

Exam Stress

Tests and Exams can be a challenging part of school life for young people and their parents/carers but there are ways to help ease stress.

Key strategies for coping with stress:

Mindfulness and relaxation: relax by listening to music, take part in activities such as yoga, meditation or deep breathing exercises.

Grounding activities: E.g. 3-3-3 method (three things you can see, three things you can hear, three things you can move)

Exam day preparation: eat breakfast and stay hydrated

How Can Parents/Carers Help?

1. Support them with study

Ask how you can support them to study. Make sure a comfortable space is available for study. Help them to plan and use their time effectively to revise for exams such as by putting together a timetable with your child. Make sure that they are taking regular breaks and not working too close to bedtime. If your child is busy revising, then it might help to be more flexible on other activities like completing chores.

2. Encourage exercise during exams

Research suggests that physical activity can promote many cognitive and mental wellbeing benefits. Exercise can help reduce stress and anxiety, boost energy levels, improve memory retention and increase focus!

3. Validate their nerves and feelings around exams

It is important to talk about the exam stress they are feeling. Acknowledge that it is normal to feel stress and anxiety during exams, so it is important that these nerves are put to good use. Your child could complete activities that replicate what they will do during their exams. For example, they could complete practice papers under exam conditions to get used to completing the questions in a timed manner.

4. Do not add to the pressure—reward hard work, effort and preparation, not just the results!

Many young people feel added pressure from their family. Avoid criticising and remain positive and encouraging before each exam. Reassure them that exams results do not define them as a person—it is OK if they do not go well. After exams, try to discuss what went well and then encourage them to move on and focus on the next one, as once it is done, it cannot be changed.

5. Promote good sleep

Encourage your child to get between 8-10 hours sleep a night. A good night sleep is vital for maintaining concentration. Make sure devices and TV are turned off for at least 30 minutes before going to sleep to allow the body wind down before sleep.

Some common signs of exam stress in young people to look out for:

- worrying a lot
- feel tense
- having headaches and stomach pains
- not sleeping well
- feeling irritable and tired
- loss of interest in food or eating more than normal
- not enjoying previously enjoyed activities
- low mood
- avoidance of revision
- feeling hopeless about the future

If you are worried about your child, contact school do discuss ways school can support.

Trusted Resources & Support Helplines & Services:

- YoungMinds [Parents Guide](#) and Helpline: 0808 802 5544

- NHS Mental Health Support: www.nhs.uk/mental-health

-Anxiety UK Resources: www.anxietyuk.org.uk/resources

-Barnardo's Mental Health Support: www.barnardos.org.uk

-Action for Children—Parent Talk
[07700 174470](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/parent-talk) (WhatsApp text-line)