

How your children feel:

Exam times can be stressful for everyone in the family. You can be worried that your child is not revising enough or that they are not giving themselves enough breaks. It can feel an overwhelming time for both parents and children.

Exams can be very stressful for young people. They may:

- Worry a lot
- Feel tense
- Get headaches and stomach pains
- Find it hard to sleep well
- Be irritable
- Lose interest in food or eat more than normal
- Lose interest in activities they normally enjoy
- Be worried about their future
- Be worried about the outcome of the exams
- Experience indecisiveness
- Have outbreaks of skin problems
- Grind teeth, bite nails, or fidget

If your child's anxiety is severe and starts to interfere with their everyday life remember they can come to one of Visyon's open access sessions for support, or visit their GP.

Links to further support from other organisations:

Family Lives

www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/school-learning/exam-stress/

www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/health-wellbeing/teenagers-and-sleep/

NHS

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/coping-with-exam-stress/

BBC

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents/helping_with_exams/

Young Minds

www.youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/anxiety/

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How you can help ease some of your children's stress:

- Establish a revision routine by working on a timetable together. Encourage them to include time for focussed work, time to do some exercise and also time to relax. Remind them to take short breaks, move around and have a drink between each part of their studies.
- Encourage your child to find out exactly what is involved in the exam so they can focus their revision.
- Support them to make a mind map to collect ideas and summarise thoughts.
- Having someone to talk to about their work can help. This can be parents, teachers at schools or their friends.
- Encourage your child to speak to a teacher who they find supportive if they are finding preparing for exams difficult. It is never too late to ask for help with work or revise.
- Understanding about anxiety, how people respond to anxiety and things people can do to manage anxiety can really help. (see the link to anxiety by Young Minds)
- Ask your child how you can best support them with their revision.
- Remind them that it is normal to feel nervous about exams.
- Make sure they have a space to work in that is as quiet and comfortable as possible. If this is difficult, think about other suitable places, like a library or the café area in Visyon's Congleton office.
- Some young people say that listening to music or having the TV on in the background helps them to revise.
- Be as lenient as possible around this time with chores and untidiness.
- Understand that they might not be feeling their best and give them opportunities to talk about how they are feeling.
- Provide healthy snacks for them to eat while they are studying.
- Encourage them to eat a balanced diet during this period. It is a commonly held myth that food and drinks which are high in sugar and caffeine can help concentration. In reality, they cause blood sugar levels to spike and fall rapidly, increasing irritability, and affecting mood and concentration.
- Give them lots of encouragement, and let them know how proud you are of them.
- Encourage them to get enough sleep (8-10 hours per night) as this will help their concentration. Building 'wind-down' time into their routine between finishing studying and going to sleep can help with this.
- Agree on reasonable treats after doing revision and getting through each exam. These don't have to be big or expensive, but can be something like choosing their favourite meal.
- Help them to come up with practical ideas which will help them manage their stress over this period.
- Check our young persons guide for more.

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