

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators MANAGING EXAM STRESS

At some point in their education, most young people will encounter exam stress, which can affect their mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing. Mental health charity YoungMinds estimates that 87% of pupils experience exam-related stress. This highlights the importance of supporting young people to manage exam pressure effectively, maintain perspective, and protect their overall wellbeing during these periods.

1 PRACTISE WORKLOAD WISDOM



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The build-up to exams can feel overwhelming, with competing demands on time and energy. Encourage young people to reflect on whether their workload is realistic and allows them time to rest and recharge. Support them in creating a manageable revision timetable that includes regular breaks and occasional days off. Remind them that plans can be adjusted if they feel overwhelmed, helping to reduce the pressure and prevent burnout.

2 CLEAR UP THE CLUTTER



A cluttered workspace can reduce focus and increase stress levels. Encourage young people to keep their study area tidy and organised, with clearly arranged notes and materials. A calm, dedicated space can support concentration and create a more relaxed mindset. Adding colour, mind maps, or creative elements can also make revision feel less daunting and more manageable.

3 MASTER THE MATERIALS



Revision can feel particularly stressful if young people are unsure where to begin. Help them confirm key study topics and materials, ensuring they're using accurate and relevant resources. Reducing uncertainty can help them feel more in control of their learning. Reassure them that they don't need to know everything perfectly, as building their understanding over time is what matters most.

4 GET CREATIVE WITH NOTES



Writing out detailed notes, rather than relying only on bullet points, can strengthen their understanding and retention. Encourage young people to turn these notes into flashcards for regular review and repetition. Feeling familiar with their material can boost their confidence and reduce anxiety during exams. This approach can help them feel more prepared and less likely to panic under pressure.

5 USE VISUAL MEMORY AIDS



Visual resources can make learning more effective and reduce their frustration when information feels difficult to grasp. Encourage the use of diagrams, videos, sticky notes, and colour coding to reinforce key ideas. Creating simple mnemonics can also make information easier to remember. Using a variety of methods can help prevent mental fatigue and keep revision feeling fresh and manageable.

6 BUILD A TECH TOOLKIT



Technology can be a valuable supporting tool during exam preparation when used in a balanced way. Educational websites, revision platforms, and subject-specific videos can help explain complicated topics clearly, reducing the risk of confusion or stress. Encourage young people to use these tools to support – rather than overwhelm – their learning, and to take regular breaks from their screens to protect their wellbeing.

7 KEEP REVISION ENJOYABLE



Revision is often more effective when it feels engaging and varied. Encourage young people to incorporate humour, real-life examples, or creative approaches into their learning. Mixing study methods, including light physical activity such as short walks, can also improve their mood and focus. Enjoyable revision experiences can help reduce stress and make the process feel more positive and sustainable.

8 USE ACTIVE STUDY METHODS



Active revision techniques can help young people feel more confident and in control of their learning. Strategies such as spaced repetition and active recall, including self-testing or explaining concepts aloud, can highlight both their strengths and areas for improvement. This clarity can reduce last-minute panic and support a calmer, more prepared approach to exams.

9 USE AI THOUGHTFULLY



AI tools can support revision by making learning more personalised and manageable. Young people can use them to generate practice questions, summarise information, or break down topics into simpler steps. Used carefully, these tools can reduce overwhelm and save time. Remind young people to check AI information with trusted sources to ensure its accuracy and build confidence in their understanding.

10 PRACTISE WITH ONLINE TOOLS



Online revision platforms can help young people test their knowledge and track their progress. Many offer quizzes, flashcards, and practice papers aligned with exam boards. Encourage regular self-testing – including timed activities – to build up familiarity with exam conditions. Becoming more comfortable with the format of exams can reduce anxiety and help young people approach them with greater confidence.

Meet Our Expert

Minds Ahead design and deliver the UK's only specialist postgraduate mental health qualifications. Winner of Social Enterprise UK's 'One to Watch' award, the charity provides training and support to education organisations and local authorities. This guide has been written by Adam Gillett – a learning and development specialist who is also Associate Vice-Principal for Personal Development at a large secondary school.



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