

Dealing with exam stress



Your child's first set of serious exams comes at the same time as hormonal changes, a new interest in relationships and increasing independence. There is much to distract and impact our children from their studies. Exams can seem stressful no matter what our age but for our 14-16 year olds this is also a brand new experience and their results really do have an impact on their future. That's pretty intense pressure.

So how can we help them through this time and make it as painless as possible?

Here are some tips.

Diet

The NHS Living Well website says:

"Some parents find that too many high-fat, high-sugar and high-caffeine foods and drinks (such as cola, sweets, chocolate, burgers and chips) make their children hyperactive, irritable and moody."

None of that will help them study!

Having a good diet really will impact your child's ability to handle stress. They may just want to grab snacks as they study to give them quick energy bursts. However, it is more important than ever whilst studying that they eat a balanced and healthy diet. It is really helpful to keep them supplied with fruit, oatcakes and other healthy snack options and remind them to drink lots of water. Do provide regular balanced meals as usual and try and ensure they take a break for these. Avoid exam talk at the table or you could really put them off joining you!

Exercise

Healthy bodies equal healthy minds and regular exercise is another must. Exercise boosts energy levels and can relieve stress by clearing the mind and raising serotonin levels. Raised serotonin helps mood and memory so is very useful during exam time!

It's also smart to give the body a good old shake about after all that sitting still revising to avoid stiffness. It is well worth encouraging our kids to stick at their sports despite their need to revise. It will help them enormously in so many ways, including sleep.

Sleep

Sleep is important for good memory and concentration. Studies have shown that late night cramming can cause poor performance, whereas optimum sleep enhances it. Teens function best with 8-9 hours a sleep a night according to researchers, yet most don't get that. To get enough quality sleep it is advised that regular bed time and waking times are kept to. It is also advised that screen free time of at least an hour pre-bedtime can really aid sleep.

Attitude

It is important that exams are taken seriously, studied for, planned for and prioritised. This is an attitude that the whole family need to have towards them. Taking them too lightly in order to keep the pressure off will only result in last minute panicking and possibly disappointment.

A really clear, workable revision plan that is manageable and not overwhelming is key to keeping your child's attitude positive and their confidence about knowing all they need to.

Helping them plan their revision and organise and adhere to their timetable, will hugely help their attitude towards their work. They will be more relaxed about it and you will not have to keep pressuring them. If you are relaxed, positive and strive for balance there is a good chance they will follow suit.

By helping them to eat well, sleep well and exercise and have a great study plan in place you really will be helping reduce their exam stress and cope with this tricky time.

- **Keep life balanced with good diet exercise**
- **Sleeping**
- **Attitude**
- **Supporting without pressurising**