

Teenagers often feel like their worries aren't taken seriously and are viewed as 'silly'. This can lead to them keeping them to themselves, and increasing their stress and anxiety. Try to build in time to let your child talk if they want to, and even where a worry seems small, take it seriously; they will appreciate your support.

Other ways you can help to reduce your child's anxiety are:

- ◆ Always encourage your child to talk with their teacher when they are feeling unsure or they don't understand
- ◆ Be positive, even when they aren't
- ◆ End every conversation on a positive note
- ◆ Offer praise and reward when they reach revision milestones

### GCSE revision in the final days

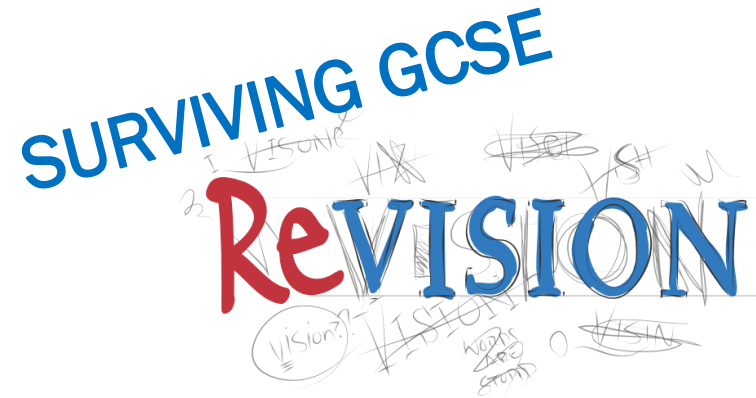
Make sure you know the dates of each exam. You also need to know whether the exam is a morning or afternoon sitting. This information is available from school if you don't already have it.



Try to avoid disagreements where possible. It isn't easy when you are dealing with a stressed out teenager but the less they have to think about, the more relaxed they will be in the exam hall.

Try not to grill them too much after the exam has happened. It's natural to want to know how it went, especially when you have worked so hard with them but this can also increase stress, so try to let them initiate the conversation, or stick with a casual 'how did it go?'.

Finally, reassure them that their GCSE is just one step in their life and that their best is good enough.



## A PARENTS' GUIDE

They always leaves everything to the last minute - one minute they have all the time in the world, the next it's all stress and stopping because it has to be in tomorrow and they don't have the things they need to do it.

Revise!

## How can parents make a difference?

Parental support is eight times more important in determining a student's academic success than social class. The Campaign for Learning found that parental involvement in a child's education can mean the difference in obtaining the top grades available. (TES, Oct 2003)

The good news is that you don't have to be an expert in the subject and you don't have to become a 'super-parent' giving up your life and responsibilities – you just need to know how best to spend the time you do have, at each stage of the process.

One of the hardest demands on students is that of understanding the long-term importance of doing the best they can, and learning to shelve short term fun in the interest of long-term benefits (not easy, even for adults).

Students will also differ in their levels of maturity, their ability to take responsibility for their learning, organisational skills and levels of motivation.

This is where parents come in. Your support, encouragement and interest can make a difference to your child's motivation and ability to cope with the academic and organisational demands of the exam period.



## Healthy child, healthy mind

Stress and anxiety can take a mental and physical toll on your child. To combat this, encourage them to be active individuals and ensure they are making positive choices at meal times, as well as drinking lots of water and getting plenty of sleep – teenagers should be getting a minimum of 8-9 hours a night.



There is a lot of evidence that “blue screens” such as phones and tablets disrupt sleep – switch off at least an hour before bedtime.

Remember, the brain works best when it is relaxed, happy, entertained, inspired, engaged and loved.

## Being there

Everyone falls behind sometimes and can feel lost, demotivated and overwhelmed. Noticing these signs early can make a real difference in getting your child back on track.

Look out for these indicators that your child may be suffering with stress:

- ◆ They talk less
- ◆ Show less interest in the things that they love
- ◆ Have mood swings
- ◆ Not eating as much as usual
- ◆ Sleeping problems
- ◆ May seem lethargic or 'lazy'

Encourage your child to share their worries with you. The more freely they talk about their issues and struggles, the more they are likely to manage them, rather than let them build up.

## Revision environment

Most revision will be done at home; having a good environment in which to work will help your child stay focused. Ensure they have a quiet and private place to revise. A table and chair in their bedroom or the dining table kitchen will suffice – the focus should be on a quiet space where they won't be interrupted and distractions are minimal.

If there are other siblings in the house, ensure they respect the revision time of the sibling doing their GCSE's; Keep the television turned down, no loud music and no arguments! (Sometimes easier said than done!). To show solidarity and forge good habits, try making this a quiet time for the family too.

## Revision equipment

Your child should have most of what they need to revise through school.

The following is a list of things they may find useful. Discuss it with your child to see what items might work for them.

- ◆ Different coloured pens, pencils, ruler, and rubber – basics
- ◆ Different coloured highlighters
- ◆ Maths equipment – protractor, compass, calculator
- ◆ Time keeper – digital stop watch or similar
- ◆ Dictionary
- ◆ Post it notes
- ◆ Note cards
- ◆ Paper
- ◆ Calendar
- ◆ Folders



## General advice – getting ready for revision

One of the very first things you need to do is explain the importance of revision to your child.

### Revision benefits:

- ◆ Reinforces what they have learned
- ◆ Identifies weak points and problem areas
- ◆ Helps them gain a solid understanding of the whole subject
- ◆ Bolsters exam confidence

It is also important not to leave revision to the last minute. The earlier your child starts their revision, the better. Many students underestimate the time they will need for proper revision and this quickly adds to the stress and anxiety as they begin to over extend themselves to make up for the lack of time.

Here is a simple way to work out the least amount of revision time needed: For one GCSE subject, allow 1 hour of revision per topic. Therefore, if a subject covers 50 topics, a student will need to revise for 50 hours. Most students study eight or more subjects, so this means 400 hours of revision. We wouldn't recommend more than 3 hours' revision an evening, so a student should start their revision 5 months before the exam to cover all the topics for all subjects.

While rudimentary, this is a good exercise to do with your child for them to appreciate the number of hours it will take to revise thoroughly and to help them understand the importance of starting their revision at the earliest possible time.

These figures look rather daunting but it is important to know that starting now is far better than not starting at all!

## Planning GCSE revision time

Teenagers aren't always the most effective organisers, but effective revision first starts with organisation. The first step to success is helping your child organise their revision time.



There is an erroneous belief that “serious revision” equates to studying for hours on end, however the opposite is true. Revision works best done little and often – 30 minutes at a time, with regular breaks. Ideally students should revise for no more than 3 hours in one day. Studying for longer is counter-productive because the brain becomes tired, they will experience difficulty in focusing and less and less information will be retained. It is also incredibly demotivating to be constantly staring at books. A student who studies for 2 hours 7 days a week will be much better off than a student who studies for 10 hours straight on a Saturday and Sunday.

Your child should create a revision timetable. Consistency is best so we would encourage students to revise on weeknights, allowing time to wind down and enjoy fun activities on the weekend, with additional sessions being built in as the exam gets closer.

Advise your child to break down the subjects by topics. Not only does that make it more effective, but it also makes it more palatable and allows you to become involved. Rather than reserving Tuesday nights for ‘English’, break this down into texts, or key skills, like A Christmas Carol or Language Methods. This allows revision to be much more focused and allows you to get in touch with teachers if you want to help your child with an area you know they are finding tricky. Give priority to topics they are finding particularly difficult, allowing more revision time.

Even as adults, we find it difficult to refuse short term fun for long term gain. This is especially difficult as a teenager. Therefore, it is also important that the ‘off’ nights be planned in too – relaxing and spending time together is just as important to ward off stress and anxiety.

## Maintaining motivation

Agree the balance between work and social life and stick to the agreement. Flexibility is key though – if a special night comes up, agree that they can make up the work at another time.

All students fall behind, feel demotivated or overwhelmed, or struggle with the balance of social, work and school demands at times. When your child feels like this, berating and punishing them will have a negative effect. Talk to them about their issues, acknowledge their feelings and adopt a calm, logical approach to finding a solution.

If your child asks for support, encourage them by helping them to see difficulties in perspective. Teenagers can take an all or nothing ‘catastrophic’ approach to challenges, so it is important to emphasise that until the minute the exam starts, it isn't too late.



## Weekly revision feedback

At the end of each week or fortnight, encourage conversation about revision progress. Make it interesting, so that it doesn't feel like an interrogation; you could use red, amber and green pieces of card for them to write down the topics that are still challenging (red), the ones they are beginning to understand (amber) and those that they feel comfortable with (green).

At the end of this, help your child to assess their progress, and review their revision timetable, giving more time to the areas they are still having trouble with. As topics move from red to amber, and amber to green, be sure to reward your child for their progress to maintain their focus and interest.