

Keeping positive

I have been teaching with Tolley for 15 years and I sat and passed both the ATT and CTA exams. I know what it's like to be a student. I remember. I am even doing some further qualifications myself!

One thing I have learnt and always tell my students, is be positive. To pass the ATT, CTA or ADIT exams you need 3 things:

Know the basic rules really well. I don't mean every specific rule and nuance to a particular tax. I mean know and really understand the main rules. Could you explain it to someone else?

Good exam technique. Timing is essential. Layout is key. Structure your written answers well. They must make sense. Use proper layouts for computations, ensure all workings are labelled and crystal clear. This is not a treasure hunt for the examiners. Don't make them look for the answers. Present them on a plate. A pretty plate.

Be positive. If you don't believe you can pass, how can anyone else? You are your greatest support. You are your greatest resource. You put in all the work to get here. You are doing all the question practice. You are going to sit this exam. You are going to pass.

Easy for me to say? I completely believe in what I say. I believe in the power of positive. I see the difference being positive makes. I see positive passes exams.

So how can you be more positive? Like studying for the exams, it takes practice. Here are my top being positive tips...

Be kind to yourself. If you keep saying "I can't do it", you are listening to yourself. All you are hearing is you can't do it. That's not encouraging, that is not going to help you prepare and improve. How about "I can do it", "I worked hard today", "I did well on that question", "I learnt something new".

Breathe. When things get too much, breathe. When you get stressed, breathe. When you get stuck on a question, breathe. If you're frustrated with yourself, breathe. Celebrate, you passed!! And breathe. Breathing grounds you, it calms the body when the body is panicked into fight or flight mode, it gives you space.

Try this...

Breathe in. Sigh it out.

Deep, steady breath in through your nose. Release it slowly through your nose.

Breathe in through your nose. Let your chest, stomach, inflate with air.

Breathe out through the nose, gently teasing the breath out.

Keep breathing in through the nose and out through the nose. Concentrating on your breath, nothing else.

Start to slow the breath. Breathing in for the count of four, and back out for the count of four.

Gradually increase to five. Then six.

Continue for a couple of minutes before letting it go and return to a normal breath.

Feeling better?

Visualise the end. See a picture of yourself. You have passed. When your mind spirals with thoughts of failing, the implications, perhaps even re-sitting, don't. Don't waste your precious time and your valuable mind space with negative thoughts. Negative "what ifs". They may not happen. You've passed exams before, you know what that feels like. Visualise a big pair of hands pushing those unhelpful thoughts out of your mind and replace it with you, passing.

Blow your own trumpet. You got this!