



Woolwich Polytechnic
Sixth Form

HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR TEENAGER IN SIXTH FORM



Maintaining your teenager's well-being

SLEEP

Ensuring adequate sleep for teens

- Sleep plays a crucial role in maintaining good health, so it's vital to ensure that your teenager gets enough rest to function properly.
- Insufficient sleep can lead to various issues such as fatigue, irritability, lack of focus, unhealthy eating habits, and a decreased likelihood of engaging in physical activity, all affecting their overall well-being and ability to handle school and life challenges.
- Many teenagers struggle to get adequate sleep due to late-night studying or distractions like binge-watching shows and social media.
- Simply being in bed doesn't equate to quality sleep; teens typically require around eight to ten hours of sleep each night to support their growing bodies.
- To help them get enough rest, establish a bedtime routine that aligns with their wake-up time, ensuring they are asleep by a suitable hour, to support their overall health and well-being.

Mobile devices, screens, and sleep

- The ability of teenagers to get sufficient sleep can be significantly affected by their constant access to a 24/7 online community through social media, as well as their strong urge to play games and watch TV shows late into the night.
- As they progress to sixth form, it becomes more challenging to enforce rules like turning off phones that were easier to implement when they were younger. Engage in discussions with your teenager about responsible mobile usage during calm moments when neither of you is tired or emotional to prevent arguments. This approach increases the likelihood of reaching a compromise that suits you both.



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Encouraging healthy habits

- Allocate at least 30 minutes of screen-free time before bedtime to promote better sleep quality. Consider engaging in activities like listening to audio books, podcasts, or soothing music with the phone closed to avoid glare and visual stimulation.
- Use timers to avoid concerns about leaving the phone on all night if they fall asleep.
- Activate bedtime mode on phones during sleeping hours to prevent distractions from alerts and messages.
- Utilise the "Do Not Disturb" feature to silence calls and messages at a set time every night, with exceptions for emergencies.
- Adjust the phone's night screen settings to reduce glare in the evening, as bright screens with white light can hinder sleepiness.
- Cultivating positive phone habits now will have long-term benefits in the future.

Avoid sleeping in

- Establishing a consistent routine is key to ensuring your child wakes up around the same time each morning. While it may be tempting, try to limit late mornings on weekends. Extensive lie-ins can disrupt their sleep pattern, making it challenging for them to fall asleep at a reasonable hour on Sunday and, consequently, making waking up on Monday mornings more difficult. To help sync their body to a regular cycle, aim to maintain consistent bedtimes and wake-up times each day. Plan engaging activities for weekend mornings to motivate them to rise and shine.

Lead by example

- Are you practising what you preach? As your teen grows older, it becomes more challenging to enforce rules, but you can inspire them by being a positive role model. If they see you following the same advice you give them, it will be easier for them to adopt healthy sleep habits.



Maintaining your teenager's well-being

NUTRITION

A well-balanced diet

- In addition to consuming their recommended "five a day" (approximately one-third of the overall diet), everyone should incorporate starchy carbohydrates (another third), and allocate the remaining third between protein, dairy/milk, and a small portion of fat. Vegetarians and vegans should ensure they receive sufficient protein by incorporating protein-rich vegetables (like peas, sprouts, sweetcorn, asparagus, broccoli, and avocado), along with nuts, pulses, and beans. To enhance focus and concentration, consider incorporating green leafy vegetables, herbs, oily fish, and pulses into their regular diet - these choices benefit the entire family as well!

Teenagers eating habits

- To maintain stable energy levels, it's crucial for teenagers to eat regularly throughout the day. Encourage them to have breakfast, lunch, and dinner with nutritious snacks in between. Packing a lunch and snacks for their busy days can help ensure they consume the right kinds of food.
- Whenever possible, gather for a family meal at the end of the day (without mobile devices!). This practice not only establishes a healthy routine for them to carry into adulthood but also offers a break from screen time, allowing for conversations and the sharing of daily experiences.

Snacks

- Indulging in sugary and salty snacks to maintain energy levels isn't just detrimental to one's health; it can also hinder performance and focus. Encourage healthier choices to support them when they're pressed for time. For those who crave chocolate, consider switching from milk chocolate or chocolate bars to dark chocolate. While an occasional treat is fine, it's wise to limit the consumption of high-sugar and salty snacks.



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Cooking together

- Engaging in cooking sessions offers a wonderful opportunity to spend quality time and strengthen the bond with your teenager. It provides a relaxed environment for them to share any concerns they may have, allowing for meaningful conversations without pressure - you can also celebrate good news together. Moreover, it's a chance to teach them how to prepare nutritious meals and equip them with essential life skills for their future independence, whether it involves entering the workforce or pursuing higher education. Additionally, with practice, they will be capable of preparing family meals, easing the burden of meal preparation solely on you.

As your teenager grows more independent, they will begin preparing their own meals, making it challenging for you to monitor their food choices constantly. Keep in mind that they will consume what is available at home, so stocking your kitchen with healthy options will encourage them to make better choices when hungry. When they are away from home, like at school, consider providing food instead of money to deter them from buying unhealthy snacks. While fast food and treats are acceptable in moderation, they should not be the main components of their diet. Adolescents may be tempted by convenience foods for quick energy, so it's important to guide them towards healthier alternatives despite their inclination towards unhealthy options. The foods you keep in your home and consume will impact your teenager's decisions. Are you setting a positive example for them?



Maintaining your teenager's well-being

HYDRATION

A significant portion of the body comprises water. Insufficient intake can lead to decreased productivity, both mentally and physically, with symptoms like fatigue, confusion, decreased energy levels, and the urge to snack when not truly hungry (as thirst is often confused with hunger). It is recommended that we should drink 6-8 glasses of water each day, which is about 1.5-2 litres. Tea and coffee count towards this.

Have water readily available

To ensure your teenager stays hydrated, it's essential to have water readily available – at their workstation, in bottles in their bag while on the move, and provided with meals. While plain water is recommended, you can enhance it by infusing natural flavours like lemon, lime, orange and mint. If your child never sees you drinking a glass of water they are less likely to think of drinking themselves.

Other drink options

While natural fruit juices are a healthy choice, they can be high in natural sugars. Consider diluting them to reduce the sugar content. Opt for herbal teas or honey with a hint of lemon for warm, caffeine-free alternatives. It's advisable to restrict your child's consumption of fizzy drinks, regardless of whether they are calorie-controlled or not, including energy drinks. Over consumption of these beverages can be detrimental to your health.

Energy shots and drinks

Energy shots may seem small, but they can be deceptively high in caffeine content. For instance, a 60 ml shot can contain approximately 200mg of caffeine. On the other hand, energy drinks may not have extremely high caffeine concentrations, but they are often served in large quantities (like half-litre bottles), leading to a significant caffeine intake for your child (e.g., 160mg of caffeine in a can of Monster). Opting for a smaller serving size of the same product would be a better choice.



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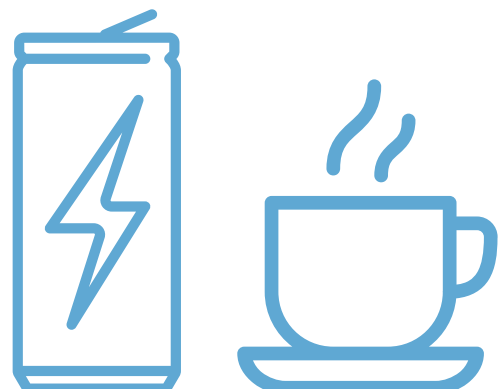
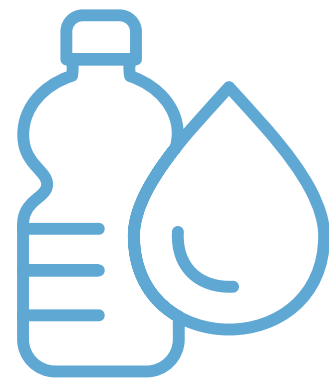
Caffeine

The impact of caffeine varies from person to person, with some individuals being more sensitive to its effects. On average, adults should limit their daily caffeine intake to 400 mg, while adolescents should consume even less.

Caffeine's impact

Consuming excessive caffeine can lead to insomnia, reduced energy levels, decreased mood, and lack of focus – which are counterproductive for effective studying. Since caffeine has a lasting effect, consuming caffeinated beverages in the afternoon can still disrupt your child's ability to sleep at night. It is strongly advised against having coffee or other caffeinated drinks late in the evening to combat tiredness and study into the night.

If you find yourself relying on strong coffee multiple times a day to boost your energy, it can affect your ability to sleep at night and send the wrong message about managing tiredness.



Life at Home & Studying

ENVIRONMENT

Finding the ideal study space

Assist your child in locating a peaceful environment for studying and revising. Key factors to consider include noise levels, lighting, the capacity to organise their papers neatly, and minimising interruptions from other family members.

Different individuals have varying needs; some may find background music conducive to their studies, while for others, it may be a distraction. Exploring different locations can also benefit some children. Instead of always studying in their bedroom, they might enjoy using the dining room or living area occasionally. Allow your child the freedom to discover what works best for them, which may differ from your own preferences.

Bedroom environment

A calming atmosphere can promote better sleep, so ensure their room is at a comfortable temperature, with fresh, clean, and cosy linens. Blackout blinds or curtains can help reduce light during the summer and a quiet environment is essential. While you can encourage them to maintain tidiness, remember that a calm, uncluttered space is proven to aid relaxation and sleep. If they study in their bedroom, it's beneficial if they designate a small area specifically for this purpose, rather than allowing books, laptops, and other study materials to spread throughout the room, which can hinder their ability to unwind once study time is over.



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Alternative options

If there isn't a suitable study and revision space at home, a nearby library could be an excellent alternative for them. A local café with Wi-Fi can also provide inspiration by creating a different atmosphere, with adults working around them serving as potential role models. Changing the study environment can introduce fresh energy and help them absorb information differently; being out of the house may also be revitalising.

Communication

Teenagers are often seen as less communicative, so when they do engage in conversation, resist the urge to interrogate them about their revision and study progress every time! While it's natural to show interest, sometimes a complete break can be beneficial, and there are many other topics you may want to discuss together.



Life at Home & Studying

ROUTINE & BREAKS

Establishing routine: A key to success in revision and home life

Routines play a crucial role, not only in crafting a revision schedule but also in everyday home life. People thrive on routine, and by introducing regular activities at consistent times, you foster unique family rituals and traditions.

Home schedule

Set regular times for breakfast, dinner, family bonding, and activities to instil familiarity and security. While it can be challenging with everyone's busy schedules, it's beneficial to establish consistent anchor points throughout the week. For example, you might aim for breakfast at 7:15 AM on weekdays and 9:00 AM on weekends, or family dinners on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 6:30 PM. Although it may not be possible to stick to the same schedule every day, maintaining a similar routine each week helps your teen understand what to expect.

Encouraging participation

If the family consistently spends about 30 minutes together for dinner at 6:00 PM, it becomes more challenging for a teen to retreat to their room with food while studying, as opposed to a routine where mealtimes vary. Whenever possible, discourage your teen from eating in their room or in front of the TV.

Enhancing time management

Implementing regular activities at set times during the day will not only provide your teenager with essential breaks from studying but also help them refine their time-management skills as they learn to organise their revision around these established times.



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It's essential for both well-being and effective studying that your teen takes regular breaks—both short and long—without feeling guilty!

Short breaks

When assisting them in creating a study or revision schedule, ensure they incorporate five to ten-minute breaks within 30 or 60-minute study sessions. Short bursts of studying yield much better results than prolonged periods. Even if they need to study all day or evening, they should not work for more than an hour at a time without a brief rest.

Long breaks

Encourage them to take time to engage in enjoyable activities, such as watching a movie, participating in sports, attending a concert, or spending time with friends and family. This downtime allows their brain to relax, refocus, and process information, helping them maintain a healthy work-play balance for a productive and fulfilling life in the long run. Aim to ensure their breaks involve a variety of activities, rather than just staying in their room binge-watching a series.

Taking a day off

Everyone needs to take a break occasionally. When challenges arise, stepping away from the issue can be beneficial, allowing them to return with a calm mindset and fresh perspective rather than pushing through. If your teen occasionally deviates from their revision timetable, don't be concerned - they're likely doing enough to stay on track. However, if you feel they are falling behind and the school shares your concern, it might be time to establish new guidelines to help them regain focus.





PHYSICAL EXERCISE & RELAXATION

Physical exercise

Being active is essential for a healthy lifestyle, benefiting both mental and physical well-being. Organising outdoor activities with your child not only provides quality time together but also encourages them to connect with nature, take a break from screens, and engage in exercise. Active hobbies stimulate the release of "happy" hormones, which are excellent for mood regulation, boosting self-confidence, and alleviating stress.

Participating in physical activities as a family strengthens bonds and instils the idea that life should include both "doing" (being active) and "resting" (such as watching TV or going to the movies). Great options for family activities include going for a walk, spending a day at a local attraction, visiting a national park, or exploring a city farm. On rainy days, consider alternatives like bowling, table tennis, museum visits, ice-skating, swimming, or checking out an aquarium.

While it's wonderful to engage in activities as a family, if your teenager prefers to exercise alone or with friends, this can foster lifelong healthy habits while also helping them expend energy and feel physically tired, which can contribute to better sleep.

If your teen is reluctant to be active, encourage them to take regular walks to improve circulation, stretch their muscles, and enjoy the outdoors. It's crucial for them to spend time being active outside each week, ideally every day.



Relaxation

It's essential for your teenager to create a routine that balances schoolwork and leisure time, whether that involves spending time with family, friends, or simply relaxing. This balance will foster a healthy "work/life" equilibrium as they mature, leading to a happier and more fulfilling lifestyle. The main challenge lies in achieving this balance; many teens tend to lean too far in one direction or the other - either prioritising free time at the expense of their studies or becoming overly stressed about academics, resulting in long hours of studying and little relaxation. When your teen is developing their homework and revision schedules, encourage them to allocate time for relaxation as well.

For many teenagers, online activities are a primary source of relaxation. They enjoy gaming, catching up on social media, and exploring various apps. This might cause some concern for you, as it differs greatly from how you spent your free time during your teenage years. While excessive screen time can be detrimental to their health, it's important to acknowledge that their experiences are different; avoid judging them for being engaged with their online communities - as long as it remains within reasonable limits. If you're worried that your teen is spending too much time online, start a conversation instead of expressing frustration. Choose a calm moment for the discussion. A constructive approach is to ask them what they consider to be a reasonable amount of online time each day. Helping them set sensible limits around screen time now will lay the groundwork for healthy habits they can carry into adulthood.

Encouraging your teen to pursue a hobby that distracts them from their phone or laptop can significantly decrease their online time, especially if the hobby involves social interaction. Engaging in an activity that piques their interest allows them to step away from school-related pressures while also acquiring new skills. If they show interest in a specific hobby, be sure to support them in their pursuit.



EFFECTIVE REVISION

The skills your teenager needs to develop for effective revision and success in exams and coursework are also essential for their future, whether they pursue further education or enter the workforce. These skills encompass:

Memorising

While it may seem less crucial in an age where information is readily accessible online, your teen must be able to recall facts during exams. They can utilise various techniques to enhance their memory, such as:

- Summarising information
- Creating "key points" cards or flashcards with detailed explanations on the reverse (perfect for testing their knowledge with you)
- Using mnemonics, which can be patterns like songs, rhymes, acronyms, phrases, or sentences to remember more complex information
- Crafting memory maps by associating familiar places or journeys with the items they need to remember, envisioning these items in unusual scenarios along the route

Encourage your child to practice active listening

- Can they recall information after hearing it?
- Are they capable of summarising key points?
- Can they take notes while listening? Can they do this for both live conversations and videos? A simple way to assess this is to discuss something you watched together - does their recollection encompass everything, or is it selective?

Planning revision sessions

Smaller, consistent revision sessions tend to be much more effective than last-minute cramming, which can elevate stress levels. Therefore, starting early is a wise strategy. If your teenager is organised and prefers to create their own timetable independently, that's wonderful! If possible, encourage them to share it with you and discuss their reasoning behind the structure. This way, you can help refine it early on if you notice any areas for improvement.



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Setting manageable goals

In addition to long-term goals, such as passing their exams, help your teen break down their revision objectives into smaller, manageable tasks. This way, they will experience a sense of accomplishment after each session. For example, instead of "read the entire book," break it down by chapters. Feeling that they have achieved their goals will positively reinforce their motivation, enabling them to approach their next revision session with confidence rather than feeling overwhelmed. Each revision session should have at least one attainable goal.

Maintaining focus

Encourage your teen to concentrate on one or two subjects during weeknights to maintain focus. Break these sessions into chunks with short breaks in between. Whenever possible, maximise study opportunities during the day, aligning with the times when exams will occur, as recollection can be more effective when it coincides with the original memory creation. Ensure their revision timetable includes weekends as well as weekday evenings.

Make time for relaxation

It's essential to include longer breaks for activities unrelated to revision, enabling your teenager to enjoy time with friends, family, and hobbies. Even as exam time approaches, taking breaks is vital. It's important for them to recognise that while they have scheduled revision time, they also have dedicated moments for enjoyment.

Plan for flexibility

Creating a revision timetable is valuable for ensuring all topics are covered in preparation for exams, rather than allowing your teen to become sidetracked by subjects they find challenging or prefer. Adhering to the timetable fosters self-discipline. However, sometimes things may take longer than anticipated, so it's important not to get upset if your teen strays from the plan. Incorporate some unassigned revision time to the timetable as this will enable them to be flexible with their studying.

Life at Home & Studying

HOW YOU CAN HELP WITH REVISION AS A PARENT/CARER

There are many approaches to studying and revising, and your child may find that some methods work better for them than others. Encourage them to explore various techniques to discover a style that keeps them engaged and helps them absorb information more effectively. Remember, it's perfectly normal if they don't have a clear preference; each child learns in their own way, and what is effective for one may not suit another.

How you can help as a parent/carer:

- If time allows and your teen finds it beneficial, offer them the opportunity to recite, repeat, and practice what they've learned with you. You don't need to know all the answers - simply articulating their thoughts can help clarify their understanding of the concepts.
- Other ways you can assist include using quizzes, mind maps, whiteboards, multiple-choice questions, or audio clips to gauge their learning.
- Studying with others can also be advantageous, so encourage them to revise with friends if they enjoy it. This allows them to test each other, exchange revision notes, and learn in diverse environments.
- As exams approach, your teenager will likely complete several past exam questions. Help them prepare by creating an exam-like atmosphere - reduce distractions, set up a clear workspace, and if possible, provide a single clock to help them manage their time effectively. Once the time is up, instruct them to stop writing to avoid the temptation to continue. If they didn't finish, encourage them to reflect on the reasons - do they need more revision, better time management, or to refine their exam techniques?
- One of the most effective revision methods is teaching others. Take on the role of the student and ask your teen to explain a topic from one of their subjects to you. Listen attentively and feel free to ask questions if you don't fully understand their explanations.
- Get a copy of your teenager's exam timetable to stay organised. Avoid planning major outings during revision times to minimise distractions and stress. Short family outings can provide a break for relaxation.



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Exam Timetable

In preparation for exams, it's beneficial to encourage your teen to develop a timetable tailored for the examination weeks.

They should create two separate timetables: one for revision that outlines their study plans leading up to the exams (including weekends) and another that focuses solely on the examination schedule.

The latter will help both of you stay informed about:

- Details about what exams are scheduled
- Specific content to be covered in the exam
- The dates and times that the exams will occur
- Duration of the exam
- Any equipment needed for the exam
- Locations and room numbers of the exams

It is also advisable to keep a copy of the 'exam only' timetable on the fridge so that everyone within the family is aware of the schedule. Be mindful that some days or weeks may bring more stress, especially if multiple exams are scheduled on the same day.



Life at Home & Studying

PREPARING FOR EXAMS - HOW TO ASSIST YOUR CHILD

Eliminate last-minute stress on exam mornings by preparing the evening prior.

- Confirm the date, time, and location of the exam. Ensure they have gathered all necessary equipment, such as a calculator, dictionary, and protractor, stored in a clear case.
- Remind them to bring a watch (no smartwatches) to help manage their time during the test.
- Check that their clothes are ready to prevent any morning rush.
- Make sure your kitchen is stocked for a healthy breakfast.
- Have they packed a clear water bottle? Staying hydrated is crucial!
- Encourage them to get to bed early. Light revision is fine the night before, but cramming late isn't advisable. Don't take for granted that the journey will be free of traffic or accidents, even if it's a route you frequently travel. Be sure to allow for extra time.



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Stay Positive

Encouragement

Foster a positive atmosphere and reassure your child about their accomplishments to enhance their confidence before an exam. Avoid adding to their anxiety by suggesting they haven't prepared enough (even if that's your perspective!). Remind them that failing an exam isn't the end; they can always retake it or explore other options.

Show interest

Provide your teen with the chance to discuss their feelings about the exam afterwards, if they wish to share. Emphasise the positives rather than dwelling on any difficulties they faced. Remember, once an exam is completed, they can't alter their answers, so it's best to focus on future opportunities that can be positively influenced.

Overall well-being

Prioritise essential health habits during exam time, such as getting adequate sleep, maintaining a nutritious diet, staying hydrated, being active, and taking breaks. Support your child in embracing these practices to enhance performance. The night before or the morning of the exam is not the ideal time to cram new information. As much as possible, help them avoid last-minute panic studying. Reviewing previously made notes is acceptable, but learning new material should be avoided.

Relieve household responsibilities

Allow your teen to take a break from household chores during the exam period. They are already facing significant pressure, so give them a reprieve from additional responsibilities until after the exams.

Addressing exam anxiety

Exams can trigger varying levels of anxiety in individuals. If your teen is feeling nervous, reassure them that it's completely normal to experience exam-related anxiety. Provide them with the space to express how they're feeling and whether their nerves are showing up as physical or mental symptoms. Avoid making them feel uneasy about their anxiety!

HOW TO COPE WITH EXAM ANXIETY

It's completely natural for your teen to feel anxious about exams and their performance – you might share these worries too! A little anxiety can be beneficial, as it can help your child focus, motivate them to study, and even aid in recalling information they didn't realise they had learned. Recognising Signs of Anxiety and Stress Being aware of the signs of anxiety and stress is important so you can keep an eye on your teen. A brief change in behaviour might not be a cause for concern, but if you notice consistent alterations, it often indicates that something is amiss.

Common signs of anxiety include:

- Loss of interest in activities they once enjoyed
- Changes in behaviour – typically quiet teens may become talkative, while chatty teens may withdraw.
- Increased grumpiness and irritability.
- Frequent headaches and digestive issues (such as stomach aches, diarrhoea, constipation, vomiting, etc). Constant worrying, often focusing on negative outcomes (e.g., "What if I fail?").
- Repeatedly discussing the same concern without finding relief
- Physical symptoms (like sweaty palms, shaking, rapid heartbeat, muscle tension).
- Restlessness and difficulty staying still.
- Trouble concentrating (like following a TV program).
- Experiencing panic attacks.
- Difficulty sleeping.

Remember to maintain perspective. If they've had several late nights, they're likely to feel fatigued, which can lead to increased irritability. Exercise can cause muscle soreness, and if they've just rushed to meet you, a quickened heartbeat is normal. A few of these symptoms, or a temporary combination of them, is typical.



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Effective techniques for alleviating anxiety

The second way to assist is by offering an opportunity for them to learn effective techniques that can help alleviate anxiety. It's beneficial for your teenager to practice these methods when they are not feeling anxious, allowing them to become familiar and comfortable with the techniques and the sensations they evoke. This way, if anxiety arises, they will be at ease with the process. Regular practice of relaxation techniques also helps keep anxiety in check.

Here are some effective options:

- Breathing Techniques are powerful tools for managing the physical symptoms of stress. Learning to breathe slowly and deeply can have an immediate calming effect and is especially useful in preventing anxiety from escalating. Practices like meditation, visualisation, and yoga promote positive breathing habits. Additionally, apps like Headspace can be installed on a phone, giving your child access to support anytime, anywhere.
- Engaging in yoga has been shown to enhance heart rate and physical strength. The focus required to achieve the poses helps divert the mind from negative thoughts.
- Meditation transports the mind to a different realm. There are various forms of meditation, including auditory (describing experiences) and visual (focusing on an image).

Breathing exercises, yoga, and meditation can be practised in short or extended sessions, either alone or in groups, making them ideal for integration into daily life or as tools for when anxiety strikes.



Life at Home & Studying

WHEN TO REACH OUT FOR EXTRA SUPPORT

Be gentle with yourself and remember that you don't need to have all the answers for your teenager's needs. It's perfectly okay to seek professional help to support them. Professional assistance extends beyond just counsellors and psychiatrists, although both can be beneficial.

Consider the various professional options available, including:

Teachers and staff at school – they can assist academically by helping your child grasp subjects better, act as tutors to develop effective study methods outside of school, or serve as pastoral experts to address emotional concerns.

Some schools offer independent counsellors who provide a safe space for your children to talk in confidence, ensuring that the information shared remains private and is not communicated to the school.

Peer support networks – these can be particularly valuable, as discussing issues with someone of a similar age can feel less intimidating than talking to an adult. Additionally, older peers who have recently navigated similar experiences can offer reassurance.

Charities – many now provide both online and telephone support. This anonymity can make it easier for your child to share their problems and worries without the pressure of face-to-face interaction.

If your teen is exhibiting multiple signs of anxiety regularly (several days a week) over an extended period (several weeks), it's important to seek help from external support services. A good starting point could be a visit to your GP.



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Focusing on effort rather than outcomes

A common reason for teenagers being anxious is the expectation their parents/carers have and the worry that they cannot live up to that and will let everyone down. You may unwittingly be putting pressure on your child by being positive about how well they will do.

You may think you're being reassuring by saying, "of course you're going to pass every exam" and expressing your faith in them; they may misinterpret what you mean and take it that if they don't pass every exam you'll be disappointed and think less of them.

That's why it's a good idea to focus on effort rather than outcomes: "I'm really impressed that you finished your revision this afternoon" gives positive reinforcement for something good that's been accomplished, rather than "Well done, all that revision's really going to help you pass your exams" which sets an expectation for a future event yet to be achieved.

There are other options

As an adult with your own life experience, you know that doing well in exams will open doors and provide lots of opportunities to succeed. You're keen to make their life easier. But exams are not for everyone, and if your child doesn't do well in theirs, there are plenty of other options and lots of routes to success. Keep this front of mind so you don't give them the impression the world starts and ends with their exams.

