

# Help!

## LIFE'S GOT ME FREAKING

Stressing about your future? Take a deep breath, put worrying on hold and read this.

Dolphin trainer. Astronaut. Singer. Over the years you've probably told people what you wanted to be when you grew up – oops, nearly forgot chocolate taste-tester (#lifegoals). But when the end of high school gets closer, the pressure to choose your career path – like, yesterday – can feel way too real. Throw in exam anxiety and it's like stewing in a pressure cooker. Here's the thing, though: you've got company. Turns out stress about school and studying is super-common during high school, according to Youthbeyondblue (youthbeyondblue.com). Luckily, there are heaps of tools to help you with the next chapter. Here's how to deal when you don't have all the answers (spoiler alert: no one does!).

### Welcome to the club

Worrying about the future is totally normal. While everyone else looks like they're sorted, chances are they're just as weighed down in decision-fatigue. If you don't know what you want to do for a career yet, that's OK. Enlighten Education's CEO Dannielle Miller says research shows we'll have an average of five separate career paths and 17 different employers throughout our lives. Meaning? The days of having a job for life are done! So, don't stress if it takes you a little longer to nut out your dream, or if you need to change things up as you go along. "There's even ways to change your mind without too much difficulty while you're at TAFE or uni," says clinical psychologist Dr Elizabeth Seeley-Wait.

So, how do you calm your nerves if everyone's on your back to get top marks and lock in a career? Soak in these quick tips.

### How to ~be chill~

#### #1 There's no such thing as perfect

Really, there isn't (well, except pizza, obviously). "As long as you've done your best, that's good enough," says Domonique. "And, if it turns out your best isn't as good as you wanted it to be, then you'll still have a bunch of options for your future."

#### #2 Keep things in perspective

"You're so much more than an exam result," Domonique adds. "Think of it as one tiny measure of success in a lifetime of experiences." It might feel like the most gargantuan measure right now, but in five, 10, 15 years, you won't remember much about it.

#### #3 Speak up and talk it out

We get it: this period of your life can be super-overwhelming. Remember, your folks just want what's best for you – even though it mightn't seem like it when you're drowning in study. If it's got you stressing, tell them! "Explain that while you appreciate that they mean well, you're doing your best and sometimes need a little less pushing and more hugging!" Dannielle says. "You can also try repeating your own positive affirmations, such as 'I'm doing my best.'" Another strategy is finding a role model or mentor to inspire you along the way. "Consider the people around

you who seem happy," Danielle says. "What is it about their choices that appeal to you? Ask them for tips for choosing pathways to success."

#### #4 Seek help – ain't nothing wrong with that!

If the thought of final exams makes you want to hide under your doona (with a tub of ice-cream), the group program Study Without Stress (centreforemotionalhealth.com.au) can help with goal-setting, time management and managing expectations. "Or you could even see a psychologist to learn the coping skills on a one-on-one basis," adds Dr Seeley-Wait.

#### #5 You've got options – loads of them!

OK, let's pretend things don't work out for a sec. (Hypothetically, of course! We know you're going to ace it). But, let's say you don't get the marks you were hoping for. Or you miss out on your uni of choice. Here's the secret everyone seems to forget in the midst of exam chaos: your life isn't over. Anything is still possible! "One door may close, so it's up to you to open up another one," encourages Dominique. "You have options. You can investigate resitting exams, take a bridging course or apply for a different uni or course with the goal to switch into your dream course later."

## Dude, where's my passion?

Unsure about what you're passionate about? Take some time to work it out. "If you're inspired by a field, then it's likely you will be good at it," adds Dr Seeley-Wait. "And, if you're good at something, then it's likely that you'll be able to make a living from it." Ah, yes please! Life coach Domonique Bertolucci agrees, recommending you try things that naturally motivate you – those things you'd just want to do, even if you weren't being paid. Last but not least, be open to new opportunities. These days, careers tend to zigzag rather than follow a smooth line, so go at your own pace, explore your passions, embrace change and enjoy the ride. Good luck!



## Girl crushin': celeb inspo

Even some of your faves have slipped up or taken a few different turns on their way to success. For 19-year-old actress, *Rookie Magazine* editor and all-round legend Tavi Gevinson, she wouldn't want it any other way. "How could I have gotten here without those mistakes?" she admits. Try your best and, if you fail, ask yourself, "What would Tavi do?" The answer? Dust off and try again!