

End-Of-Year Exam Stress

Yet again, sadly, our school community has been deeply affected by the death of a student. We are reminded of the precious and precarious nature of life itself as we struggle to understand and come to terms with the devastating loss of a promising young life.

As we hold our children tight, it is only natural to wonder and to worry about how best to support them as they navigate the minefield that is grief. Helen Spencer has already sent information about this home to parents of Senior students, but as a reminder it can be found by using the following links: <https://headspace.org.au/assets/Uploads/Resource-library/Young-people/Grief-web.pdf> and <https://headspace.org.au/friends-and-family/life-issues/grief-and-loss-1/>

To add to this very heavy emotional load, our Senior students are finishing up their final weeks of school and preparing for their last exams. In these very difficult circumstances, they are going to need all the love and support you can muster. We hope the following tips may help provide a guide.

Start by having a conversation with your daughter about what she needs. We can so easily make assumptions here but may miss a vital point. She will appreciate being asked.

Encourage your daughter to have a serious look at the shifts she is doing at work. A 40-hour week should include time at work, and time at school. Add to that the hours spent studying at home and it's a heavy workload in anyone's book. Students who are attempting to do more than 10 hours of work per week are compromising their capacity to do their best at school.

Now is also a good time to reassess your expectations around chores and other family responsibilities. Let go what you can. 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 Year 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? If it doesn't, can something be changed?

Encourage and facilitate healthy meals and regular exercise. Breakfast, in particular, is important. Evidence shows 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; if regular sport isn't part of her routine encourage a 20-minute walk after dinner. 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 curtailing of 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 are not unreasonable. It might mean being prepared to do a few late-night pickups to avoid the sleepovers which can sometimes takes days to recover from.

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 child.

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 As 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 Year 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 gentle, be supportive and encouraging, and cheer her over the finish line. There is also useful information and further reading available through our Your Mind Matters Website, both for students through the Student Matters link and for parents through the Parent Matters link.

Sometime in the next couple of weeks we will be sending home a very brief five-question survey seeking feedback about the Your Mind Matters site. If you haven't done so already, take the time to have a look today, using these links.

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