



# Parents and Carers Guide to Coping with Exam Stress and Anxiety

You will have been provided with your child's exam timetable by the school but your child's behaviour and attitude will almost certainly alert you to this forthcoming event long before then. You may begin to notice some or all of the following:

- Irritability
- Loss of interest in food
- Negative attitude
- Sleepless nights
- Headaches
- Stomach aches
- Tearful/angry outbursts
- A 'don't care' attitude
- Generally appearing to be depressed

To help your child isn't always easy as they may well be resistant to perceived interference. You may well recognise the escalation in their stress levels before they do and you will then be dealing with denial...as well as all the above!

## **What do you need to do?**

- **Try to ensure that they get enough sleep (not easy we know!)**

Allow about half an hour for your child to wind down between studying, watching TV or using their computer before going to bed.

'Cramming' all night before an exam is not a great idea. Sleep will be far more beneficial than a few hours of last minute 'panic studying'

- **Stay calm yourself (this will all be over soon)**

Be flexible and don't worry too much about untidy bedrooms (even if they resemble a demolition area!)

Ask if they need drinks or snacks and suggest a break at this time.

Help them to draw up a revision timetable (or ask us to help with that)

- **Be supportive**

Remind your child that feeling anxious is normal! Being reminded of the things that they do know and the fact that they have put in so much work already is always a positive (even if they don't acknowledge that to you)

- **Don't put them under pressure!** You know that you're trying to help but they feel that you're nagging! (Childline have advised that many of the children who contact them at exam time feel that the greatest stress comes from their family)

Listen to your child and offer support but try to avoid criticism.

After each exam offer your child the opportunity to talk it through. Focus on the positive (because they will almost certainly feel that have failed!) and then move on to the next scheduled exam rather than dwelling on what has gone and can't be changed.

- **Rewards**

Don't use rewards as bribes, instead encourage them to work for their own satisfaction and offer small frequent treats.

Possibly organise an end of exam celebration.

**Please feel free to contact the school if you have *any concerns at all* – we are there to support you to support your child!**

**Remind your child that support is always available to them in school.** Subject teacher, Form Tutor, Head of Year, Pastoral Team or any member of staff that they feel confident to speak with. We are all there to help.

**Good Luck! 😊**