

Exam Preparation

Believe it or not we are fast approaching the business end of the year for our senior students. Whilst we all know that a solid, consistent approach to study throughout the year is the best tack, there is no escaping the stress that comes with looming exams. On top of that, students these days have folios and independent projects to prepare for external assessment long before exam time arrives.

How, as parents can we help our daughters to achieve their very best, and at the same time minimize the stress they inevitably feel?

Have a conversation with your daughter about what she needs. Encourage her to have a serious look at the shifts she is doing at work. A forty hour week should include time at work + time at school. Add to that the hours they spend studying at home and it's a heavy workload in anyone's language. Students who are attempting to do more than 10 hours per week at work are compromising their capacity to do their best at school.

The next couple of months (and only 6 school weeks) until exams is a good time to re-assess your expectations around chores and other family responsibilities. It is also helpful to talk to younger siblings and even encourage them to step up to the plate, knowing that they will be similarly considered for special treatment when they are in Gr 11 and 12. Have a good look at the study environment at home. Is there a quiet, well lit area away from family and TV noise where study can occur? Does your family routine allow for several hours of uninterrupted study per night?

Encourage and facilitate healthy meals and regular exercise. Breakfast, in particular, is important. It has been shown that those who skip this meal tend to be irritable and grumpy, and struggle to concentrate. It is also tempting to let sporting commitments go at this very busy time but this is not wise. Physical activity relieves stress and helps clear the mind for study. The days are starting to get longer (just); if regular sport isn't part of her routine encourage a 20 minute walk after tea. Go together. Take the dog.

Allow a social life and time with friends. Every one of us needs time to relax and to unwind doing something we enjoy. However with final exams looming, the need to curtail social activities can be necessary. Encourage your daughter to be selective about the parties she attends. 18th birthday parties are coming thick and fast and especially at the end of the year guidelines and curfews can be called for. It might mean being prepared to do a few late night pickups to avoid the sleep overs which can sometimes takes days to get over.

Be alert for signs she might not be coping; for example being particularly irritable or argumentative, lots of negative self-talk, avoidance of study or cutting herself off from friends, family or sport. Try to stay calm and avoid being drawn into arguments with your

stressed and anxious student. Be supportive and encouraging. Let your daughter know that you believe in her and in her ability to do well. But be realistic. You know your daughter. You know what she can realistically achieve. Don't demand 'A's when you know she is a 'C' student and a solid pass is a good result for her. Help her to plan and manage her time. Expect her to do her best and help her to believe in herself too. For Grade 12 students their years at school are nearly over and for most of them this period is one of mixed emotions. Ultimately the end results are up to her but she doesn't have to do it alone. Be there, be supportive and encouraging, and cheer her over the finish line.

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