

# EXAM STRESS

## Healthy Young Minds

CAMHS would be very grateful for any feedback on this newsletter. Please could you complete the online survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/XN9QSHG>

### *What is exam stress?*

- Stress is the body's natural response to something threatening or frightening.
- Exam stress happens particularly around the time of exams.
- Mild levels can make us more alert and help motivate us.
- If stress levels are too high, it can impair our ability to prepare for exams, leading to more stress.
- A certain level of stress is normal about exams.

### *What signs should I look out for in a young person?*

- Feeling frightened, nervous or panicky
- Difficulties sleeping
- Bad dreams
- Eating more/less than usual
- Difficulties concentrating on homework
- Not wanting to go to school
- Avoiding or excessive revising
- Not wanting to do activities previously enjoyed
- Feeling tired
- Tearfulness
- More irritable than usual
- Using the toilet often
- Fidgety
- Complaints of:
  - \* Racing heart
  - \* Feeling faint
  - \* Stomach ache
  - \* Feeling sick
  - \* Pains in the chest
  - \* Feeling breathless
  - \* Headache

- Levels of self-harm increase around the Summer exam time
- If we can spot it, we can help young people develop helpful strategies to manage the stress
- Stress can impair performance if not managed

### *What can I do to help a young person with exam stress?*

- ✓ Talk to them about how they are coping
  - ✓ Help them to plan study time with regular breaks and rewards
  - ✓ Emphasise their other strengths if they struggle academically
  - ✓ Reassure there are other options if things don't work out how they hope
  - ✓ Make sure they eat well
  - ✓ Encourage half an hour 'wind-down' before bed
  - ✓ Make sure they have somewhere comfortable to study
  - ✓ Remind them that feeling anxious about exams is normal
  - ✓ Encourage light exercise
  - ✓ Be reassuring and positive before an exam
  - ✗ Don't expect them to do household chores, tidy room etc during revision time
  - ✗ Talk through the parts of the exam that went well and then move on to the next one; don't dwell on the bits that didn't go well
- **Some useful websites:**
- <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/Coping-with-exam-stress.aspx>
  - <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/school-college-and-work/school-college/exam-stress/>

