

How Can Caregivers Support Their Young People Through Exam Stress

What impact can exams have on children?

Exams can create stress and anxiety among children. This pressure may affect their mental health and diminish their enjoyment of learning.

It's essential to balance academic assessment with support for children's emotional and psychological well-being during this critical transition period.



Practical Tips for Managing Exam Anxiety and Stress



1

Spot Fear

While some young people admit very readily to feeling scared, many will do their utmost to cover up all signs of 'weakness'. If they also lack the skills to articulate their problems and resolve them, this only leaves them limited options such as slamming doors, angry outbursts, sullen silences, poor sleep and physical signs (such as stomach pains and headaches).

Understand all these as calls for help.

Fight / Freeze

Anxiety and stress is a normal and often helpful experience!

It is an overestimation of 'danger' and an underestimation of our ability to cope.

When we perceive a situation as a threat, we react in one of the following ways:

- We may run away or avoid the situation.
- We may freeze - our mind may go blank.
- We may fight and get angry and lash out at people.

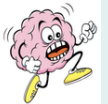
Fight



FREEZE



flight



2

Talk to them about their worries

What is the worrying thought?

ASK:

- Why are you feeling worried?
- What is frightening you?
- What do you think will happen?
- What is the worst thing that might happen?
- What is it about exams that makes you worried?



3

Respond and comfort

- Ask questions and wait.
- Help your child feel understood - empathising.
- Help your child feel normal - normalising
- Checking your understanding.
- Let children share and support with labelling emotions.



4

Positive self-talk

Use and encourage positive self-talk as a daily practice.



"I stick with things and don't give up easily"

"I can ask for help when I need it"

"I cheer myself up when it gets hard"

"I learn from my mistakes"

"I am brave enough to try"

"I can try again later"

"When I don't succeed right away, I try again"

"I improve with lots of practice"

5



Take a break from revision! FUN activities only!

6



Improve sleep quality



Tips:

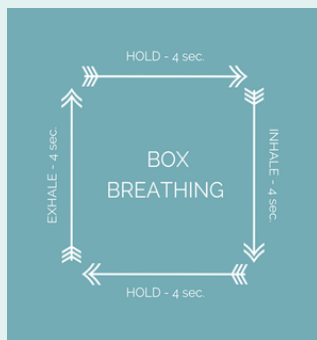
- No screens at least an hour before bed - Phones and tablets DON'T stay in bedrooms.
- Stick to the same bedtime and wake time.
- Encourage your child to do something relaxing and unrelated to revision in the half hour before they go to bed.
- Make sure your child has an opportunity to exercise in the day.
- Try some mindfulness/relaxation exercises if they can't fall asleep.
- Try 'worry time'.



7

Manage stress symptoms

Relaxation and breathing techniques



Wellbeing resources for young people

FREE wellbeing platform for children:

- Chat to a practitioner
- Guided relaxation
- Activities to boost wellbeing

Kooth.com

8

Finally...



Try not to place any pressure onto your child and do create a safe space for your child to speak to you about their worries around exams!

I AM PROUD OF YOU



Don't forget, exams are just exams, as long as your child tries their hardest, that is the main thing!

