



Exams Stress and Anxiety

Parental Support

Watch out for signs of stress

The next few weeks can be stressful for lots of pupils. The added pressure of exams can exacerbate or bring on feelings of stress and anxiety.

We hope this pack gives you some ideas on supporting your child as they navigate exam preparation and completion.

Children and young people who are stressed may:

- worry a lot
- feel tense
- have headaches and stomach pains
- not sleep well
- be irritable
- lose interest in food or eat more than normal
- not enjoy activities they previously enjoyed
- be negative and have a low mood
- feel hopeless about the future

Having someone to talk to about their work can help. Support from a parent, tutor or study buddy can help young people share their worries and keep things in perspective.

Encourage your child to talk to a member of school staff who they feel is supportive. If you think your child is not coping, it may also be helpful for you to talk to their teachers.

Try to involve your child as much as possible.

Physical wellbeing

Eating well

A balanced diet is vital for your child's health, and can help them feel well during exam periods.

Some parents find high-fat, high-sugar and high-caffeine foods and drinks, such as energy drinks, cola, sweets, chocolate, burgers and chips, make their children hyperactive, irritable and moody.

Where possible, involve your child in shopping for food and encourage them to choose some healthy snacks.

More about healthy eating for teens can be found on the NHS website.

Help your child get enough sleep

Good sleep improves thinking and concentration. Most teenagers need 8 to 10 hours' sleep a night..

Allow half an hour or so for your child to wind down between studying, watching TV or using a computer and going to bed, to help them get a good night's sleep.

Cramming all night before an exam is usually a bad idea. Sleep will benefit your child far more than a few hours of panicky last-minute study.

Encourage exercise during exams

Exercise can help boost energy levels, clear the mind and relieve stress. It does not matter what it is – walking, cycling, swimming, football and dancing are all effective.

Activities that involve other people can be particularly helpful.

The benefits of physical activity can be found on the NHS website.

Preparing for exams

Help them study

Make sure your child has somewhere comfortable to study. Ask them how you can support them with their revision.

Help them come up with practical ideas that will help them revise, such as drawing up a revision schedule or getting hold of past papers for practice. To motivate your child, encourage them to think about their goals in life and see how their revision and exams are related to them.

Make time for treats

With your child, think about rewards for doing revision and getting through each exam.

Rewards do not need to be big or expensive. They can include simple things like making their favourite meal or watching TV.

When the exams are over, help your child celebrate by organising an end-of-exams treat.

During the exams

Be flexible during exams

Be flexible around exam time. When your child is revising all day, do not worry about household jobs left undone or untidy bedrooms.

Staying calm yourself can help. Remember, exams do not last forever.

The Family Lives website has more about coping with exam stress

Talk about exam nerves

Remind your child that it's normal to feel anxious. Nervousness is a natural reaction to exams. The key is to put these nerves to positive use.

If anxiety is getting in the way rather than helping, encourage your child to practise the activities they'll be doing on the day of the exam. This will help it feel less scary.

For example, this may involve doing practice papers under exam conditions or seeing the exam hall beforehand. School staff should be able to help with this.

Help your child face their fears and see these activities through, rather than avoiding them.

Encourage them to think about what they know and the time they've already put into studying to help them feel more confident.

When to get help

Some young people feel much better when exams are over, but that's not the case for all young people.

Get help if your child's anxiety or low mood is severe, persists and interferes with their everyday life. Speak to your child's School if you require a referral to the Mental Health Support Team.

The table below offers some addition support sites:

	<p>Whatever you're going through, you can contact the Samaritans for support</p> <p>Opening times: 24/7</p> <p>Number: 116123</p> <p>Email: jo@samaritans.org</p>
	<p>If you're under 19 you can confidentially call, chat online or email about any problems big or small.</p> <p>Sign up for free Childline locker to use their free 1-2-1 counsellor chat and email support service.</p> <p>Hosts online message boards where you can share your experiences, have fun and get support from other young people in similar situations</p> <p>Opening time: 24/7</p> <p>0800 11 11</p>
	<p>Offers support to anyone under 25 about anything that's troubling them.</p> <p>Email support available via their online contact form.</p> <p>Free 1-2-1 webchat service available</p> <p>Free short-term counselling service available.</p> <p>Opening times: 3-12pm, seven days a week</p> <p>0808 808 4994</p>