

How to manage Exam Stress of GCSEs at Home

March 2025

Hannah Semple

Role of the Parent/Carer



- Support system
- Guide
- Champion
- First Aider
- Voice of reason

2025-2026

-JULY-

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

-AUGUST-

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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
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25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Exam Prep Stage 1

-SEPTEMBER-

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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
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29	30					

-OCTOBER-

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27	28	29	30	31		

-NOVEMBER-

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Exam Prep Stage 2

-DECEMBER-

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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

-JANUARY-

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18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

-FEBRUARY-

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-MARCH-

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Exam Prep Stage 3

-APRIL-

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20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

-MAY-

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Exams Start!

-JUNE-

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Things to Remember...

Remember learning is hard - don't downplay exams as an important part of this

Making mistakes is part and parcel of this

Any sort of revision is really hard to start

It is normal for students to feel nervous and it is normal for students to feel a bit "stressed"

We all feel anxiety

Normal vs Problematic

It is important to make sure we are giving the right messaging about this!

But how can you try to make this as easy as possible?

What your Child Needs to do well

Breakfast Boost



Good Sleep Hygiene



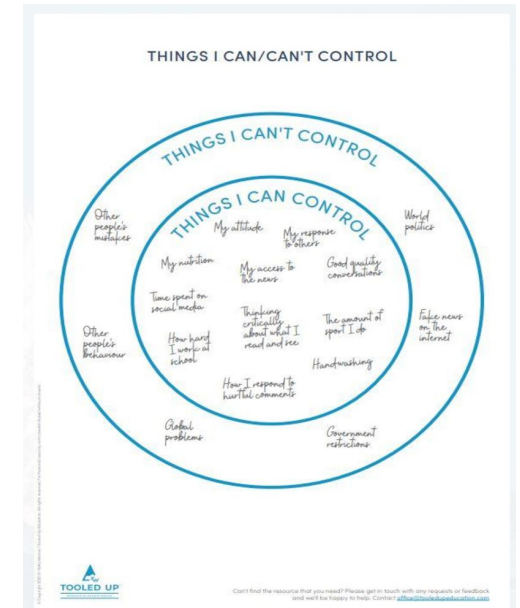
Keep home as calm as possible



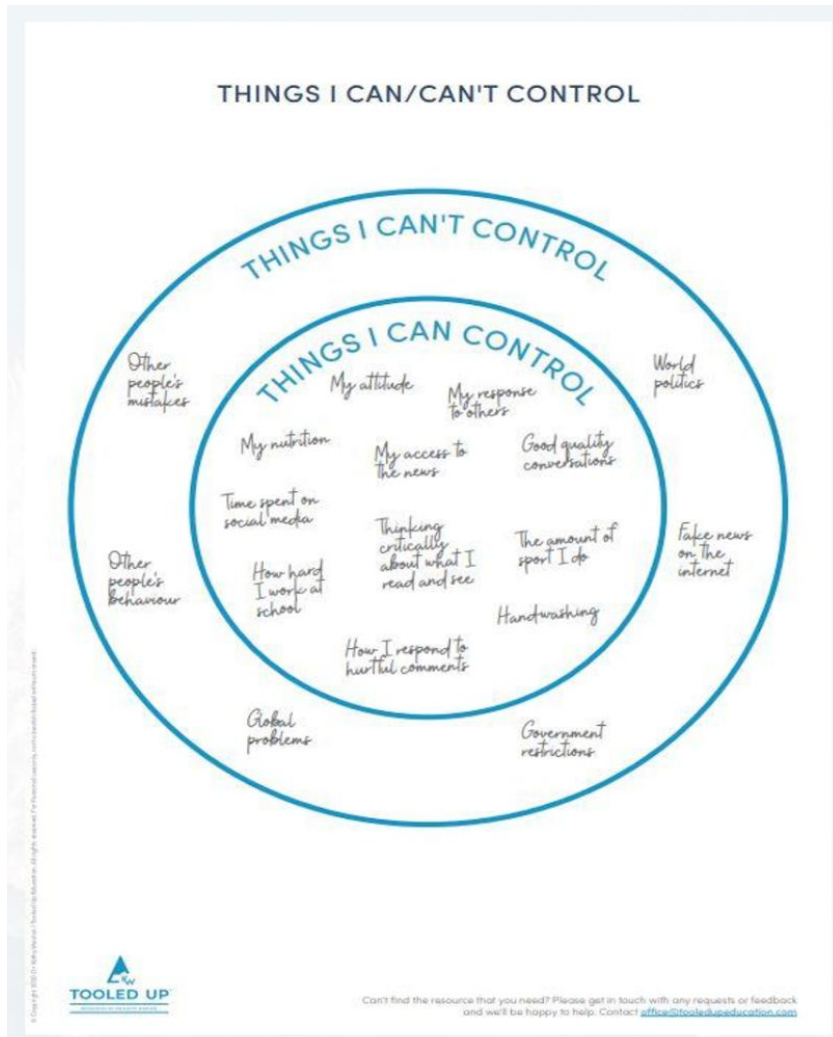
Exercise aids Learning!



Have Things to Look Forward To

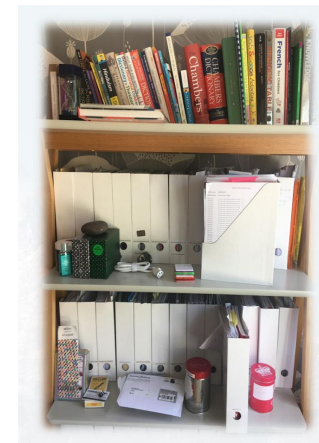
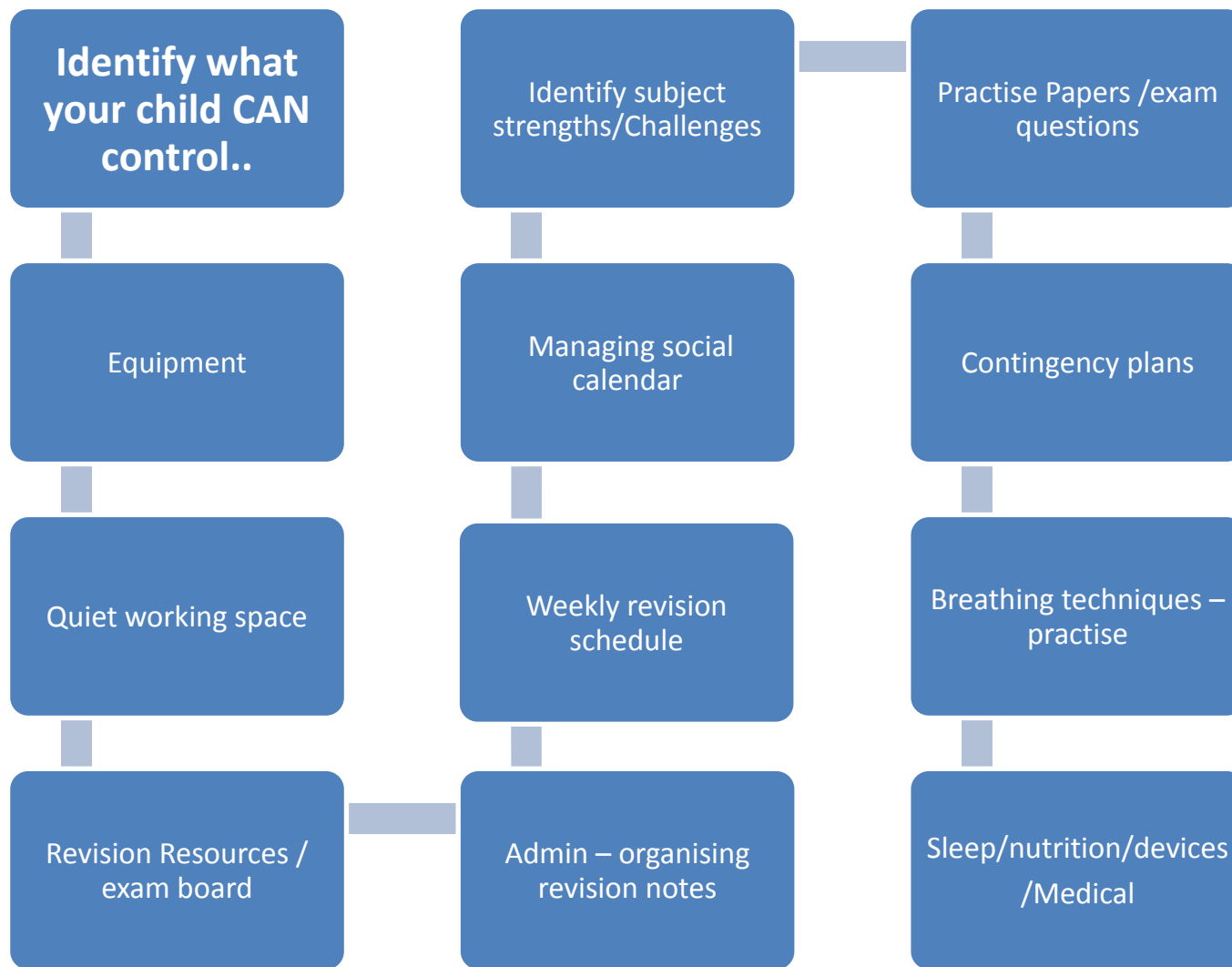


Exam Anxiety: Planning – Taking control (3-6 months before)



- Put things into perspective for your child
- Normalise exam worry/stress
- Address the irrational worries
- Help your child take control and channel their worries into actions and create a plan
- Provide reassurance and break the unhelpful worrying habits

Exam Anxiety: Planning – Taking control (3-6 months before)



What your Child Needs from you

Validate, don't fix



Coach don't soothe

What can help:

- ✓ Defining the problem
- ✓ Chunking it down
- ✓ Brain-storming possible solutions
- ✓ Appraising solutions and choosing appropriate one
- ✓ Implementation
- ✓ Evaluation.



Brainstorm 'things that help reduce stress'



What helps, what doesn't?



Questions to ask..... A Week Before

- What favourite breakfasts can I prepare for you?
- How would you like to get to school on the morning of each exam?
- Do you need me to pick you up after each exam?
- If you feel anxious, where do you feel it in your body? When I feel anxious, I like to...
- Can you think of a time when you felt a bit anxious but it worked out well?
- Can you please take the dog for a walk or why don't you spend 30 minutes doing some outdoor exercise?
- What little things can I help arrange for you to look forward to after your exams?
- Which one of your friends calms you down or would be good to be around during exams next week?
- Do you like talking to other people before or after exams?
- What is your view about good luck cards and phone calls? Do they help you to feel relaxed ahead of an exam or can they hinder?

Exam Anxiety: To say or not to say....



As long as you are trying your best, there can be no question of failure	Why would you worry about that?
We can't eliminate your stress but can we control it	That's a silly thing to worry about
Well done for recognising you are feeling stressed – let's go for a walk and talk through this together	You will be fine – stop worrying
Thank you for sharing, I understand that must be very overwhelming.	Leave it to me – I will handle it



Exam Anxiety: Questions to ask..... Day/Night before

- Have you got everything you need for tomorrow?
- Can we just recheck the time and location of the exam tomorrow?
- Do you want to study tonight or do you want to do something relaxing? What would help?
- What are you wearing tomorrow?
- Do you fancy a walk?
- When you look back at the last few months, what are you most proud of?

Exam Anxiety: Questions to ask..... Morning of

No questions will be particularly beneficial now.

- Calm is required
- Get them to eat breakfast.. Or something small if they can't stomach a meal (buffet style)
- Keep things light and jolly in the car or on the journey.
- If they wish for silence, give it to them.
- If they want to read their notes, or not, that is ok.
- Provide a calm point for them that day

The day of a test

- Get up before them. Have your breakfast;
- Give them a brilliant breakfast;
- Don't ask them too many questions;
- Don't wish them luck.
- Try and take your cue from them.



Supportive Apps

Useful Apps



Calm App Help you improve your health and happiness through daily meditation and sleep relaxation.



Headspace App Relaxation exercises to add extra mindfulness to your day, and hundreds of meditations on everything from stress to sleep.



Catch it App (Free) Teaches you how to look at problems in a different way, turn negative thoughts into positive ones and improve your mental wellbeing.



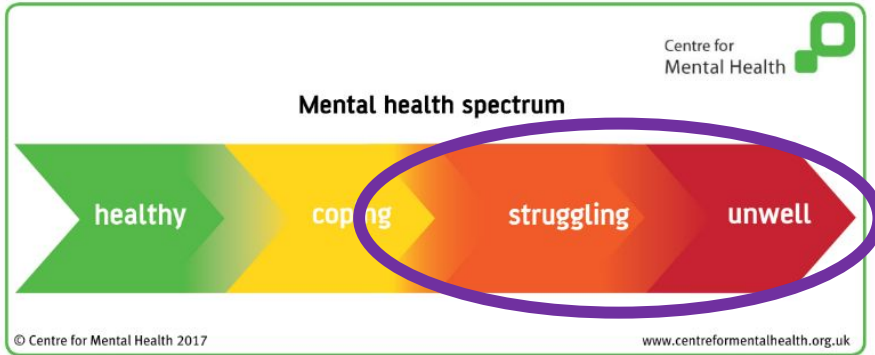
Student Health App (Free) To reduce your worries, feel more confident and get the support you need at what can be a challenging time for any student.



Thrive App (Free) Helps you prevent and manage stress, anxiety and related conditions.



Anxiety, depression, low mood...



'I have noticed you seem sad/down a lot of the time, is that how you have been feeling?'

'How or what can I do to help you?'

'Is that something you would like support with?'

'I have a few ideas we could explore together to help you manage how you are feeling, can we look at those together this evening?'

Counselling Services



Self Refer

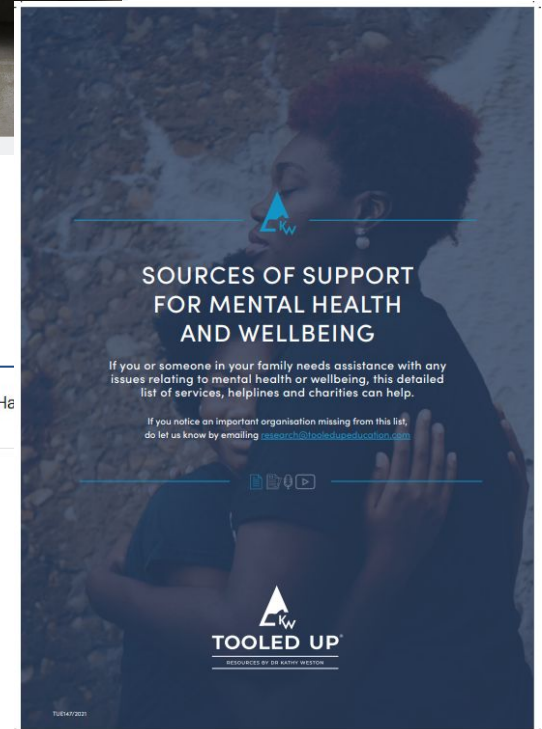
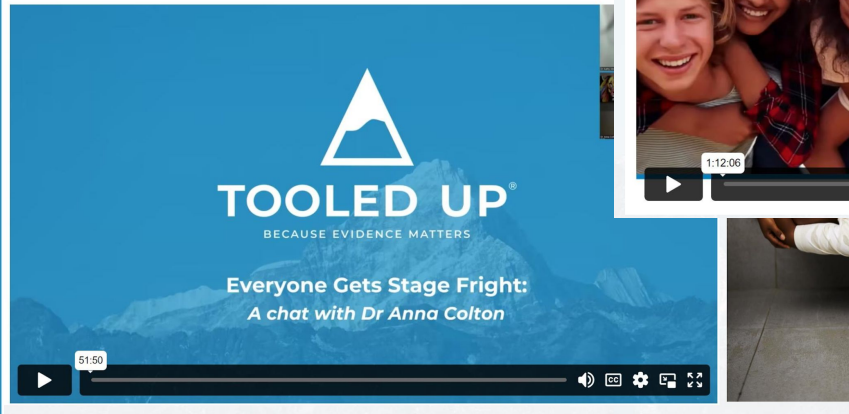


Book a wellbeing appointment with your GP

Children's Wellbeing Practitioners Parent Webinars



Workshops



TOOLED UP Resources Events Researchers Wednesday Wisdom Support ▾ Hi, Ha

Article

October 16, 2024

Resources to Reduce Exam Anxiety for Parents and Teens

By Dr Hope Christie • 3 minute read
Updated on: October 16, 2024

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