

Revision Advice for Parents

How can you help as a parent or carer?

There is no single way to support someone completing examinations. The following points are intended to offer some general advice, but we are always willing to offer support and advice for individual students or families if we are able.

1. Be a supporter, not a nag

When your son or daughter is approaching exams, resisting the temptation to 'oversee' their revision - or arm-wrestle them into doing it - can be tough. However, asking questions like 'Have you done any revision today?' is bound to cause arguments and come across to your child as nagging, especially if they are already anxious about their GCSEs. Instead, if you can, help your son or daughter with creating their revision timetable. If he or she would prefer to do this alone, at least take a look at the timetable and offer encouragement, letting your child know you're impressed with their organisation. Asking how the schedule is going, rather than if they are doing any work, feels less intrusive for your son or daughter and is less likely to create tension. If he or she has fallen off track with revision, don't judge - just ask how they plan to solve the problem and offer your support. Giving your child a sense of responsibility, plus the feeling that you're behind them in taking this on board, is key.

2. Look for signs of stress

If your son or daughter isn't eating as much as usual, seems to be struggling to sleep or is experiencing unusual aches and pains, it could be that they're too stressed. Look out for these signs, and if you see them talk to your child about why they are so anxious. Reassurance from someone who loves and knows them well will help to alleviate stress. You should also encourage your son or daughter to eat as healthily as possible, take regular breaks from revision and engage in normal social activities, as well as unwind with some exercise. Remembering that there is life beyond the GCSEs is crucial - although it can be a challenge for the students about to sit them.

3. Offer praise and rewards - not bribes

As parents we all want to see our children do well, and it can be tempting to offer attractive 'incentives' for them to do so. Be wary, though, of offering rewards for results rather than for the hard work that your son or daughter does in the lead up to the exams.

Promising specific treats in exchange for top grades can feel like bribery, and may heap extra pressure on your child at an already stressful time - whereas a series of small rewards during the revision period can provide encouragement and help build confidence.

4. Get involved

Do whatever you can to help your child - whether that means making endless cups of tea, keeping younger siblings from disturbing them or sending them to bed when they look tired. Offer to test your son or daughter on what they've revised each day and encourage them to put up revision posters, diagrams and post-it notes around the house. Above all, make sure you're available to your child if they want to talk about any worries they may have.

5. Avoid arguments

GCSE time is likely to be stressful for the whole family: your son or daughter will be nervous about the approaching exams, while the rest of you will be keen for them to fulfil their potential. Tempers are likely to be frayed during revision time, but do your best not to rise to the bait if your teenager is more challenging than usual. Young people's self-esteem can be fragile as the exams approach, particularly if they are pushing themselves to get top results - so stay as positive and supportive as you can.

6. Don't say 'In my day...'

Telling your son or daughter that you, or older siblings, did exams like GCSEs and survived them might seem helpful - but unfortunately it can add to the stress your child is already feeling. If your son or daughter feels under pressure to perform well, thinking about themselves in relation to others who've done the exams before - particularly brothers and sisters who were very successful - might make matters worse.

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