

# COPING WITH STRESS

## ADVICE FROM THE PRIZEWINNERS

EXAM STRESS CAN BE DIFFICULT TO CONTROL, AND CAN EVEN IMPAIR EXAM PERFORMANCE, SO LEARNING HOW TO MANAGE STRESS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF EXAM PREPARATION. ACCA DECEMBER 2009 EXAM PRIZEWINNERS CLEARLY MANAGED THEIR EXAM NERVES EFFECTIVELY – WHAT ADVICE DO THEY HAVE FOR OTHER STUDENTS?



**CARA MILLER**  
JOINT GOLD  
MEDAL WINNER

**Works for:** Baker Tilly as a group audit manager

**Lives in:** Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

**Studied with:** Kaplan Financial

**Chose ACCA:** Because it was so flexible

**CLICK HERE FOR CARA'S STRESS TIPS**



**SALLY WILLARD**  
JOINT GOLD  
MEDAL WINNER

**Works for:** Ernst & Young LLP as an executive

**Lives in:** London

**Studied with:** BPP Professional Education

**Chose ACCA:** Because international recognition is important for an international firm such as Ernst & Young

**CLICK HERE FOR SALLY'S STRESS TIPS**



**NICOLA CROMACK**  
SILVER MEDAL WINNER

**Works for:** rpmi as a business assurance senior

**Lives in:** Middlesbrough

**Studied with:** BPP Newcastle

**Chose ACCA:** Because the comprehensive syllabus, and worldwide recognition suited my career choice as an auditor

**CLICK HERE FOR NICOLA'S STRESS TIPS**



**COLIN JEFFREYS**  
BRONZE MEDAL WINNER

**Works for:** PricewaterhouseCoopers CI LLP as a senior associate

**Lives in:** Guernsey, Channel Islands

**Studied with:** BPP Guernsey

**Chose ACCA:** Because I could choose how many papers to sit, and when

**CLICK HERE FOR COLIN'S STRESS TIPS**

**MAKE SURE YOU ARE PREPARED FOR YOUR EXAMS**

For more tips on coping with stress visit [www.accaglobal.com/stressbusting](http://www.accaglobal.com/stressbusting)

X**CARA MILLER, JOINT GOLD MEDAL WINNER**

I take around four days off work before each exam, and plan my time carefully, breaking it into three-hour blocks. During these four days I do at least two mock exams, practise questions, and read, setting aside time to focus on difficult areas. A strict revision programme makes me feel well prepared and ready.

The day before the exam I finish studying at 5pm, get everything ready for the next day, relax and get a good night's sleep, then arrive at the exam hall in plenty of time. Ever since my first exam – when I was just as stressed about the journey as I was about the exam – my husband has taken the day off work and driven me to the exam hall. I read my notes in the car, and then we meet up for lunch afterwards. This makes exam day much less scary – like a nice day out with my husband, only I have to sit an exam first!

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X**SALLY WILLARD, JOINT GOLD MEDAL WINNER**

I control exam stress by making sure I'm well prepared. If I've done enough revision, especially on the more difficult areas, this gives me the confidence to know that I will answer the exam to the best of my ability. I also try to have a good night's sleep before the exam, but despite all this, I think everyone is nervous when they enter the exam room – I attempt to control my nerves by adopting a positive mind-set and taking deep breaths.

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### **NICOLA CROMACK, SILVER MEDAL WINNER**

I was fortunate that my employer allowed me sufficient time to prepare before my exams which, together with a very supportive family, greatly reduced my stress levels. Earlier in my ACCA studies I had taken a break to start a family, and this time away made me even more determined and focused when I returned. As a result, missing an exam session helped reduce my stress, although this approach doesn't suit everyone.

I certainly feel nervous in the exam hall, but use the 15-minutes' reading time to calm myself, and decide on which questions to answer and in what order. I also make sure I arrive with plenty of time to spare, so I can compose myself, and don't have to worry about being late.

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### **COLIN JEFFREYS, BRONZE MEDAL WINNER**

I controlled pre-exam nerves by making sure I got some fresh air and daylight for at least an hour every day. I found that after a proper break I was more refreshed and ready to move on to the next topic. I also wasn't too concerned if I had an unproductive revision session – these days happen and all you can do is move on.

In the exam hall, I think there's something wrong if you don't feel nervous – after all, you've spent months preparing for the exam and only three hours to show that you know enough to pass. I found the most effective approach was to close my eyes, take a few deep breaths and try to block out everything else around me. I also tried to remember that it would soon all be over!

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