



Supporting your Child with Exam Stress

Created by the Severn Vale
School Wellbeing Team

What is Exam Stress?

Exam stress is a type of psychological stress or anxiety that occurs before, during or after an exam or test. It's a common experience for students and can affect performance, concentration and overall wellbeing.

What causes it?

- Fear of failure
- Lack of preparation or poor time management
- High expectations (from self, family or teachers)
- Past negative experiences with exams
- Pressure to achieve certain grades for future goals (e.g. college or an apprenticeship)



Signs of exam stress



Physical Signs

- Headaches
- Trouble sleeping
- Fatigue
- Sweating
- Rapid heartbeat
- Loss of appetite

Thoughts & Feelings

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Panic or nervousness
- Low confidence
- Difficulty concentrating
- Negative thoughts (e.g. "I'll fail no matter what")
- Memory blocks during revision or the exam

Behaviours

- Withdrawn/isolated
- Not wanting to go to school
- Avoiding social situations
- Eating more or less than usual
- Self-harming
- Avoiding study (Procrastination)

How to Help



Supporting a child or young person during an exam season can feel tough and overwhelming. Always remind yourself you are doing your best as a parent/carer, and it's natural to feel overwhelmed. The following pages will outline some strategies you may wish to try with your child to help reduce their anxiety. Remember, **you do not need to try all of these tips at once** – have a look, and pick one or two things you feel might help.

1

Create a Calm, Supportive Environment

- Ensure a quiet, comfortable space to study is available.
- Reduce distractions at home during revision time.
- Keep your tone calm and encouraging, even if your child seems anxious or unmotivated.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTION

Decide together on a study space. Ensure that the space has items that they need for study. If this is in an area of the home that is shared with others, decide upon some rules (time it is used for study, volume level in the area, other activities whilst study is happening).



How to Help

4

Be a Listening Ear

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- Let them talk about their worries without judgement.
- Try not to feel the pressure to 'fix' things, often young people just want to be heard.

PRACTICAL
SUGGESTION

Set time aside to do something one-to-one with your young person (e.g. baking, going for a walk, playing a game, kicking a football about). Young people often open up more when they are doing something.



5

Promote Healthy Study Habits

- Help them to create a balanced revision timetable with planned breaks and time to relax.
- Encourage **consistency** over **cramming** – little and often is more effective.

PRACTICAL
SUGGESTION

Use this study schedule template to help plan out revision and relaxation.

<https://shorturl.at/GrucB>



6

Celebrate!

- Plan a fun way to celebrate the hard work that they have put in and exams being over. There are so many options here – be creative and involve the young person in the planning.

Getting Further Support

Support in School

- Talk to your child's Head of Year if you are concerned that they are not coping with exam stress. You can contact the Head of Year via email (www.severnvalesschool.com/contact-us)
- The Head of Year can liaise with our Wellbeing Team who can help put wellbeing support in place.
- We have Wellbeing Support available in school including counselling and group work, but we are also able to signpost and refer onwards to other local services if necessary. We assess each student's needs individually.

Let's Talk Well provides **free** mental health and wellbeing support to children and young people aged 9-25 in Gloucestershire. They offer counselling (remote or face-to-face), an anonymous chat helpline for young people and a parent helpline. For further information or to refer your child: www.letstalkwell.org.uk



This Support Finder can be used to find the most appropriate local support options for young people in Gloucestershire: www.onyourmindglos.nhs.uk

GP -Your GP can find out more about how your child is feeling and suggest things that might help. They can also let you know about local services that can provide support. If your child's exam stress is more severe, they may make a referral to the NHS Service for children and young people's mental health. This is called CAMHS. Please be aware that schools are not currently able to make direct referrals to CAMHS in Gloucestershire.