks at specific times
 - ▶ Ask a parent or friend to check in on you
 - ▶ Make the task more interesting
 - Work with friends
 - Use creative ways to memorise things
 - Listen to music while you work
 - ▶ Give yourself an incentive
 - ▶ Decide what you are willing to give up
- 



Impact of a Growth Mindset Intervention

Math Grades Before & After Intervention



Blackwell, Trzesniewski & Dweck (2007) *Child Development*

Thank you for listening

- ▶ Questions?