



# Exam Stress

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# What is Stress?

- Everyone can feel stressed out at times.
- Affects girls more than boys.
- There are many ordinary situations that make us stressed:
  - School work and exam pressure
  - Relationship problems with friends and family
  - Being bullied or teased.
- As Year 11 students taking exams, this is a particular stressful time because of what's at stake.



# What is Stress cont..

- Exam time may cause young people to feel:
  - family will place a weight of expectation on them
  - afraid that they are not good enough or haven't worked hard enough.
  - worried that their friends will do better than them.
  - scared of letting themselves down and not being able to achieve what they expected of themselves.
  - worried that if they don't achieve, they may miss out on 6<sup>th</sup> form, a college place or a job opportunity.



# Stress - The Science Bit

- Stress is an automatic mental and physical alerting response which allows the body to cope effectively with danger, illness & emergencies.
- Stress hormones (Adrenaline, Noradrenaline and Cortisol) cause the "Flight or Fight Response"
- This response causes physical reactions to occur within the body such as a raise in blood pressure & heart rate, sweating, breathing to be quicker, an increase in mental awareness and a reduction pain/discomfort.
- Designed to make it easier to defend yourself or run away.



# How much stress?

- A small amount of stress is not a bad thing. It allows us in a short period to manage our nerves and perform well in a challenging situation.
- Large amounts of stress where stress hormones are being constantly produced can damage your physical and mental well being.



# Symptoms of too much Stress

- Too much stress can lead to a wide range of health problems including:
  - Feeling on edge & irritable
  - Being oversensitive & tearful regularly
  - Problems with sleeping
  - Feeling tired all the time
  - Loss of appetite & feeling nauseous
  - Headaches
  - Stomach aches
  - Chest pains/muscle cramps
  - Feeling restless & finding it difficult to concentrate
  - Constipation or diarrhoea
  - Dizziness & fainting spells.



# When to get help for Stress

- Stress can get on top of us and make us feel trapped and hopeless.
- Understanding and support from other people can make it much easier to cope. **Feeling alone makes it much harder.**
- People who your child may want to talk to:
  - Friends and family
  - Teaching staff
  - School nurse/matron
  - School counsellor
  - Youth Connexions PA
  - Help lines
- If you believe that stress is seriously affecting your child's health and mental wellbeing, seek advice from your GP who will be able to provide specialist help.



# Minimising exam stress

## ■ Basic strategies:

- Being organised and planning work
- A planned revision timetable - making realistic goals for each session.
- A revision technique that works for your child - there's no right or wrong way.
- Ensure revision time is balanced with other activities which your child enjoys.
- Eat healthily - Bananas!!!
- Have a good sleep pattern.
- Physical exercise.



# Minimising exam stress cont...

## ■ Points to remember:

- Going at it non stop is not an effective way to revise, taking time out will enable a better quality of revision
- Putting it off makes it feel worse, once your child has made a start on their revision, they will feel better
- Ensure your child has a good space to revise - a table is best, with everything to hand
- Mix up favourite subjects with those less favoured



# Minimising exam stress cont...

## ■ Points to remember:

- Some revision websites are good and contain games which aid memory but monitor so your child doesn't get distracted by MSN or Facebook!
- Test them or encourage them to test their peers /be tested
- Remind your child that they can only do their best and that is good enough
- Show an interest
- School will cover reading questions properly, looking at mark allocation, reading all questions before start, checking work etc



# De-stressing

- Learning how to relax is crucial in managing the run up to the exams and being in the exam room.
- Lots of strategies exist e.g relaxation, breathing techniques.
- Panic is a short lived experience
- New technique using NLP.
- Solution focused approaches



# For more help and information

- ChildLine provides a free 24-hour confidential support hotline for children. Helpline 0800 1111.
- The Samaritans provide a 24-hour service offering confidential emotional support to anyone who is in crisis. Helpline 08457 909 090 (UK); email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)
- The Royal College of Psychiatrists have a factsheet called [Coping with stress: for young people](#) available from [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation)
- Support for parents - [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk) or call 0808 800 2222
- Support with exams:
- S-Cool is the UK's leading GCSE and A-level revision website
- "Taking the sting out of exam stress" available on the Teens First for Health website: [www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk](http://www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk)



