



## Parental Guidance: Exam Stress

Exams can be a challenging time for young people, and many young people can feel worried and stressed in the lead up to exams. As parents and carers, it can be difficult to know what we can do to support them. We've shared some tips on supporting your child if they're feeling stressed about exams.

### Look out for signs of stress

Stress can present differently in everyone. Signs of stress could include not sleeping or sleeping more than usual, losing interest in food or eating more than usual, being irritable, having headaches or stomach aches, being negative, feeling hopeless, or not enjoying activities they previously enjoyed. If you notice your child is struggling, ask them what you can do to help them.

### Talk openly about stress and nerves

Remind your child that it's perfectly normal to feel worried or stressed about their exams. The key is to put these nerves to positive use. Talk openly about how you cope with your own stressful situations, so your child has a positive role model for managing their emotions and time.

Look online for guided breathing exercises or relaxation techniques (we love these relaxation techniques from [NHS Scotland](#) ).

### Support them to create a routine

Routines and rituals can help your child keep healthy habits, and can help you ensure your child is getting enough sleep and eating well. If they haven't already, encourage your child to create a revision plan or timetable, splitting their day up into chunks. Encourage them to take regular breaks - which they could use to have a meal, get some exercise or unwind – and try to discourage them from staying up late revising.



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### Try not to add to the pressure

Many young people feel pressure to do well in their exams to make their teachers, or families proud. Try not to add to this pressure. Be reassuring, positive, and help put things into perspective. Remind them that there is more to life than their grades, and their results don't define who they are. Reassure them you will be proud of them 'no matter what'.

### Make yourself available to talk

Sometimes your child may not want to talk, and it's important we don't force them to have a conversation they don't want to have. Make yourself available but don't pressure them to talk.

You may find that your child opens up in situations where they feel less pressure – for example when you're in the car on the way home from school, or during a walk

### Help them unwind after exams

Find ways to help your child unwind after each exam, so they don't dwell on things they could have done better or differently. After each exam, you and your child could watch a film or enjoy your favourite meal together, before they start revising for the next test.

### Need to speak to someone

If you're concerned about your child's stress, or find they don't want to talk to you, encourage them to seek support elsewhere. This could be someone at school, or a professional organisation such as Kooth, Shout or Childline.

- Visit [Kooth.com](https://www.kooth.com)
- Text CONNECT to 85258 for free to speak to Shout
- Call 0800 1111 to speak to Childline, or visit [childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk) for their free online chat