

Supporting your child through their GCSEs

Mental health and wellbeing: a guide for Year 11 parents and
carers



STOWUPLAND
HIGH SCHOOL

What we will cover this evening

1

Understanding exam stress

What is normal, and what it can look like at home

2

The foundations

Sleep, food, movement and downtime

3

Your role at home

Conversations, environment and revision support

4

Getting help

When to be concerned and who to contact



Some stress is normal, and even useful

Helpful pressure

Comes and goes around deadlines and exams

Motivates them to get started

They can still switch off, sleep and enjoy things

Eases once the task is done

Too much pressure

Feels constant, with no let-up

Leads to avoidance or freezing

Affects sleep, appetite or mood most days

Stops them doing things they normally enjoy



What exam stress can look like at home

Sleep

Struggling to get to sleep, waking early, or sleeping far more

Mood

More irritable, tearful, flat or snappy than usual

Body

Headaches, stomach aches, feeling sick or run down

Eating

Noticeable change in appetite or eating habits

Withdrawal

Dropping friends, hobbies or family time

Outlook

"I'm going to fail", "There's no point"



The foundations matter more than extra revision

1

Sleep

A regular bedtime and wake-up time, including at weekends

2

Food and water

Breakfast, regular meals and a water bottle on the desk

3

Movement

A walk, sport or time outdoors every day, even 20 minutes

4

Downtime

Keep hobbies, friends and guilt-free time off each week



Sleep is part of revision, not time away from it

8–10

hours of sleep a night is what
most teenagers need

What helps

A consistent bedtime on school nights

Screens off 30 to 60 minutes before bed

Phones charging outside the bedroom overnight

No caffeine or energy drinks after lunchtime

Stopping revision at a set time each evening



Creating a calm environment at home

1

A place to work

Quiet, tidy and free of distractions, with what they need to hand

2

A predictable routine

Agreed times for revision, meals and stopping for the day

3

Lighter load

Ease off chores and be flexible during mocks and exams

4

Normal family life

Keep mealtimes, humour and time together going



Conversations that help

Instead of...

"Have you done any revision today?"

"You'll be fine, stop worrying."

"Your sister never had this problem."

Try...

"What are you working on? Anything I can do to help?"

"That sounds really tough. Tell me more."

"I can see how hard you're working, and I'm proud of you."



Supporting revision without taking over

1

Plan together

Help map out a realistic timetable, then let them own it

2

Short bursts

25 to 45 minute sessions with proper breaks in between

3

Show interest

Offer to test them or listen while they explain a topic

4

Notice effort

Praise the work they put in, not just marks and grades



Your child is more than their grades

Knowing they are valued whatever the outcome is one of the strongest protections against exam anxiety.



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During the exam period

The night before

- Light review only, then stop
- Pack bag and equipment
- A normal bedtime

The morning

- Breakfast and water
- Leave in good time
- Calm, brief encouragement

Afterwards

- Ask how they feel, not what they wrote
- No post-mortems
- Rest, then on to the next one



When to be more concerned, and where to turn

Seek support if

Signs last two weeks or more, or are getting worse

They are regularly not sleeping or not eating

They are avoiding school or have stopped coping day to day

They talk about feeling hopeless, or you are worried about their safety

Who can help

School: Mrs Morley, Mrs Fullman and form tutor

Kooth, The Source, [Psychology in Schools](#)

Your GP, or NHS 111 for urgent mental health help

YoungMinds Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544

For your child: Childline 0800 1111, or text SHOUT to 85258

In an emergency, call 999



Five things to take away

- 1 Some stress is normal; watch for changes that last
- 2 Protect sleep, food, movement and downtime
- 3 Listen more than you fix, and praise effort
- 4 Keep perspective: they are more than their grades
- 5 If you are worried, contact us early

Thank you. Any questions?

