

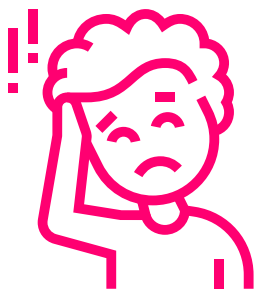
## Exam Stress - Parent Guide

### Exam stress

Whether they are SATs, GCSEs, A Levels or mocks – tests and exams can be emotionally challenging for children and young people, causing feelings of stress and low mood. As parents, it's helpful to know how to recognise and reduce this stress where possible.

### What signs of stress shall I look out for?

If your child is stressed, they may be worried or tense, express feelings of hopelessness, or show a lack of enjoyment in their hobbies and interests. Other signs to look out for include:



**Headaches or  
stomach pains**



**Poor sleep  
patterns**



**Mood swings  
or outbursts**



**Irritability and  
withdrawal**



**Negative  
self-talk**



**Changes in  
appetite**

Some children may also wet the bed, have bad dreams, refuse to go to school or become overly clingy or tearful.

## How can I support my child?

As a parent or carer it can be difficult to know how to best support your child through this stress. Here are some things that you can do:

- **Make sure they eat and drink properly** - It is important for them to stay hydrated and maintain a balanced diet so that they are nourished, energised and well during exam periods.
- **Help them to get adequate sleep** - Getting 8-10 hours of sleep is really important to ensure good thinking/concentration and overall energy levels. Good sleep is far more beneficial for your child than last-minute cramming of examination content.
- **Help them to study** - Even if you can't help with specific topics, you can help them to make a manageable revision timetable or you could buy them useful revision materials such as new stationery or revision guides/workbooks.
- **Foster open communication** - Let your child know that it's okay to be stressed and nervous about their exams, and that they can talk to you about it at any time. Encourage them to use these nerves to motivate themselves and work hard.
- **Don't add to the pressure** - Don't increase your child's stress levels by criticising them or being negative. Support them and offer reassurance and positivity. Don't force them to tidy their room or do chores if they are already stressed - help them out so that they can focus on revision and unwind in their free time.
- **Praise and reassure them** - Make sure that your child knows that you will love and be proud of them no matter what and that no exam results will ever change that. Support their wellbeing and confidence by teaching them to stay hopeful.

You could also talk to your child and ask them what they personally feel you could do to support them during the exam period - every child is different and some may need more support than others.

## Where can I get additional support?

If your child needs further support to help them with their exam stress, there are various options available to you.

### School/Teachers

Your child's school or teachers may be able to support you by sharing revision techniques or resources to help your child or by arranging mentoring or counselling sessions for your child.

### WithYouth

Our open access With Youth service provides online support to children and young people experiencing mental ill health and/or emotional distress. Support may include:

- Instant Access (IM) support
- One-to-one support
- Group Support
- Lumi Nova (app based) support

No formal referral is needed. Reach out to us through our instant messaging service or email [withyouth@hertfordshiremind.org](mailto:withyouth@hertfordshiremind.org) with your preferred contact details.

### GP

If your child's stress and anxiety are severe and persistent, it may be a good idea to see your GP who may be able to provide support or a referral to CAMHS if this is appropriate.

### SENCOs

If your child has special educational needs, speak to the SENCO at their school about any specialist provision or reasonable adjustments that could help your child during exam season.

### Young Minds

You might also find [this guide](#) helpful if your child is dealing with exam stress during exam time.