

## How you can support your child through the stress of revision and exams.

Parental support is 8 times more important in determining a child's academic success than social class. The Campaign for Learning found that parental involvement in a child's education can mean the difference between grades.

You do not have to be an expert in any of your child's subjects to make a real difference. You also do not have to give up your life and other responsibilities – you just need to know how best to spend the time you do have.

One of the hardest demands on students is that of understanding the long-term importance of doing the best they can, and learning to shelve short-term fun at times in the interest of long-term benefits.

Children will also differ in their levels of maturity, their ability to take responsibility for their learning, organisational skills and levels of motivation.

**This is where you come in.** Your support, encouragement and interest can make a spectacular difference to your child's motivation and ability to cope with the academic and organisational demands of the exam period.

The best way to support your child during the stress of revision and exams 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.

If your child is given study leave in the run-up to exams, try to be at home as much as possible so that you can share a break and a chat together.

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

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.

It's important to get a good night's sleep before an exam, so discourage your child from staying up late to cram. And make sure he or she eats a good breakfast on the morning of the exam.

### Top tips

The secret of 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.

Tips for revision planning:

- ✓ work out a revision timetable for each subject
- ✓ break revision time into small chunks – hour long sessions with short breaks at the end of each session often work well
- ✓ make sure your child has all the essential books and materials
- ✓ condense notes onto postcards to act as revision prompts
- ✓ buy new stationery, highlighters and pens to make revision more interesting
- ✓ go through school notes with your child or listen while they revise a topic

- ✓ time your child's attempts at practice papers

You can help **keep the motivation up**.

Tips for motivating your child:

- ✓ Agree the balance between work and social life and stick to the agreement. Again flexibility is the key – if a special night comes up, agree that they can make up the work at a specified time.
- ✓ All students fall behind, feel demotivated or overwhelmed, or struggle with the balance of social, work and school demands at times. When your child feels like this, berating and threatening them will have a negative effect. Talk to them about the issues, acknowledge their feelings and adopt a sensible attitude in wanting to find a solution.
- ✓ Be flexible – use the 80/20 rule. If your child is sticking to what they are supposed to be doing 80% of the time, they will be doing alright.
- ✓ If your child asks for support, encourage them by helping them to see the difficulties in perspective. Teenagers often take an all or nothing 'catastrophic' approach to difficulties – "I've messed up this essay, I might as well give up".

On the **eve of the exam**:

- ✓ Please do not add to the stress levels by 'rising to the bait' when your child pushes the boundaries. Shelve the battles that do not need winning just yet.
- ✓ Help prepare your child for the exam – talk with them about when it starts, how long it lasts for, what are the main topics that might come up. Do not 'over egg' this – they may have worked all day and have come down stairs to relax.