

Top 10 tips to support your child through their exams

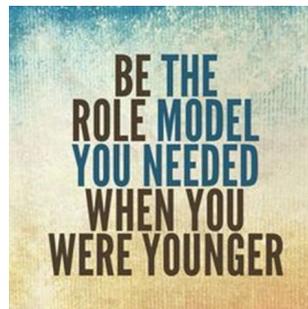
In October we gave all students a 'Power to Perform booklet' this went through different strategies and routines that they can employ to support them in their physical, mental and academic preparation for the exams, however as parents and carers there are many ways that you can also support your children in the run up to exams and during the exam season itself. I have outlined below a number of different strategies that you may find useful in supporting your children in the next 5 months:

- 1. Being a role model**
- 2. Helping them set goals**
- 3. Keeping them active**
- 4. Healthy eating**
- 5. Time out**
- 6. Sleep patterns**
- 7. Unplugging**
- 8. Staying cool & calm**
- 9. Belief**
- 10. Being supportive**

1. Being a role model

Set a good example by modelling the behaviour you want your child to adopt...

- Planning for the week.
- Eating healthily and well.
- Keeping hydrated.
- Leading an active life.
- Staying calm.
- Being organised.
- Good sleep habits.
- Reading



2. Goal Setting

- Encourage them to keep their goals planner visible – e.g. printed and displayed on their bedroom wall.
- Help focus them and talk to them about their goals regularly.
- Give positive reinforcement, evidence suggests that a verbal reinforcement can be more effective than a material one, for example telling them how proud you are of their achievement and effort.
- Connect with them about 'why' and 'what' they want to achieve.

3. Keeping Active

- Encourage them to keep active on a daily basis.
- Carry out exercise in manageable chunks e.g. 3 x 20 min sessions throughout the day.

Plan to do active things together on a weekend.

- Go out for a walk together and get some fresh air.
- Help them plan out their weekly exercise schedule in advance.
- After exercise your brain functions well, so encourage a revision session afterwards.

4. Healthy Eating

- Avoid high sugary and fatty foods or drinks, encourage them to eat healthy high energy foods such as bananas, fish, brown rice, eggs, apples, porage, oranges, seeds, nuts...the website below gives some great advice to help your child eat for energy:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/the-energy-diet/>

- Aim to eat clean, fresh and healthy foods.
- Encourage them to eat breakfast everyday, especially before exams.
- Hydration is key to brain functioning so make sure your child carries a bottle of water with them.

5. Time Out

Encourage them to build in opportunities to take some time out every week, away from study. For example:

Going out for food

Seeing friends

Having a bath

Listening to music

Reading a book

Doing a hobby

Going shopping

Going to the cinema

6. Sleep Patterns

- Young people need between 8 – 9 hours sleep per night.
- Help your child create a relaxing evening routine.
- Make sure they don't eat too late at night.
- Avoid giving them caffeine or sugary drinks late at night.
- Make sure they don't work or revise too late before going to bed.
- Encourage them to switch off from social media / technology at least an hour before bedtime, possibly taking their phone bedroom at night time.

7. Unplugging

- Encourage them to unplug from technology everyday.
- Help them switch off from technology at least 30 mins- 1 hr before going to sleep.

- Support your child to appreciate the world around them rather than being governed by their phone.
- Make sure they put their phone away, & on silent, while they are concentrating on tasks / revision / homework.
- Help them learn to have the control to not be obsessed with their phone or gaming.
- Choose some time each day/week to switch off and unplug from technology with them.

8. Staying Cool & Calm

- Set a good example by staying calm yourself.
- Create a relaxing environment for your child to relax and work in.
- Help them plan out coping strategies to deal with their stress, the school can help with this if you are unsure how to advise them.
- Give them positive distractions away from studying
- Help them understand their stress and that some stress is natural & to focus on controlling the controllables.
- Promote a balance of their academic studies & other activities during the week
- Support them not to 'catastrophise' - Watch this Ted talk with them on 'Fear-setting'. In it Tim Ferriss encourages us to fully envision and write down our fears in detail, in a simple but powerful exercise he calls "fear-setting."

https://www.ted.com/talks/tim_ferriss_why_you_should_define_your_fears_instead_of_your_goals?language=en#t-342736

9. Belief

All children are fearful of failure and often disappointing their family, friends and most importantly themselves. This can lead to a lack of effort as if you don't try you can't fail. To support this could do the following:

- Give them positive reinforcement and do not dwell on the negative.
- Boost their confidence daily.
- Celebrate any successes and reward them e.g. if they have achieved their mini-goals.
- Try not to have unrealistic expectations, this does not mean they should not be high or aspirations.
- Show them how proud of them you are.
- Highlight things to make them feel good and give them the belief in themselves to help them achieve.

10. Be Supportive

- Be a good listener and approachable.
- Show some understanding of what they are going through.
- Help them deal with their emotions & feelings, offer caring advice.
- Just be there for them!

