



# Exam Stress and Anxiety:

## A Guide for Parents and Carers



## Exam season can be a stressful time for the whole family.



The pressure to perform well can be overwhelming for your child or teenager, leaving them feeling stressed and anxious.

As a parent or carer, you might struggle to know how best to support them and may experience feelings of stress and anxiety yourself.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to support your child or teenager, alleviate the pressure, and successfully navigate this challenging time together.



Exam stress looks different for different people, but can include...



Being 'snappy' or argumentative

Feeling low or tearful

Spending more time alone

Sleeping less, or more, than usual

Losing interest in hobbies and activities

Physical symptoms e.g. headache, nausea

Struggling to eat well

Feeling overwhelmed

Difficulty focusing or concentrating

## Tips for supporting younger children

Every child and young person is different, and what works for one may not work for another. It's important to create a toolkit of strategies, so that you can support not only your child, but also yourself through this tricky period.

Establish a **regular bedtime routine** so that your child gets enough sleep and feels fresh and energised in the mornings.

**Staying hydrated** helps with concentration, so make sure your child is drinking plenty of water throughout the day.

Encourage your child to **eat nutritious meals and healthy snacks** that include lots of fruit and vegetables.

Remind your child that **tests are not the 'be all and end all'** and that there is much more to them than results.

Make sure your child has time to **do all the things they love**, like seeing friends, playing sport, or getting outside.

Listen to your child's concerns or worries and **reassure** them that you are always there to help and support.

## Supporting older children / teenagers / young people

### Healthy routines

Encourage them to establish healthy routines, such as going to bed early, limiting screen time, and eating nutritious food.

### Reassure

Even though exams are important, reassure them that there is more to life, and that they are not defined by their results.

### Be there

Make sure they know you are there if they need you. Try to be available, both emotionally and physically.

### Time for you

Take some time out for yourself, to help you get some perspective on the situation. Just going for a walk can work wonders!

### Look for changes

Keep an eye out for signs of any subtle changes in their behaviour, such as spending more time alone or becoming tearful.

### Share with others

Talk to other parents and carers who are going through the same thing and share helpful tips and advice.

## Supporting older children / teenagers / young people

### **Talk to school staff**

If you are worried about your child, contact their school and speak to a member of staff. They'll be happy to help.

### **Support with tasks**

Help them take care of practical tasks, like cleaning their room or organising their workspace.

### **Be compassionate**

Extend compassion to yourself and to them and remember that everyone is trying their best.

### **Don't take it personally**

Try not to take things to heart, e.g. if they are more argumentative than usual, it's usually a reflection of how they feel inside.

### **The right balance**

Try to make sure they strike a balance between revising, and doing things that they enjoy, such as sport, socialising, or gaming.

### **Positivity**

Try to maintain a positive mindset and help them to become aware of and change any negative self-talk.



**If you are worried about your child, contact their school for further advice and support.**

You can also find helpful tips and resources on these websites:

[Young Minds](#)  
[Mind](#)  
[Childline](#)

