



Parent and Carer Guide

to

Supporting Your Child Through

Revision & Exams

This is a guide for parents and carers to help support your child through the revision and exam period. It is **not** a guide about revision technique or study strategies. There is a Revision Guide on pages 16 to 26 of the KS4 Student Planner. Further help and advice is provided in the KS4 Study Strategy Guide.

The exam season is an emotional rollercoaster. No one likes exams and it can be a stressful time. It is important that your child understands that some stress and anxiety is to be expected. This is completely normal and some stress is helpful in getting motivated to do well and getting on with revision. As a parent you can really help your child through this time just by being there for them and encouraging them to talk about their feelings and fears. Arrange some downtime for your child in between the exams so they can fully recharge before the next exam. Having some balance is very important and can help your child manage their stress and anxiety levels. Here are some practical ideas of how you can help.

PROVIDE SUPPORT

The best way to support your child during the revision and exam period is to make home life as calm and pleasant as possible. It helps if other members of the household are aware that your child may be under pressure and that allowances should be made for this.

Be lenient about chores and untidiness as much as you are able to.

Make sure there are plenty of healthy snacks in the fridge and try to provide good, nutritious food at regular intervals. There are ideas about this on page 7 of this booklet.

Encourage your child to join family meals, even if it's a busy revision day - it's important to have a change of scene and get away from the books and computer for a while.

Encourage your child to take regular exercise. A brisk walk around the block can help clear the mind before the next revision session.

It is important that your child manages their revision themselves as much as possible.

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 distract from revision.

ASSISTING WITH REVISION

Some students will welcome a lot of help and assistance. Others will prefer to be left alone to manage this themselves. Here are some tips on how to help your child get the best out of their revision time.

Make sure your child has a clear revision plan

The secret to doing well in exams lies in planning. You can help your child to create a clear revision plan and method of studying that will make them feel in control of their work.

Make sure your child has all the essential books and materials

This might include

- School books and notes

- Revision guides

- Access to the internet

- List of helpful websites or apps – see the KS4 Study Strategy Guide

- Revision cards

- Pens, pencils, highlighters, rulers, compass, graph paper etc.

If you can, create a quiet space for your child to do their revision.

Ideally a desk in a quiet space that is specifically for revision and studying. However this is not always possible so a quiet corner of the house, or the kitchen table will do. Try to keep others out during the revision times. The school provides a range of revision and exam preparation sessions after school. Encourage your child to attend.

Put phones away

Multi-tasking is a bit of a myth. What really happens when you try to do two things at once is that your attention shifts from one thing to another and then back again and so neither has full focus. Ideally your child will manage this themselves. They should put their phone away and only check it during breaks that have been built in to their revision timetable. However, for some students rules may be needed such as taking phones away completely during revision times.

BREAKS AND TIME OFF

It is important to take regular breaks and time out from exams

Encourage regular breaks

Breaks should be built in to the revision timetable. They can be as short as 5 minutes to have a cup of tea, or an extended period one day a week where no revision is expected at all. This gives permission to your child to relax and recharge so that they are energised and motivated to carry on with their revision.

Do some things that they enjoy

It is important for your child to carry on with other social or extra-curricular activities. Again these should be built in to the revision plan. You could plan a day out to the beach or a trip to the cinema. Make sure your child knows this in advance so that they can plan this into their schedule.

Rewards and Treats

Although bribery isn't advisable, it's fine to provide small treats by way of encouragement - perhaps a piece of cake or some biscuits after a chunk of revision has been completed.

Get outside

It might be tempting for your child to hole themselves up trying to get every inch out of their revision. Try to encourage your child to get some fresh air at least once a day. Being in nature helps, too. An experiment on study breaks compared a natural environment to an urban one. The researchers found that students who had taken a break in natural surroundings felt more refreshed and subsequently performed 20% better on returning to their work.

SLEEP RIGHT THINK RIGHT

There is a strong relationship between getting a regular night's sleep and exam results.

Your child may be tempted to sacrifice a good night's sleep in order to do extra revision but sacrificing sleep is actually detrimental to mental alertness and results in poor coping strategies for managing stress. Cramming at the last minute instead of sleeping is likely to be counterproductive. Having a good night's sleep and a regular sleep routine will enable your child to react more quickly to situations, have a more developed memory, learn more effectively and solve problems. There is more information about how to get a good night's sleep on page 8 of this booklet.

MANAGING STRESS AND ANXIETY

It is important to remind your child that it is normal to feel stressed and anxious at exam time.

Some stress is useful to help your child be motivated to revise and do well. If the stress and anxiety is overwhelming then learning and practising some relaxation techniques can be hugely beneficial. There are some simple exercises on page 9 of this booklet to get you started. Eating well can also affect our mood and ability to cope.

For more information on how food and mood visit

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/food-and-mood

There is a list of helpful apps, websites and other services on page 11 of this booklet if your child is not managing stress well.

PREPARING FOR AN EXAM

The Night Before

The night before an exam, try to keep things as calm as possible.

Encourage your child to get all their pens, pencils and equipment ready the evening before.

Try to get your child to stop studying early enough so that they have time to wind down before going to bed. Late night cramming is likely to lead to a poor night's sleep which is counterproductive.

In the morning

Arrange for them to have a healthy and nutritious breakfast to help them focus and concentrate.

Check that they have everything they need including water and a non-sugary snack.

Ensure they leave for school in plenty of time so that they are not rushed which can cause panicky feelings.

Remind your child that it is normal to feel nervous. This will provide the adrenaline that they will need to get through the exam. If they are very anxious then help them practise relaxed breathing to help keep calm.

For recipes and ideas for exam day breakfasts visit:

www.bbc.com/food/collections/breakfasts_for_exam_day

After the Exam

Some students will want to talk about their exams in detail after they have completed them. If this is your child then give them the opportunity to talk about how they have done. Let them do the talking while you listen. Encourage them not to dwell on mistakes they may have felt they made.

Exam results are important. However, it is a good idea to remind your child that exams are not the most important thing in the world. If they do not get the grades they want then this does not mean that they have failed. It is important for them to know they will still be able to go on to work towards their ambition. It might just take a little longer than the original pathway they had planned.

BRAIN FOOD

What we eat is closely connected to how our brain functions. In fact the gut is sometimes referred to as the 'second brain'. This is because the gut uses many of the same chemicals as our brain, and communicates with it. Eating a balanced diet, eating regularly and keeping hydrated is essential for both mental and physical health.

Encourage your child to drink plenty of water (or herbal teas such as peppermint or green tea) and eat regular meals and snacks. Eating a balanced diet of fruit, vegetables, protein and healthy fats will also help increase positive feelings, enable clearer thinking, give more energy and help with feeling calm.

Research shows that pupils and students who eat breakfast perform better in exams. For the best breakfast, include slow-release carbohydrates, such as porridge oats, whole grain bread or low-sugar muesli, as they provide slow-release energy. Add a protein food, such as milk, yoghurt or eggs, to keep your child feeling full for longer. On exam day aim to include a portion of a food rich in long-chain Omega-3 fats, such as smoked mackerel, as they are believed to have brain-boosting properties.

Ideas for snacks while revising

Nuts and seeds: are packed with protein, and will keep your child feeling full for longer.

High-fibre fruits: their high levels of fibre mean they release their energy into the bloodstream more slowly. Examples include bananas, apples and pears.

Popcorn: is higher in fibre than snacks such as crisps, so it releases its energy slowly.

Dried fruit: Most dried fruit tends to be high in fibre, so releases its energy more slowly than sweet treats such as milk chocolate.

For more information, ideas and recipes for brain food visit:

www.nicolamorgan.com/resources

THE GOOD SLEEP GUIDE

Getting a good night's sleep is as important as a balanced diet and regular exercise. Poor sleep can affect your emotional wellbeing, physical health and can affect your concentration and performance at school. Teenagers should aim for at least 9 hours sleep per night.

- Make sure your bedroom is comfortable. (not too hot, cold, noisy or bright) .
- Establish a bed time routine. This could include having a bath and a warm drink.
- Go to bed at the same time each night.
- Try to wake up and get up at the same time each day even if you have had a poor night's sleep.
- Avoid napping during the day and no napping after 4pm.
- Try to use your bed for sleeping only and only sleeping in your bed (not on the sofa).
- If possible, use a table, desk, beanbag or comfy chair for other activities such as homework, revising, reading, or using your laptop or mobile phone.
- Get off your mobile phone, TV and computer at least one hour before bedtime and leave them outside your bedroom if you can.

Using devices with screens just before bedtime can seriously affect your ability to get a good night's sleep. There is separate fact sheet on this available on the safeguarding page on the school website. The fact sheet includes ideas on alternative suitable activities you can do just before bedtime.

- Get an alarm clock so you don't have to rely on your mobile phone to wake you up.
- Avoid eating a heavy meal late at night BUT...
- ... Don't go to bed hungry. Have a milky drink or non-sugary snack such as a banana.
- Avoid tea, coffee and fizzy drinks – basically anything with caffeine in it. Try not to drink any caffeine after lunch.
- Exercise is good but not just before bedtime. Try exercising earlier in the day.
- Don't take your problems to bed. Try and have a time before bed time to go through problems. Or write them down so you can sort them out the next day.

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

There are many different variations of these techniques so find the ones that suit you best. The apps on page 11 have several versions of these exercises.

Relaxed Breathing

Relaxed breathing is slower and deeper than normal breathing. If you regularly practise relaxed breathing then you can use it to help decrease your heart and pulse rate, reduce tension and relax your muscles. You can even increase your alertness by helping to get more oxygen to your brain. This can be especially useful if you get tense just before a test or exam.

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes if you would like to.

1. Breathe *slowly* and *steadily* in through your nose for account of 4
2. Hold your breath for a count of 2
3. Breathe out *slowly* and *steadily* for a count of 4
4. Repeat for at least 3 minutes

Tense and Release

1. Sit or lie in a comfortable position.
2. Take a few relaxed breaths.
3. When you are ready, shift your attention to your right foot. Take a moment to focus on the way it feels.
4. Slowly tense the muscles in your right foot, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10.
5. Relax your foot. Notice how your foot feels as it becomes limp and loose.
6. Shift your attention to your left foot and tense and release as above.
7. Move slowly up through your body in this order: right foot, left foot, right leg, left leg, hips and bottom, stomach, neck and shoulders, face and jaw, right arm, left arm, right hand then left hand. Don't forget to breathe!

1 minute of Mindfulness

1. Sit or lie in a comfortable position. Close your eyes.
2. Take a few relaxed breaths.
3. Listen to all the sounds around you for 1 minute.

We hope that you find this guide helpful in supporting your child through the exam season. If your child is still struggling then please do contact school and ask for more help and advice:

Who you can contact:

- ✓ Subject teacher – for subject specific advice or problems
- ✓ Your child's Head of Year
- ✓ Your child's Tutor
- ✓ Uffculme School's Student Welfare Officer

Useful apps for mobile phones



SAMApp

This app is free of charge and free of advertising.



MindShift™

This app is free of charge and free of advertising.



Headspace

There is some free content and some paid for content on this app.

Useful Websites



www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Infoline:

03444 775 774



www.youngminds.org.uk

Parent Helpline:

0808 802 5544



www.familylives.org.uk

Helpline:

0808 800 2222

Other sources of support



ChatHealth is a text service enabling young people aged 13- 19 at secondary school to reach out to the School Nurse team for confidential advice on a wide range of issues including emotional health and wellbeing.

Text: 07520 631 722



Young people aged 11 to 18 years have access to online advice, self-help tools and counselling through Kooth.com. This is available 365 days a year and interactive counselling is available till 10pm every night.

www.kooth.com



Young Devon For those young people who feel they need face-to-face counselling, or are steered towards personal contact through online counselling, Young Devon's trained counsellors are available in safe settings across the county.

Phone: 0808 281 0155

Email: info@youngdevon.org

www.youngdevon.org



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