



# How children can combat stress around school exams

Taking exams can be a stressful time in a child's life. Many young people struggle with the huge pressures surrounding exams and when they end, the stress of waiting for results begins. While exams obviously can't be prevented, there are plenty of ways that young people and parents can learn to cope with exam stress in healthier ways.

In this guide, we outline how parents can help reduce exam stress in their children.



## Top tips for parents to help minimise exam stress

1. Remind children that it's normal to experience emotions such as sadness, anger and anxiety around exam time, but that these don't last forever
2. Young people often 'catastrophise' and may believe they will fail. Help them to look at evidence of their hard work, so they can challenge irrational thinking
3. Help children to form a plan so that even if their results are not what they hope for, they know they have various options open to them in their future



4. Remind children that they are loved unconditionally, no matter what their exam results are

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5. Encourage children to talk about how they're feeling, explaining that parents can feel like that too in times of stress, so that they feel less alone or like something is wrong with them

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6. Don't put pressure on children to revise. Remind children that they will feel satisfied if they know they have tried their best, with a healthy balance of revision and relaxation

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7. Let children know that they can always contact a supportive charity, such as ChildLine or the Samaritans, if they need a confidential discussion

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8. Make sure children turn off all screens an hour before bed, as looking at a screen may prevent them from getting to sleep, which impacts their mood and wellbeing

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9. Encourage children to exercise regularly - it will improve mental health and sleep patterns

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10. If a child is experiencing intense stress, parents can try the following to help distract them:
  - + Watch a film, read a funny book, watch funny videos or look at old photos

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  - + Avoid worrying about exams except for short periods, morning and night

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  - + Encourage thinking of a relaxing memory as a safe place to go to in their head, and to describe it in detail. They can take themselves back to that memory at times of stress

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  - + Hold some ice tightly; as the ice melts they can feel their tension melt away

If stress levels don't seem to improve, it is important to seek help from a GP. A doctor can refer children to a psychiatrist to receive therapy, which can make a significant difference in a short period. Medical experts can also liaise with schools and recommend extra time in exams for children, or allow children to sit exams in smaller rooms with fewer people.



## Contact us

If things don't seem to be improving, professional support can help children to cope. Priory works with worldwide leading mental health professionals and our proven record of helping people to get their lives back on track is unrivalled.

For more information, please contact us by:

**Telephone: 0800 840 3219**

**Email: [info@priorygroup.com](mailto:info@priorygroup.com)**

Read more about mental health treatment at Priory by scanning the QR code.

