

Preparing for Exams

How to help your son prepare for examinations

Boys respond to examination pressure very differently. Experience tells us that support at home is as important as the preparation and teaching boys receive while at school.

If your son is feeling anxious ahead of an examination, it can interfere with success and feelings of wellbeing; being prepared will help reduce those feelings of stress and anxiety. Below are some tips which might help you guide your son in his preparation:

(i) **Ask him if he needs help.** Offer to test him on things he has learnt or to supply revision cards and coloured pens: whatever he says might help. Try not to voice concern - "Should you be having another break? Do you really think you know that?" - tempting as this is. Boys are sometimes worried themselves; your voicing the same concerns can make them anxious and cause resentment.

(ii) **Let your son take the lead.** Encourage your son to make a realistic plan for revision: suggest that he begin by planning when and how he will spend his free time, including any family and sporting commitments. Factoring in the fun and allowing for short breaks every thirty five minutes or so means he will be more likely to stick to it. Revision plans are often more successful if they are task-based rather than time-focussed, so make the plan a guide rather than a rule book.

(iii) **Remove distractions.** Try to make sure

your son is studying at a desk and in a space with as few distractions as possible. Phones and laptops are rarely needed for revision, however convincing an opposing argument may be. If your son really needs a computer, there are a number of apps that have been developed to temporarily remove computer-based interference; these are: www.getcoldturkey.com and similarly for Macs, www.selfcontrolapp.com. At a point when your son is feeling motivated and positive, you might suggest he put these settings into place himself, rather than let him feel it has been done 'to' him.

(iv) **Encourage him.** Applaud the effort he is putting in, provide small incentives and perhaps think about reducing any chores he is expected to do at home (in the short term).

(v) **Remind him.** There are all sorts of things he can do to help with revision: watch a relevant film, or consult YouTube, Quizlet, GCSE bitesize and the Dulwich Website. All of these can ignite interest when he grows tired of working from class notes.

(vi) **Sleep, exercise and food.** These are all vital to wellbeing; make sure your son is getting plenty of each. Try to discourage laptops and phones an hour or so before bed, or encourage him to use an app such as www.justgetflux.com to remove the blue light that interferes with melatonin production. Exercise and eating healthily will help reduce feelings of anxiety and increase feelings of wellbeing.

(vii) **Communicate.** It can take time for boys to 'learn how they learn' and to get into good revision habits, but they all get there eventually. Encourage your son to be kind but disciplined to himself. Most importantly, help him to keep things in perspective and remind him to talk to you, or to his teachers or friends if he feels worried.

