



St Cuthbert's
Catholic High School
Live life in all its fullness

The Exam Season: Supporting Your Child

Exams can be a challenging and a stressful time for everyone in the family as your child may be feeling anxious and under pressure. The exam season can be a really daunting time for some students. As a parent/carer you can help your child by knowing what to look out for and offering them extra encouragement and help to get through the exams.

If you are worried at any time, please contact your child's Form Tutor, Head of Year, Assistant Head of Year or the Exams Officer to discuss your concerns.

Watch for signs of anxiety/stress

Normal levels of stress can help students work, think faster and be more effective, and generally improve levels of performance. However, if the anxiety begins to get overwhelming, your child's performance can be affected. Being aware of what is causing the anxiety can help reduce its effects.

Anxiety can cause:

- Headaches and stomach pains
- Patchy sleep and sleepless nights
- Irritability or short temper
- Butterflies in the stomach
- Poor appetite or comfort eating
- Not being able to enjoy things anymore
- Always thinking about exams or worrying about them
- Catastrophic thinking – 'what if...'

Ways to help reduce and manage stress levels

- Encourage your child to start consolidation and revision early. Regular revision in chunks will enable your child to feel more prepared for the exam which should help to reduce the exam stress.
- Short targeted revision sessions are best, with frequent revisiting.
- Encourage your child to make a revision timetable and to give you a copy.
- Make sure your child has regular breaks and down time. Intense studying can be counterproductive. Taking breaks and relaxing is important.
- Talk about exam nerves – remind your child that feeling anxious is **normal**. Nervousness is a natural reaction to exams.
- Be calm, positive and reassuring and put the whole thing into perspective.
- Encourage them to do their best.

Eat, sleep and exercise

- Our brains need energy and rest. Try and help your child get the right balance.
- Make sure that your child eats a healthy and balanced diet. The brain needs food to keep energised whilst studying.
- Good sleep will improve thinking and concentration. Most teenagers need between 8 and 10 hours sleep a night.
- Exercising can boost your mood, give you more energy and help you to sleep better.

- If you can, take away phones/tablets/laptops at a set time each night so that your child isn't working too late and can get an uninterrupted sleep. The blue light from devices stimulates the brain making it more difficult to sleep.

Exam time

- Make sure you are aware of your child's exam dates and times. Add them to the family calendar.
- Check for any transport issues on the day of the exam. Remember, trains are often less frequent in the afternoon and it can therefore take longer to get to school.
- Make sure your child gets up with plenty of time to get to school. Being late and rushing causes students unnecessary stress. We want the students in a calm state of mind before entering the exam hall.
- Encourage your child to organise what they need the night before the exam. Making sure they have the right equipment, a bottle of water and snacks/lunch if they have more than one exam that day.
- Most importantly - make sure your child eats a healthy breakfast/lunch before an exam. Protein rich foods can lead to great mental alertness and starve off hunger pangs.
- Remind your child about the consequence of bringing in a phone to the exam hall. **Any** mobile phone caught, even if it's switched off, will count as malpractice and will usually result in zero for that exam paper.

After the exam

- Encourage your child not to dwell on mistakes or questions in which they feel they haven't done their best.
- Discourage comparing notes with other students. If they have realised they have made a mistake this could cause additional anxiety.
- Once the exam has finished they need to try and forget about that exam and look to the next one, particularly if they have had a really tough paper. They can't change what was written in that exam so worrying about it doesn't help. Also, it is worth remembering that exams are designed to be hard.

If you wish to contact a member of staff to discuss any concerns you have with exams, please send an email to hello@stcuthberts.com

Head of Year 11

Mr Mearns/Mrs Carvill

Exams Officer

Mrs Seddon

SENDCo

Mrs Barrett

Updated April 2021