

Exam stress

What is exam stress and what are the impacts?

It is common for students to experience some degree of stress, worry, or nerves about an upcoming exam or test.

Exam stress can have a wide range of impacts:

- **Emotional:** anxiety, panic, feeling overwhelmed or out of control, fear, depressed, tearfulness, mood swings, anger.
- **Cognitive:** difficulty concentrating, going 'blank' or struggling to remember information, negative thoughts or beliefs about failure and the future.
- **Physiological:** muscle tension, difficulty sleeping, feeling sick or dizzy, fast heartbeat, sweating, shaking, feeling run down or unwell.
- **Behavioural:** changes to eating or sleeping patterns, withdrawing from hobbies or social activities, avoiding revision.

Exam stress can be worse for young people who:

- have had a negative experience of exams in the past,
- already experience mental health difficulties,
- struggle with schoolwork,
- have special educational needs, or
- are under a lot of pressure to perform well from themselves, their families, school or college.

Exam stress is also likely to increase as children get older, due to the pressure of more advanced qualifications and decisions about what to do once school finishes. If stress around exams is temporary it can often be tolerated by young people, and even help them develop coping skills for the future, especially if they are supported by adults around them (including teachers and family members).

Tips to support young people with exam stress

- Listen to the young person's concerns and reassure them that they are valid.
- Practical help, such as creating a revision timetable together and identifying different revision techniques (if you are unsure about how to do this, ask school for help or use some of the resources below).
- Help them find a distraction-free space to study at home, school, a local library, or a friend or family member's home.
- Encourage them to take regular breaks from revision.
- Help them keep up with healthy routines as best they can, including eating well, staying hydrated, getting enough sleep, and doing some physical activity.

- Support them to try different ways of relaxing, such as breathing exercises, mindfulness or yoga.
- Reward their efforts rather than their results, for example, by noticing the work they are doing, or planning something to look forward to once exams are over
- Support them to set their own goals for their exams and explore different options for the future if things don't go to plan.

How to talk to young people about exam stress

It can be hard to talk to young people about exam stress, especially if they are trying to manage their worries by avoiding revision or not talking about exams and the future. It can help to:

- Regularly make time to sit and talk.
- Ask open questions, such as “how are you feeling about your exams?” or “what helps/doesn't help you while you are preparing for your exams?”
- Ask how you can help.
- Try not to add extra pressure.
- Be a role model, for example, by talking openly about your day, how you are feeling, or any stress you might be experiencing and how you manage it.

Where can I get local advice and support?

All young people would benefit from support during their exams, however, if you notice that exam stress is negatively impacting your child's behaviour, physical health, or mental wellbeing, they may need some extra support.

ChatHealth - is a way to text a school nurse to find out about local services and get confidential help and support. Text: 07507 332160. The service is available Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm (excluding bank holidays). For more information [click here](#).

If you live on the Isle of Wight, or would rather speak to someone face-to-face, you can ask your school or college about their nursing service.

Kooth - is a free, anonymous online counselling and emotional wellbeing support service for young people aged 11-25 years (up to 26th birthday) in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. It offers a safe way to access support for emotional health and wellbeing needs from a team of professional qualified counsellors. Counsellors are available from 12:00 pm to 10:00pm on weekdays and 6:00pm to 10:00pm at weekends, every day of the year. No referral needed.

[Click here](#).

Shout - is a free, confidential, anonymous 24/7 text message support service. Text HANTS (if you live in Hampshire) or SHOUT to 85258 for free.

[Click here](#).

Where can I get more advice from national resources?

<i>Link and /or QR code</i>	<i>Description</i>
Exam Time & Exam Stress - Parents Guide To Support YoungMinds	Young Minds has advice and information on exam stress for parents and carers, as well as self-care tips and real-life experiences for young people.
Exams & revision Parents' Toolkit	BBC Bitesize has information and advice about revision and exams, including a Parents Toolkit.
Exam Stress: Just The Facts	Health for Teens has tips and information for managing exam stress, as well as links to support services.
Information for young people – Exam stress	Mind has information and advice for young people on exam stress, as well as where to go for support.