

EXAM STRESS

Healthy Young Minds



What is exam stress?

- Stress is the body's natural response to something threatening or frightening.
- Exam stress happens particularly around the time of exams.
- Mild levels can make us more alert and help motivate us.
- If stress levels are too high, it can impair our ability to prepare for exams, leading to more stress.
- A certain level of stress is normal about exams.

What signs should I look out for in a young person?

- Feeling frightened, nervous or panicky
- Difficulties sleeping
- Bad dreams
- Eating more/less than usual
- Difficulties concentrating on homework
- Not wanting to go to school
- Avoiding or excessive revising
- Not wanting to do activities previously enjoyed
- Feeling tired
- Tearfulness
- More irritable than usual
- Using the toilet often
- Fidgety
- Complaints of:
 - * Racing heart
 - * Feeling faint
 - * Stomach ache
 - * Feeling sick
 - * Pains in the chest
 - * Feeling breathless
 - * Headache
 - * Butterflies in the stomach

Why is it important to look out for it?

- Levels of self-harm increase around the Summer exam time
- If we can spot it, we can help young people develop helpful strategies to manage the stress
- Stress can impair performance if not managed

What can I do to help a young person with exam stress?

- ✓ Talk to them about how they are coping
- ✓ Help them to plan study time with regular breaks and rewards
- ✓ Emphasise their other strengths if they struggle academically
- ✓ Reassure there are other options if things don't work out how they hope
- ✓ Make sure they eat well
- ✓ Encourage half an hour 'wind-down' before bed
- ✓ Make sure they have somewhere comfortable to study
- ✓ Remind them that feeling anxious about exams is normal
- ✓ Encourage light exercise
- ✓ Be reassuring and positive before an exam
- ✗ Don't expect them to do household chores, tidy room etc during revision time
- ✗ Talk through the parts of the exam that went well and then move on to the next one; don't dwell on the bits that didn't go well

➤ Some useful websites:

- <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/Coping-with-exam-stress.aspx>
- <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/school-college-and-work/school-college/exam-stress/>



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<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/XN9QSHG>