



LEARNING TO BE EXTRAORDINARY

Part of the Athena Trust, Company No 08150106

EXAM HEALTH GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Many of these are based on what we teach our students on how to maintain positive wellbeing. Where we are promoting the same actions at school and home, we can further strengthen the mental resilience of our young people.

The same strategies apply to you. We know that you want your child to do well, and that can cause you to be stressed during exams. Dr Anna Colton, Adolescent Clinical Psychologist says that “the more stressed parents are the less likely children are to share their own stress and worries with them.”. She shares great tips for parents here: [BBC - Top Tips for Parents from the Mind Set Experts](#)

- **Attend our revision strategy evenings.** We will help you and your child break down what they need to revise, how to do it and when – it becomes less of a mountain and becomes manageable, controllable chunks. VIth Form students can use the same strategies that they learned in Year 10 and 11 throughout Year 12, 13 and beyond. All year teams provide revision packs. It takes 21 days to build a habit. You can support your child in building good revision habits by using the strategies shared in these evenings.
- **Use the power of yet.** Don't accept “I don't get it” “I will never get it” – support your child in changing their thoughts to “I don't get it yet”... then help them look through knowledge organisers, email subject teachers for guidance and find solutions.
- **Help them get organised.** Clear a study area, good lighting, folders for their notes and revision cards – away from distractions like the TV. Help them find their revision guides and notes in their rooms/bottom of bags etc – they SHOULD be in their folders... however, we all know that occasionally young people manage to lose things.
- **Be tolerant of revision posters** – the physics equations on sticky notes around the bathroom mirror – they are helping your child to remember them whilst brushing their teeth. The quotes from Romeo and Juliet stuck on the back of the toilet door... they are helping and will go after their exams!
- **Set a timer.** Set 30 minutes to review the set physics equations for example. When the 30 minutes is up, they can have a break with a drink/snack for 5 minutes, and then start another 30 minutes.
- **Encourage reading for pleasure:** it's relaxing, takes your mind off worries, and helps you wind down before sleep. It also helps boost a wide range of vocabulary which is a bonus in many exams! Research has shown that daily reading for pleasure is linked to better exam results.
- **Keep their fluids and nutrients up:**
 - Eat breakfast – we have breakfast club at school for free. Oats provide the most energy for the day
 - Lots of health websites advise eating oily fish to boost Omega 3 in the brain for memory retention. There are supplements that do this if your child does not like eating fish.
 - Avoid fizzy drinks and caffeine
 - Drink water to keep the brain fuelled, oxygenated and energized. When you wake up, have a glass of water as soon as you can to rehydrate your brain and get it ready for the day. Students can drink

water between lessons at a number of water refuelling stations around the school and the free jugs of water in the canteens.

- A yoghurt or an apple at the end of a meal is a great way to finish and provide extra energy
- Fresh food, with a balance of fruit and vegetables is encouraged as a brain-fuelling diet.
- **Text 07312 263 499 – Cornwall Chat Health support for Parents and Carers.** There is an alternative number for young people: 07312 263 096 – someone will respond to you within 48 hours Mon- Fri.
- **Keep them active.** Go for walks. Interacting with the environment can have a positive impact on our mental health. Build in a time in their revision schedule to go for a walk with your child. Going for a walk also gives them a neutral environment to share any worries they may have, or just to walk in silence but know that they are supported. If outside is not an appealing space for your child reflect back on what you did during lockdown to encourage exercise in the house, did you have a dance in the kitchen or do a Joe Wicks workout together for example? These work just as well now. Open a window so they get fresh air to revitalise them.
- **Share worries.** We encourage students to share their worries with a trusted adult as this can help the worries become smaller and more bearable as the load is shared. We find that students are often more comfortable talking about worries if they are not sat down and are doing something like drawing, going for a walk, being outside. We tell them to make you a cup of tea, suggest taking the dog for a walk, helping to fold the washing, helping dry the plates whilst you or they wash up etc – a space where they can have a conversation with you and be calm in the process.
- **Be strict about bed-time.** Students should maintain a regular sleeping pattern where they get around 8 hours sleep.
- **Use music to relax, use quietness to study.** In the exams they will be working in silence. They need to practise that and realise that it is ok and manageable to sit in a room in silence and work. Students that struggle with that can use focusing techniques and those with sensory needs will have strategies shared with them by the SEND team.
- **Minimise social media and digital interactions** – especially in that golden hour before bed. Blue screen time can overstimulate the brain and so students will not be getting a good enough sleep, which can have a long-term impact on their mental health. As parents and carers, you can:
 - Install parent controls on their devices and turn them off or limit their apps (I use Family link on mine – you can remotely lock their devices – works for focusing on study and calling for tea if they are ignoring you!)
 - Remove their devices when they are studying. They don't use them in lessons.
 - Keep their devices in a different room before bed and return them in the morning
 - Remove TVs and consoles from bedrooms if they do not stick to switching them off at a set time
 - NHS Guidance can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/youth-mental-health/>
 - And: [Social Media & Mental Health | Guide For Parents | YoungMinds](#)
- **Breathing techniques:** we share 7-11 breathing. Breathe in through your nose for the count of 7, and out through the mouth for 11. Slow breathing down. There are plenty of techniques out there to use. Students also count on their fingers by pressing their thumb to the tip of each finger from pointer to little finger and back again, with each one slowing their breathing down to focus themselves and reduce panic.
- **'Butterflies' before an exam** – treat them as excitement to show what you know, and you do know a lot. This is also anxiety, but when we focus so much on the word anxiety, students can become more worried that their mental health is really suffering and that there is something horribly wrong with them. Sometimes, there is more help that is needed. Sometimes, it is natural anxiety about doing well and reframing that into excitement makes it into a much more positive experience.

- **Great videos to support with a whole host of questions about revision and managing wellbeing:** [Exams and revision - Study support - BBC Bitesize](#)
- **Use the ‘Power of 10’ or ‘I am awesome’ cards.** These are the size of a credit card that can be kept in their pocket or wallet. We create these on Preparation for Life days, but also with students who need them in response to how they are feeling about themselves. We encourage students to write down 10 things that make them smile, or 10 nice things that others have said about them. As a teacher I have been using this for over 20 years – including having a family approach me at a festival “Miss Clark you won’t remember me but....” And showing me their ‘I am awesome’ card from 18 years ago, and then his Mum came up and showed me her card too. Their family uses them all the time for those wobbly moments when we need to reflect on the fact that there is light and joy.
- **Consider your role.** Are you the cheerleader for your child, cheering them on in their successes? The trainer who sits with them and checks their revision cards with them as you did with their times-tables at primary (an older sibling who has sat that exam could help them with this for example)? The organiser who writes their revision schedule for them and makes them stick to it? The fixer who works through understanding a topic (use the knowledge organisers, revision guides or online videos to help you – you can also contact Heads of Department for guidance if your child is stuck on a topic) Or a combination of many roles? Students are encouraged to remember that there is a team of people around them, all prepared to help them to be a success. The same applies to you. Talk to other parents and carers whose children have been through exams, what worked for them? What didn’t?

If you have any questions about the content of this guide please email Mrs Rowles-Janes, our designated mental health lead at rowles-janef@cambornescience.co.uk or me at gellatlys@cambornescience.co.uk - we will get back to you as soon as we can. For Year 11 related enquiries please contact Mrs Trevarthen or Mrs McKinley. For V1th Form, please contact Mr Ross, Mrs Ormerod or Miss Hendrick.

Best wishes and thank you for your continued support

Mrs Susan Gellatly

Mrs Fiona Rowles-Jane

Assistant Principal, Character Education Assistant Principal and Designated Mental Health Lead