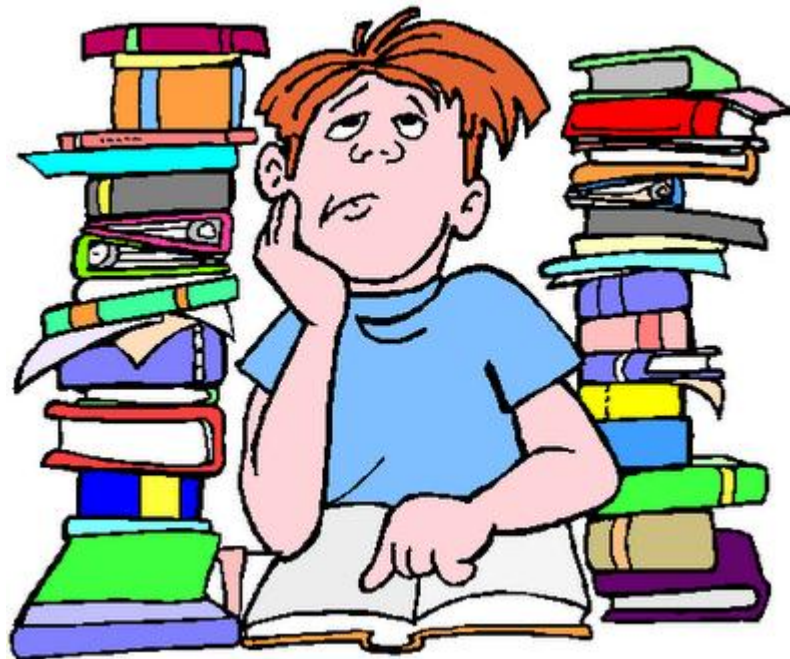


# GCSE's and Exam Stress

## How can parents help?



## The most common frustrations for parents

He always leaves everything to the last minute - one moment he has all the time in the world - the next it's all stress and stropping because it has to be in tomorrow and he hasn't got the stuff he needs to do it...

I didn't even do GCSEs - how can I help him?

I don't understand all these controlled assessments, levels and module exams - it's completely different from when I was at school.

I can't stand the arguments and stress when I tell him exams are important and try to make him work - it always ends up with him saying it's his life and slamming the door.

There's a million websites to help but how do you know which are any good?

She's always got an excuse - I don't know what to believe.

She's always panicked in exams - when I try to help her it always ends in a slanging match - it always seems to end in me making her more stressed.

Surely she shouldn't be going out again when she's got exams coming up?



# How Can I Make The Difference?

- Most parents feels at a loss when their children are preparing for exams – **you are not alone!**
- Evidence shows that parental support is **8X more important** in determining a child's success than social class.

You can help **even if you do not know any specifics** about the individual subject itself by;

1. Help your child **to take responsibility** for their own learning
2. Encouraging them to **ask a teacher** when they do not understand
3. Help them to develop strategies to **overcome their frustrations** when they do not succeed first time around
4. Help them to **be organised** – get everything done in time, not leaving things to the last minute. Encourage routine
5. Help them to **prepare for revision** and exams (more on this later)

## Your role as a parent may include

- **Attendance officer** – getting them up and into school and making sure they make the most of each lesson
- Maintaining an **active link** with school (Form Tutor / Head of Year / Senior Staff)
- **Provider of the tools** – a quiet space at home, a “Workbox” of pens, pencils, paper etc
- **Banker!** Paying for all the things they needs like revision guides etc
- **Sounding board** – listen to problems, help them to break down tasks into manageable chunks, celebrate achievement, be there when things go wrong
- **Project manager** – agreeing rules for homework or revision, helping them to be realistic about what they should be doing

## Your role as a parent may include

- **Go between** – when problems arise
- **Study buddy** – show an interest in what they are doing, but do not do it for them
- **Information provider** – help them to get to the right websites with information on e.g. exam board websites
- Whatever their individual needs are, **you are the most important person** to help them resolve any issues

When the going gets  
tough...



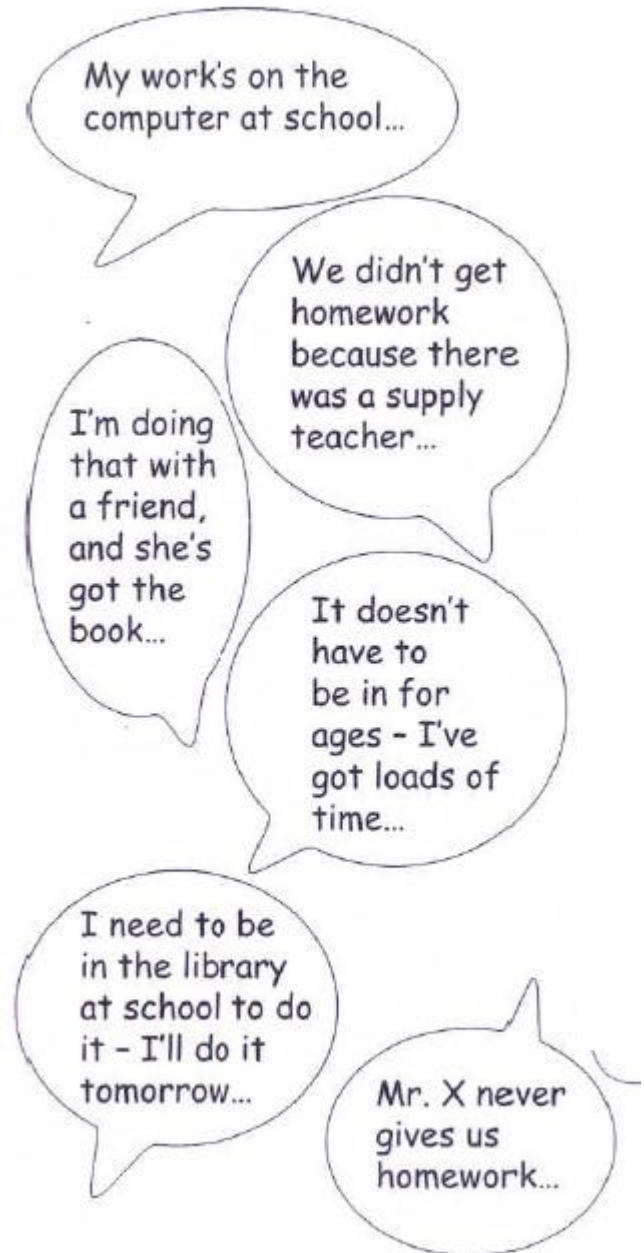
maintaining motivation  
and encouraging  
persistence

## When the going gets tough

- **It is your job** to agree the **balance** between work and their social life – including going out, being on the computer, having access to social networking during work periods
- **When they fall behind** – and most do at some point – help them get organised and set **realistic targets** to get back on track. No point berating them or threatening as this will have more of a negative impact. Better to agree a plan of action that you encourage them to stick to.
- Implement a **reward structure**. Does not have to be financial. An extra night out? A trip with friends. Being let off household duties whilst working – ask for proof! Little and often is the key.
- Be flexible – use **80/20 rule**. If your child is sticking to what they should do 80% of the time, ignore the other 20%. They will do alright.

## How to deal with their excuses!

- Keep a track of **excuses** with dates and subjects!
- Agree or **suggest a solution** that is achievable – ask to see evidence of the work the next day for example
- **Outline your concerns** to them and say you are going to check it out with their teacher
- **FOLLOW ON UP WHAT YOU SAY**
- Remember that the **aim is to get the work done**, not win the battle. Always give them a chance to save face as long as the work gets done!



## Tips for managing their revision

- **Buy all the materials** that they say they need for revision (within reason). A folder for each subject so that they can put revision materials into it in an organised way is essential.
- **Start revision early!** A little and often is better than all at once
- Make a **realistic revision timetable** with your child (they will be doing this in tutorial). Make sure they do the revision, stick to the time and equally importantly do not overdo things!
- Have **one place to work** / revise so that everything they need is there and time not wasted searching for things
- Make sure your child has a **routine for working** both during the week and at weekends

# Good and Bad Revision

## What is revision?

- Literally means to “**re-look**” at something
- The aim is to **know the information** you will be tested on and be able to **apply it** in an exam

## The aim of revision;

- To reduce the amount of information relating to a subject to a set of “**Key Points**” – that can be expanded upon by the student in an exam to answer the question. These “Key points” prompt your brain to retrieve the information stored.
- At the end of a revision session you should end up with a **single sheet / card with key facts** on for that section of work.

# The Structure of Revision Sessions

## Good revision sessions include;

- **An aim** – know what you are trying to achieve by the end!
- Identify the **bits you do not know** and spend more time on these.
- **Test yourself** - at the end to see if you have learned and understood
- **Break large sections** down into bite sized chunks
- Don't just read work – **do something active** like summary notes, mind maps (more later)
- Tick off the subject studied on the “completed” list – but **revisit regularly** after one day, one week, one month. **THIS REALLY WORKS**

# The Structure of Revision Sessions

## Do something with the information learned;

- Draw **Spider maps** on large sheets of paper
- Use **pictures** to explain things, use colour on posters
- Display **key points** on bedroom walls – sticky notes – on fridges
- Put key points **around house** for any “Rote learning” – chemical formulae, math equations, language verbs.
- Use a **voice recorder** to make notes and play it back in the car / on the bus to school
- Use a **highlighter** to emphasise key points in books or in notes
- **Watch and make notes** from DVD’s or revision videos such as GCSE Bitesize
- **Read a page** – shut the book – what do you remember – write down what you forget. **Repeat / Learn / Revisit**
- Get your child to **talk to you** about what they have learned that revision session over a cuppa, or dinner. This may need careful managing the first time round
- Have a **family quiz** to test the learning with your **child as the “expert”**

# Memory Techniques

**Find out what helps your child remember things by trying out a few of the things listed here;**

- **Acronyms** – “Wholly Inadequate Needless Damned Outrageous Waste of Space – becomes “WINDOWS”
- **Picture stories** – thinking of a strong visual image with the key facts in that you need to learn in the picture (rats jumping out of a pudding, being eaten by two King Charles Spaniels, running away from a burning bakers shop, number 1666 in flames)
- **Mnemonics** – a silly sentence. **Never Eat Shredded Wheat** (North, East, South, West)
- **Review** – take time out and ask whether the revision techniques are working for your child. Are they learning?
- **Later on** – once some revision has been completed do some practice exam papers – all freely available on the exam board website.

## Quick Tips For Revising

- **Make your child start** no matter how much they don't want to!
- Make sure they **build in short breaks**
- Make sure they **do short exercises** to stop themselves becoming tired and aching (studying is hard work when done well)
- **Drink plenty fluids** (water based soft drinks best)
- **Get fresh air** – even just in the garden
- Keep the revision **room temperature “cool”** – but not cold
- **Eat “brain foods”** – avoid sugar, have lots of healthy snacks around to eat. Little and often
- Encourage your child **to take a day off** now and again and do something entirely different
- **Do not leave more difficult bits** to the end
- **Relax** before bedtime – otherwise they won't sleep well
- **STOP** and **take a break** – when they get **frustrated** and stuck. They can make a note of what the problem is and ask their teacher for help
- **Rewards** for working well each session – a favourite TV programme, half an hour on the X-Box, Contact friends
- **Tidy up** – at the end of each session, revision notes filed away, work area cleared up for next session

Thank You For Listening!