

How can I support my child through the exam period?

Exams are stressful and your child may be:

- Anxious, worried
- Upset, teary
- Tired
- Easily annoyed
- Acting differently from normal, for example being withdrawn, changes in their sleep pattern or appetite.

These feelings are common and understandable. This page offers ideas for how you can help, and tips you can share with your child.

Tips for coping with exam stress

During the exam period students should try to look after themselves by:

- Making time for things they enjoy
- Talking to others about how they feel
- Finding a balance between work and free time
- Taking care of their physical health, with enough sleep, food and water, and some exercise
- Focusing on themselves rather than comparing themselves to others.

While preparing for an exam, students can reduce their exam stress by:

- Starting revision early, so it isn't crammed in close to the exam
- Finding a study group and attending school revision sessions
- Making a revision timetable with realistic goals and regular breaks
- Finding a revision method that works for them.

On the day of the exam, students can reduce exam stress by:

- Preparing their items the night before
- Start the day with plenty of time so they arrive to school on time
- Trying to ground themselves with a breathing exercise
- Remind themselves that the exam will be over soon.

After the exam students can reduce exam stress by:

- Avoiding going through answers with friends
- Rewarding themselves for finishing and the effort they put in
- Relaxing before the next exam
- Focusing on the next steps.

Wellness toolkit: Things that can help

Everyone is different, so what helps one person feel well may not help another. That's why it's worth exploring lots of ways to look after our wellbeing. Our 'wellness toolkit below can help students get started.



Getting active

Get active and get your blood pumping; it's a great way to work out anger, frustration or worry and really takes your mind off things.



Getting outside

Just being in outside space, camping and scouting, road trips, sunsets and sunrises, rollercoasters, walking the dog, taking a mindful walk.



Connecting

Time with family, quality time with friends, looking after pets, group activities, team sports, counselling, talking to friends online, WhatsApp groups.



Reaching out

Sometimes, if you can't really face being with people, you can still have a laugh with your mates online and it may help you feel better.



Positivity journal

Write down one thing you feel grateful for each day. Some days it's hard to think of something, but you'll probably feel better when you do.



Quiet time and relaxing

Enjoy your own space – sleeping in or taking a long bath. Immerse yourself in things that make you happy like reading books, playing video games, listening to music, watching your favourite TV shows and cooking.



Playlist of my life

Find songs to represent all the different things you are feeling and sing along. Try to allow yourself to feel a range of different things and end with something upbeat.



The healing power of tea

We decided that there is hardly anything that doesn't feel a bit better with tea! Seriously though... even when things are really bad, if you take time out to make a hot drink and sit down with it, it gives you time to be calm, focus and begin to plan your way out of a hole.



Worry balloon

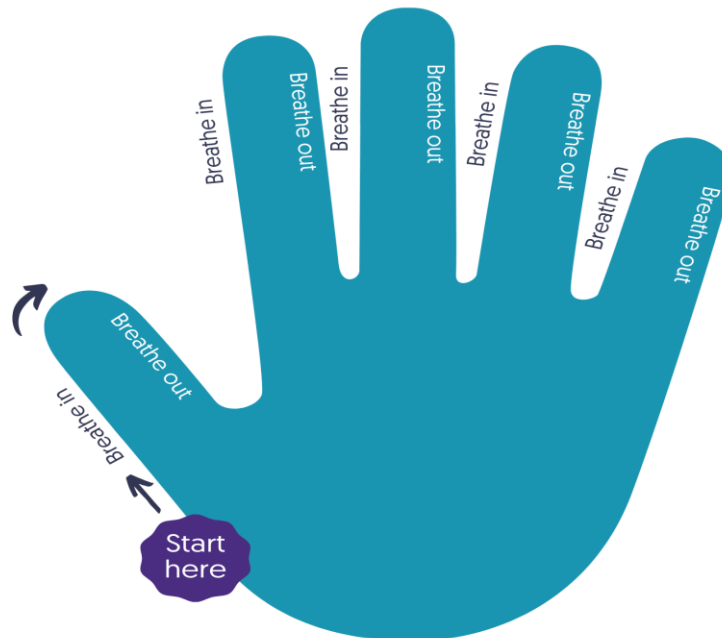
Write your worries on a balloon... then blow it up and let it go or pop it.

Breathing Techniques can also help you to stay in the moment.



5 FINGER BREATHING

Slowly trace the outside of the hand with the index finger, breathing in when you trace up a finger and breathing out when you trace down. You can also do this breathing exercise using your own hand.



Grounding techniques can also help you stay in the moment at times of stress or worry.

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique

Look around you and notice...

5 things you SEE
Example: Items in the room or out the window, Your hands, The sky, A plant, Picture on wall, Furniture, People, Colors, Shapes, Object details, Count or categorize objects

4 things you FEEL
Example: Feet on the ground, A chair on your back, Clothes you're wearing, Shoes on feet, The texture of your skin, Pencil in hand, Wind blowing, Pet an animal, Squeeze ice, Wrap yourself tightly in a blanket, Hug a pillow

3 things you HEAR
Example: People talking, Birds chirping, Your breath, Clock ticking, Car horns, Traffic noise, Listen to music, Humming of electronics

2 things you SMELL
Example: Laundry detergent on clothes, Food from lunch, Citrus fruits, Fresh cut grass, Rain, Cookies, Fresh air, Flowers, Shampoo, Perfume, Soap, Lotion, Tea, Essential oils, Scented candles

1 thing you TASTE
Example: Mint, Gum, Sour candy, Fruit, Desert, Toothpaste, Eat an orange segment by segment, Take a drink of something, Bite into a lemon

Extra Tip:
If there is nothing for you to smell or taste, you can simply imagine smelling or tasting something you enjoy.

Where to go for support in school

Any member of staff they trust.

Where to go for support

For students:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/feelings-and-experiences/tips-for-coping-with-exam-stress/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/feelings-and-experiences/exam-stress/#WhatIsExamStress>

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/exam-stress/>

For Parents:

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/exam-time/>

<https://charliewaller.org/mental-health-resources/supporting-your-child-with-exam-stress>

This page draws on guidance from Mind (mind.org.uk) and YoungMinds (youngminds.org.uk). Dr Mary Ellen Copeland (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) and Dr Pooky Knightsmith.