

PARENTS GUIDE TO SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD THROUGH G.C.S.E. EXAMS

Some children sail through exams with very little stress. In fact, some parents wish their children would get more stressed about exams! For others even small tests cause real anxiety.

There are lots of ways to help your child deal with exam stress, from practical things like providing healthy food and helping him to getting organised, to actually supporting your child with revision. This short guide is aimed at showing what you can do to help your child.

Focus, Goals, Aims: Has your child got an aim, a goal, a target to aim for? If they don't know what they are aiming for they won't know what to do. This needs to be a starting point. College, training or work? What qualifications are needed? Talk to your child. Connexions can help. UCAS Progress is the route for most applications. Every student has their own log in and the website has lots of useful information on routes for progression.

Expectations: Be realistic about what they can achieve. Don't expect 10 A*'s if their estimated grades are nowhere near this. Also, don't underestimate and let them settle for less than what they are capable of. The recent report will give you a current picture. Speak to individual subject staff.

Getting Organised: Work out a revision timetable together early on so that your child allows enough time to cover all the topics s/he needs to revise. Ticking off each topic as it's done can help revision seem more manageable. The rule is little and often!

Environment for Learning: Your child will need their own space. Make it comfortable and relaxed (but not too relaxed!). Take away any distractions like games consoles or mobile phones. Revision or homework cannot be done effectively if the TV or music is on in the background.

Revision Techniques: Does your child know how to revise? Revision needs to be active: reading through notes will not make them stick in your child's memory. Encourage them to make notes, to highlight key points and words and to go over each topic several times. At the end of each topic, suggest they makes a short list of the main points. These will be useful for a quick revision session the night before each exam. See Revision Guide. Praise your child when he is working hard. Small rewards can be a real incentive to work, too.

Equipment: Has your child got everything they need to succeed. Pens, pencils, calculators etc. Post-it notes to stick key words and phrases on the wardrobe door. The right equipment for practical subjects, ingredients for food etc.

Websites, Revision Guides: There are plenty of websites which offer revision games and activities as well as practice papers with mark schemes. Using a variety of techniques will help all the information to sink in. Subject revision guides are available from major booksellers and most are available in school.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/> <http://www.s-cool.co.uk/gcse.html>

www.blingmygrade.org.uk <http://www.revisioncentre.co.uk/> <http://www.u2learn.com/>

During the Exams: On a calendar, mark exam dates and get a thick pen to cross off exam days once they're over. This will help you both feel that there is an end in sight!

Help your child to organise his clothes, food and pens the night before each exam. Feeling organised about the little things will help to cut down on stress. Encourage your child to get plenty of sleep and to take regular breaks while they're revising. The brain will work better if it's rested.

Sleep and rest: Trying to cram in last-minute revision the night before an exam is generally a bad idea. It will make your child panic and might even affect his performance the following day. It's much better to have a relaxing evening the night before each exam so he can do his best the following day. Exercise, even a walk to the shops, will help your child to concentrate when he gets back to work. It can also help him to sleep better. Make sure an alarm is set for the next morning! Waking up in a panic or even arriving late for an exam only makes things more stressful.

Food and Drink: It's important to eat a healthy, balanced diet all the time, but during exam times this is vital. Eating well will help your child to focus and do his best. Try to discourage your child from eating lots of sugary snacks, as these can actually stop them from concentrating. Discourage your child from drinking caffeine-rich drinks like tea, coffee and cola in the evening as caffeine can disturb sleep. Make sure your child takes a bottle of water into the exams. It will help them to stay alert. This is especially true during the long exams. Exam stress can make some children lose their appetites. If this happens, encourage your child to eat light meals or sandwiches.

The Signs of Stress

- Sleeping or eating more or less than usual
- Loss of concentration and interest
- Tears, tantrums and panic attacks
- Excessive drinking or smoking
- Lack of confidence
- Calls for help such as "hanging round" seeming to want to talk

If your son or daughter is showing signs of stress, you will obviously want to do all you can to reduce that stress. Offer practical support, such as making sure they eat well and get enough sleep and exercise. This may be difficult to enforce, but will make a difference.

Emotional support is important too. Expect that during exam time your son or daughter may be snappy or short with you. The best thing by far is simply to listen, and allow and encourage them to express their worries and fears. Offer them the space to talk, cry or simply to be.

Keep Encouraging: However difficult, keep emphasising the positive things that keep happening!

Results: Result Days is Thursday 24th August 2017

Celebrate: Whatever their results, as long as they have done their best, celebrate their results.

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