

TOP TEN EXAM TIPS FOR PARENTS

1. DON'T NAG

"It doesn't help," says ChildLine counsellor Maggie Turner. "Keep your expectations out of it, kids have enough of their own. And stay calm. Fear and anger are catching."

2. SET GOALS AND BOUNDARIES

Agree a revision schedule and offer to tape their favourite TV shows for watching later. Treats are essential. It helps give them a purpose for getting revision done.

3. OFFER TEA AND SYMPATHY

They could be your biggest contribution. Take them drinks and make sure they take regular breaks. Offer to test them. Stop them working if they seem over tired.

4. TRY AROMA-MEMORY

Pick an oil your child has not used before, one known to improve alertness, such as basil, lime, or peppermint. Use it in a burner while revising. Keep a different oil for each subject. When the exam comes along put a drop of the same oil on a tissue or sleeve cuff. Sniff discreetly and it will help your memory recall the information.

5. FEED THEIR MINDS

Sugar may give an "energy hit" but it increases stress levels. Give them a bowl of seeds, nuts and dried fruit to eat while studying. Encourage them to drink milk instead of coffee, it's very calming. Serve them small, regular meals including things like potatoes, pasta, rice, fish and chicken. Make them drink plenty of water. It's good for the brain.

6. BUILD UP THEIR CONFIDENCE

Maggie Turner says: "Some kids don't revise through sheer terror. Then if they fail they can blame it on the fact they didn't revise. Build up their confidence by reminding them of things they've done well in, in the past. Others find revision a difficult concept to grasp. Encourage them to see their teacher to develop revision skills."

7. LOOK FOR SIGNS OF STRESS

Stressed youngsters might be off their food – or overeating. They may be irritable, withdrawn, silent, have difficulty sleeping or be waking early. It's important to keep a good relationship so they can talk to you about their worries. If necessary get professional help. Most schools have counsellors.

8. HELP THEM RELAX

"Relaxation techniques are very effective," says Jennie Kramer who teaches stress management at Callington Community College in Cornwall. "Put on some nice music, get them to lie down, close their eyes and breathe deeply while visualising a calming scene such as a deserted beach. Visualising success can really raise self-confidence too."

9. **PAMPER THEM**

Use essential aromatherapy oils to help them beat stress with a relaxing massage or bath. Aromatherapist Valerie Anne Worwood suggests mixing chamomile roman (5 drops) mandarin (2 drops) oremnis flower (3 drops) geranium (3 drops) in 30ml of almond oil.

10. **KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE**

If you are stressed too, console yourself by talking to parents who have been through exam hell. Remind yourself – and your child – that exams aren't the be-all and end-all. Always reassure them that however well or badly they do, you will still love them.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.mind-map.com

- contains helpful learning techniques.

www.bbc.co.uk/education/revision

- the BBC's revision pages cover all stages of education.