

Parent Tips and Advice for Examination Periods

1. How to best start an examination day

- Place a copy of their examination timetable in a shared space in the house and know when their examinations are taking place.
- Ensure they have a water bottle each day (with no label) and a fully stocked clear pencil case; black biro pens are needed.
- Students need to be in school in good time: by 8.45am for morning sessions and by 1.15pm for afternoon sessions.
- Try to keep them settled the night before, off technology and away from the books, and into bed at a good time.
- Provide them with a good breakfast as they will need a lot of energy to perform well.

2. Keep good habits

- Encourage your child to avoid stimulants, such as caffeine. Drugs and alcohol impede energy and concentration in the long term.
- Do not encourage your child to cut out all the enjoyment from her/his life.
- Encourage your child to break her/his revision workload into manageable chunks and to take frequent breaks when revising; psychologists say we can only concentrate properly for 30-45 minutes at a time.
- Help your child to eat well by maintaining a good blood sugar level and avoiding highs and lows of energy. A diet rich in slow-release foods such as bread, rice, pasta, fruit and vegetable is essential.
- Make sure that your child drinks lots of water, hydration helps concentration.
- Ask your child to think about when and where they work best. Not everyone is a morning person, and some people do not find the library a productive place to work. There is no one best place or time to work – it is about what works best for each individual student.
- Encourage your child to keep active: even a short walk can be beneficial. Exercising is one of the quickest and most effective ways to de-stress. Fresh air clears the head and aids focus.

3. Talk about stress as a physical symptom – this will help to normalise it, which can make it feel less overwhelming. Explain that when stress reaches a certain intensity, it can lead to heightened physical and psychological awareness. This normally enables us to perform well under pressure, but it can overreact or fail to reset properly, and this can make us feel nervous.

4. Talk openly about how you cope with your own stressful situations, so your child has a positive role model for managing her/his emotions and time. This might include having a relaxing bath or writing a week-by-week plan to manage your workload.

5. Teach relaxation techniques using basic breathing exercise through slow, deep breathing (the in-breath should be shorter than the out-breath; counting in for 3 and out for 5); using guided imagery (close your eyes and think about a safe place you have been where you have felt totally relaxed, identify details about what the place looks and feels like, and focus on these, while breathing calmly).

6. Boost positivity and self-esteem by enabling your child to be practical about their preparations. Sentences such as, "You are more than your results" can be very powerful; talk about what they are good at and enjoy. Whilst examination results are important, and everyone wants their child to do the best they can, boosting self-esteem will help them to feel good, and achieve their best.

7. Address negative thinking by:

- Identifying negative thoughts, and how these thoughts make your child feel.
- Thinking about how these thoughts and feelings link to behaviours and physical symptoms.

- Going back to the original thought and "test the reality" by suggesting different ways of thinking about the situation.
8. Be mindful about what to say, or not to say, when talking to your child about the exams; as parents and carers, it is very normal to feel anxious about your child's examinations, however, the risk is that your child might absorb your anxiety and become even more stressed.
 9. Discourage them from discussing examination questions in great detail after the exam has finished.

For further guidance, the NHS has published information for parents on supporting their child during exams and you can find the link below.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/coping-with-exam-stress/>