

### What is exam stress?

Exam stress is the feeling of tension and worry that comes from test-taking situations. It is normal to feel some stress and a small amount of stress can challenge you and stimulate you to work harder. It becomes problematic when it interferes with your ability to perform and achieve your academic and learning goals.

### Signs to look out for...

Children and young people who are stressed may:

- Worry a lot
- Feel tense
- Have headaches and stomach pains
- Not sleep well
- Be irritable
- Lose interest in food or eat more than normal
- Not enjoy activities they previously enjoyed
- Be negative and have low mood
- Feel hopeless about the future

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## Useful websites:

Young Scot

<https://young.scot/get-informed/exam-stress-with-mental-health-foundation/>

NHS

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/childhealth6-15/Pages/Examstress.aspx>

Young Minds

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/exam-time/#Thingsthatcanreallyhelp>

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<https://highlandcouncilpsychologicalservice.wordpress.com/wellbeing/managing-exam-stress/>

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## Supporting your child through their exams

### Information for parents

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## How can I support my child?

The best way to support your child around revision and exam time is to make home life as calm and as pleasant as possible. It is helpful if others in the household are aware that your child may be under lots of pressure and to be as understanding as possible.

Talk to your child about exam nerves and remind them that it is normal to feel anxious.

Make sure there are plenty of healthy snacks in the fridge and try to provide good nutritious food at regular intervals.

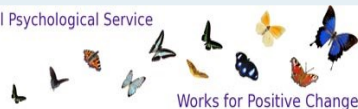
Encourage your child to join family meals—even if it is a busy revision day. It is important that they have regular breaks as this can help them feel more able to cope and can make concentrating easier. Encourage your child to go out, take some exercise, and find ways to relax.

Try not to nag or make too many demands on your child during exam time. Arguments are counter productive and will only add unnecessary stress and distraction from revision.

Build in treats for your child throughout the revision and exam period—perhaps sitting down for a coffee together, going out for lunch. etc.

Do not add to the pressure. Listen to your child, give them support and avoid criticism. Be reassuring and positive and reinforce that you are and will be proud of them no matter what happens.

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## Every child is different ... ..

Your child may have a different way of studying to you or to a sibling. There are different ways of studying—including reading or writing notes, making mind maps or spider diagrams, watching pod casts or presentations.

Let your child know that you are there to help them with their studying or to set up a studying timetable if they wish. Some young people may find this helpful and others will definitely not!

Some websites advise studying in hour blocks with a break—there is not a ‘one size fits all’ for studying and every young person is different in how much or how long they can focus on one subject for.

Help your child to focus on their own journey and not take on board how much (or little) their peers are doing. And to keep perspective, their exams are not a reflection of their value as a person.

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## Things to avoid saying to your teenager during exam time

(From BBC website)

- “Don’t worry, you’ll be fine” instead acknowledge that it is stressful but they can only do their best and that’s enough.
- “Remember how well your sister/brother/cousin/friend/ did?” Comparing to someone else will make them feel unsupported and judged. Don’t do this.
- “How can you do any work with all those screens running at once?” Remember everyone is different in what works for them.
- “At least the exams are much easier now” This is not true, instead try saying “exams are challenging you in the same way as exams have always challenged people” or avoid saying it all.
- “Shouldn’t you be revising?” Avoid policing and instead be a source of support and enable rather than watch and monitor.
- “You’ll kick yourself if you’ve only missed out by one mark” This is unhelpful and likely to add additional pressure.

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