

Helping your child cope with stress



Swanshurst
School

Please find the latest edition of our safeguarding newsletter. For more information on safeguarding please visit our school website www.swanshurst.org/safeguarding/1720.html

We know this time of year can be particularly stressful for both pupils and their parents, especially for those with formal exams looming. Noticing the signs of stress in your child is the first step. Children and young people who are stressed may:

- worry a lot
- feel tense
- have headaches and stomach pains
- not sleep well
- be irritable
- lose interest in food or eat more than normal
- not enjoy activities they previously enjoyed
- be negative and have a low mood
- feel hopeless about the future

Below are some simple tips to help support your child through any stressful period and help them to achieve their potential. There are also some useful websites listed should you need additional information or support.

1 Make sure your child eats well

A balanced diet is vital for your child's health, and can help them feel well during exam periods.

Some parents find high-fat, high-sugar and high-caffeine foods and drinks, such as energy drinks, cola, sweets, chocolate, burgers and chips, make their children hyperactive, irritable and moody.

Read more about [eating a balanced diet](#).

2 Help your child get enough sleep

Good sleep improves thinking and concentration. Most teenagers need 8 to 10 hours' sleep a night. Allow half an hour or so for your child to wind down between studying, watching TV or using a computer and going to bed, to help them get a good night's sleep.

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3 Be flexible during exams

Be flexible around exam time. When your child is revising all day, do not worry about household jobs left undone or untidy bedrooms. Staying calm yourself can help. Remember, exams do not last forever.

4 Help them study

Make sure your child has somewhere comfortable to study. Ask them how you can support them with their revision. Help them come up with practical ideas that will help them revise, such as drawing up a revision schedule or getting hold of past papers for practice.

To motivate your child, encourage them to think about their goals in life and see how their revision and exams are related to them.

5 Talk about exam nerves

Remind your child that it's normal to feel anxious. Nervousness is a natural reaction to exams. The key is to put these nerves to positive use. If anxiety is getting in the way rather than helping, encourage your child to practise the activities they'll be doing on the day of the exam. This will help it feel less scary.

For example, this may involve doing practice papers under exam conditions or seeing the exam hall beforehand. School staff should be able to help with this. Help your child face their fears and see these activities through, rather than avoiding them.

6 Encourage exercise during exams

Exercise can help boost energy levels, clear the mind and relieve stress. It does not matter what it is – walking, cycling, swimming, football and dancing are all effective. Activities that involve other people can be particularly helpful.

7 Do not add to the pressure

Support group Childline says many children who contact them feel that most pressure at exam time comes from their family. Listen to your child, give them support and avoid criticism. Before they go in for a test or exam, be reassuring and positive. Let them know that failing is not the end of the world.

After each exam, encourage your child to talk it through with you. Discuss the parts that went well rather than focusing on the questions they found difficult. Then move on and focus on the next test, rather than dwelling on things that cannot be changed.

Information taken from NHS, Mind and NSPCC. Useful websites:

[Family Lives](#) (Coping with exam stress) | [Health For Teens](#) (preparing for exams)
[NHS](#) (Physical activity guidelines) | [Childline](#) (exam stress and pressure) | [NHS](#) (Balanced diet)