



In this edition: dealing with exam stress - tips for parents & young people ★ Information about Xanax - a drug affecting local young people & how to get support ★ Ways to stay calm

★ Exam stress

A little bit of stress can be a good thing to help motivate us to get things done, however exams can create feelings of worry and pressure that cause stress levels to get out of hand and stop young people performing at their best. The good news is there are things that they can do to help deal with the stress and anxiety they might be feeling... Over the page are some tips from people in the know to help keep young people on track.



★ How parents can help

- ★ Try not to set unrealistic expectations for your child that will add to their stress.
- ★ Help them to make a revision plan and encourage them to stick to it
- ★ Don't say: 'I'm sure you did better than you thought' after an exam, they might not have and this can feel like a pressure. It's better to say 'well it's over now, let's wait and see'.
- ★ Help them problem-solve if they don't get the results they want.
- ★ Remind them that it will all be over soon and help them think about things to look forward to.
- ★ If you think their stress is getting out of hand, talk to someone at your child's school.

★ Did you know...?

These famous people all flunked their exams:

- ★ Russell Brand (comedian, actor, writer and presenter)
- ★ Carey Mulligan (actress)
- ★ David Karp (Founder of tumblr)
- ★ Lord Alan Sugar (business magnate)
- ★ Prince Harry
- ★ Benedict Cumberbatch (actor)
- ★ Richard Branson (entrepreneur)
- ★ Jeremy Clarkson (TV presenter)
- ★ Steven Spielberg (film director)
- ★ Albert Einstein (physicist)

★ Exams - advice for young people

Childline has the following good advice for young people:

"When we feel anxious, we often give ourselves negative messages like: 'I can't do this', 'I'm useless' and 'I'm going to fail'. It can be difficult but try to replace these with positive thoughts such as: 'this is just anxiety, it can't harm me' and, 'relax, concentrate - it's going to be okay'.

Picturing how you'd like things to go can help you feel more positive. Try to imagine yourself turning up to an exam feeling confident and relaxed. You turn over your paper, write down what you do know and come away knowing you tried your best on the day."

(from www.childline.org.uk)

★ Exam Stress: Tips for young people

Keep things in perspective

- ★ Exams aren't everything. Whatever happens, you can still be successful in life afterwards. So if you don't do as well as you hoped, try to keep things in perspective - it worked for the famous people on page 1!
- ★ Remember exam success doesn't define you as a person. Everyone copes differently in different situations and there is much more to us than how we do in an exam.
- ★ Focus on all the things you are good at and have succeeded in not just your exams.
- ★ Once you've done an exam try to forget about it. There's nothing you can do about it and worrying won't change your mark.
- ★ Be realistic about what you can achieve and talk to your parents about this. If maths is not your strong subject you are unlikely to A star it, but you might do better in another subject.



★ Get organised

- ★ Remember that the exams will be over at some point, so there is a definite end in sight.
- ★ Work out the basics, which exams you have when and what you have to learn for each one.
- ★ Break your revision into small chunks and make a plan. Once you have a plan you won't have to worry about what to revise when.
- ★ Schedule in time to rest and free time to unwind and see friends
- ★ Don't panic if you go off schedule, tomorrow is another day

★ Practise good habits

- ★ Take frequent breaks. Psychologists say we can only concentrate properly for 30 – 45 minutes at a time. Get up from your desk and walk around or make a drink.
- ★ Eat well and try not to snack on loads of sugary things. Food like bread, rice, pasta, fruit and veg will help give you energy and stay focussed.
- ★ Drink lots of water to keep your brain & body hydrated.
- ★ Try to get a good night's sleep, especially the night before exams, and get into the habit of doing something relaxing before bed and turning off screens.
- ★ Think about when and where you work best. Not everyone is a morning person and some people don't find the library the best place to work. Find out what works best for you.
- ★ Find activities that help you relax and build them into your revision schedule.
- ★ Talk to your friends and parents if you are feeling worried or overwhelmed.
- ★ Try not to compare yourself to your friends, everyone has their own strengths and some people exaggerate!

(adapted from studentminds.org.uk)

Avoidance

What is your distraction?

.....

In a study of 2,000 college students, 75% said they avoided doing revision and wasted between 3–4 hours a day doing the following:

- ★ 45% said they browsed social media or the internet, or watched TV or gamed instead of revising
- ★ 30% chatted or met up with friends
- ★ 7% got so desperate they tidied their room!
- ★ 18% found other ways to avoid revision

★ Helping young people deal with anxiety using mindfulness

Summer Term can be a stressful time for young people, with exams, changes in year and friendship groups and increasing pressures. Practising mindfulness as a family can be a useful way of helping your children to manage these challenges.

Mindfulness is about learning to focus our attention on our experience as it happens, moment by moment, with curiosity rather than judgement. Instead of stressing about what has happened or might happen, it trains us to respond to whatever is happening right now, whatever the circumstances and whatever we are feeling. This helps provide a 'buffer' for young people – particularly for those prone to anxiety – against being swept along by their emotions.

We may not tend to think about teenagers when we think about mindfulness, but there is growing evidence that it has real benefits for them and can help them to manage the challenges of adolescence. For example, studies have shown that mindfulness can help young people to build empathy with others as well as helping with concentration and impulse control.



USEFUL APPS TO HELP PRACTICE MINDFULNESS:

- ★ Insight Meditation Timer
- ★ Smiling Mind
- ★ Stop, Breathe and Think
- ★ Take a Break!

USEFUL CONTACTS:

- ★ Right Here Brighton & Hove have a range of activities and support related to young people's health and well-being:
www.right-here-brightonandhove.org.uk/activities

★ Here are some ways you can help your young person to practice mindfulness:

- ★ **Model Mindfulness yourself** - for young people to engage with mindfulness, it is important that they see us modelling it ourselves: are we stepping back in stressful situations and reflecting rather than just reacting in the heat of the moment and losing the plot? Can you incorporate some mindfulness into your everyday family life? Take time out to really be with your children, listen to them, and engage in activities that allow you to 'be in the moment' with them, like a walk, a game, an art or cooking activity or playing calming music.
- ★ **Teach them the science** - brain imaging studies show that mindfulness positively alters the structure and function of the brain, improving thought processing, learning and well-being. In effect, mindfulness is a form of training for the brain, in the same way that physical exercise is training for our bodies. There is an excellent TEDx talk by Dan Siegel, author of *Brainstorm: The power and the purpose of the teenage brain*, which has a great demonstration that you can use with teenagers to teach them about parts of their brain.
- ★ **Teaching Teenagers about the 'worried mind'**. Often anxiety stems from the thoughts that whirr around in our heads, when we imagine worst case scenarios. Focussing on being in the present moment and noticing our thoughts but not paying them any attention, can help young people to see that they are just thoughts, not reality.
- ★ **Breathe it out** – get them to focus on their breath, this is particularly useful for young people who are feeling anxious, as focusing on the breath helps them to switch their attention from worrying thoughts to sensory perception. They may like to close their eyes during this exercise, but paying attention to the sights and sounds around them is also a beneficial way to help shift attention away from anxious thoughts. Linking this exercise to a particular daily activity can help make it a regular practice – perhaps just before breakfast or last thing at night.
- ★ **Deciding on a 'quiet time' is another way of building in mindfulness** – a few minutes each day when the TV, phones and computers etc. are all turned off and the family can just 'be' together rather than 'do'.

★ A worrying rise in young people using Xanax (Alprazolam) in Brighton & Hove



Recently Xanax, a tranquiliser has hit the news with use increasing across Brighton & Hove and the country, particularly amongst young people. Ru-ok?, Brighton & Hove's specialist Under 18s Substance Misuse Service has noticed a rise in teenagers reporting using this drug or hearing of others doing so. A few young people have even ended up in A&E after using what they believed to be Xanax.

Thankfully most young people do not use drugs but many parents and young people worry about how to talk about the issue or get support if needed. It is also useful to have up to date information so that you are well informed should the need arise.

★ What is Xanax? (aka 'zanies')

Xanax is a strong benzodiazepine (benzo) which is a tranquiliser from the same family as diazepam (Valium). However, Xanax is 20 times stronger than diazepam. It is not prescribed through the NHS and it appears that most pills are being bought through the internet. This means that it is impossible to know the strength of content of the pills. Street prices seem to be around £1.50 for 1mg and £3 - £5 for a 2mg Xanax bar. 2mg in itself is considered a strong dose and much more than would usually be prescribed.

★ Why are young people taking Xanax?

The reasons are varied, but many young people report taking it first to help manage anxiety; it is also cheap and easier to get hold of than alcohol or some other drugs. Young people may start out using Xanax to help cope with stress but there is a risk that they will become dependent on them, feeling unable to manage without them.

Top photo by johnofhammond
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/9977278@N04/2231624660>
Reproduced under © Creative Commons License 2.0
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/> Commons

★ What effect does Xanax have?

Effects start within 20-40 minutes, peaking within 1-2 hours. Xanax use can lead to sedation, dizziness, difficulty in moving and breathing, blurred vision, slurred speech, unconsciousness and, even death. It can leave the user feeling confused, suffering memory loss or feeling anxious. It is possible that the following day the user may still be groggy and/ or irritable. Some young people also mix Xanax with alcohol or other drugs which increases the risks.

If taken regularly, Xanax can lead to physical and psychological dependence; withdrawal effects can include increased anxiety, agitation, confusion and panic attacks, and can lead to acute psychosis in vulnerable people. Sudden withdrawal is potentially dangerous sometimes resulting in seizures and can even be fatal. It is important therefore that withdrawal is medically supervised.

It is illegal to be in possession of Xanax, unless it is prescribed, or to supply Xanax.



★ If you have any concerns about a young person's drug or alcohol use, please contact ru-ok?, which provides confidential support, advice and guidance to young people, their carers, friends or professionals, alongside treatment programmes for young people identifying problems arising from substance use.

Contact: Tel: 01273 293966

Email: RUOKDB@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Web: www.ruokservice.co.uk



★ Drugs & alcohol - how can parents & carers help?



Keep talking Many parents feel that they are the last person their children would want to speak to about drugs or alcohol. As parents we might also avoid these difficult conversations because we don't think we know enough, are frightened of our child's reaction, are worried about saying the wrong thing or don't know when is the right time to bring the subject up. The Amy Winehouse Foundation has produced a useful booklet for parents and carers which suggest the following tips:

★ **Get prepared** Firstly explore your own thoughts/feelings about drug and alcohol use. Do you have any particular fears or anxieties; are there any barriers for you? Do you have a problem with drugs or alcohol yourself? Where can you get support?

★ **Get clued up** This will help you to answer any questions that your child may have and ensure they are getting up-to-date and accurate information. Talk to Frank is a good source of information: www.talktofrank.com

★ **Don't make it a big scary thing** Avoid having the 'big talk' by starting the discussion early and talking regularly. This will help avoid you or your child feeling awkward or uncomfortable.

★ **Don't assume the issue won't affect you or your children** The Amy Winehouse Foundation has found that people from all types of backgrounds and walks of life misuse drugs or alcohol.

★ **Plan ahead for the conversation** Identify a suitable and convenient time to talk with your child. Perhaps you could use a relevant film or TV storyline to break the ice and begin a discussion. Alternatively, you could ask your child to talk to you about what they've learned in school or what they know about the issue, you might be surprised by how much they know already. Just listen and ask questions and don't judge.

★ **Think about the best place and time to talk** Consider when and where might be a good place to begin to have the conversation. Ideally you want to

be somewhere your child feels safe and comfortable to encourage them to open up to you.

★ **Don't give up** If the conversation doesn't go the way you expected, don't be afraid to come back to the subject, children generally benefit more from ongoing conversations rather than a 'big talk'. If they know you are available and will support them if they get into any problems, rather than punishing or sanctioning them, they are much more likely to ask for help early on before any problems get out of hand.

★ **Talk to other parents** It may be useful to talk with other parents in a similar position to find out what worked or didn't work for them. It can be helpful to know that you are in the same boat as a lot of other parents.

(Adapted from Resilience Programme Parents information booklet; Amy Winehouse Foundation)

★ **Did you know?** Three-quarters of parents with 11-16-year-olds thought they had already had a conversation about drugs with their child. However, less than half as many (36%) of 11-17-year-olds said they remembered such a conversation taking place. *(Mentor UK)*. 80% of parents said they would deal with the issue of alcohol with their child once it happens. *(Drinkaware)*

★ County Lines - a risk for parents & carers to be aware of



What is 'county lines'? County Lines is a really serious issue where criminals set up a drug dealing operation in a place outside their usual area. Gangs will move their drug dealing from big cities like London to smaller towns in order to make more money.

Gangs recruit and use children and young people and vulnerable adults to move drugs and money for them from one city/town to another. The most common drugs involved are heroin and cocaine (crack and powder), but also MDMA, cannabis, amphetamines and spice. Children as young as 12 years old and up to 17 years old are recruited, often using social media. They are exploited and forced to carry drugs between locations, usually on trains or coaches. They are also forced to sell drugs to local users.

The activity is coordinated by the use of dedicated mobile phone lines. Gangs and networks are also known to target vulnerable adults and take over their premises to distribute Class A drugs in a practice referred to as 'cuckooing'.

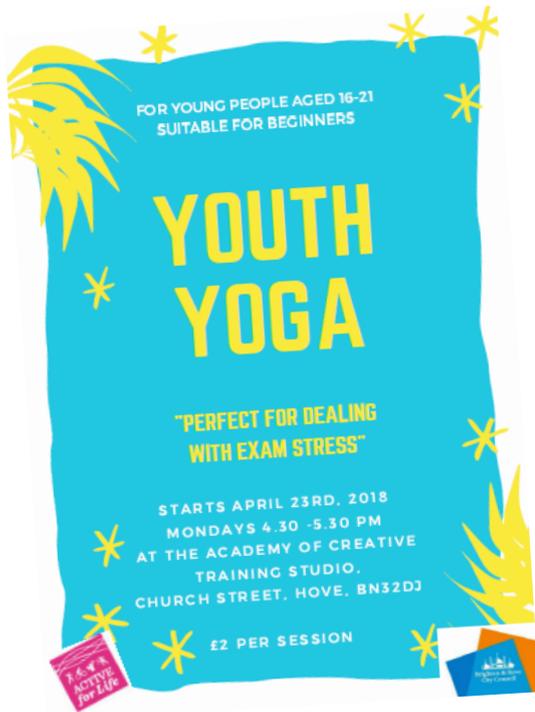
These gangs sometimes use violence to threaten children and young people when recruiting them. Gangs also assault children and young people working for them if they find their drugs or money to be missing. Weapons such as firearms, knives, bats, acid are sometimes used to make violent threats.

There is some evidence that county line gangs are operating across the county. This is putting local people at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation, as well as serious harm through physical and sexual violence and emotional abuse.

Signs to look out for: Here are some signs to look out for that can suggest that someone you know might be involved in county Lines activity:

- ★ Are they always going missing from school or their home?
- ★ Are they travelling alone to places far from home?
- ★ Do they suddenly have lots of money/lots of new clothes/new mobile phones?
- ★ Are they receiving many more calls or texts than usual?
- ★ Are they being very protective of their phone/reluctant to let it out of sight or off their person? (may act violently or be visibly scared if their phone is lost or confiscated)
- ★ Are they carrying or selling drugs?
- ★ Are they carrying weapons or know people that have access to weapons?
- ★ Are they in a relationship with or hanging out with someone/people that are older and controlling?
- ★ Do they have unexplained injuries?
- ★ Do they seem very reserved or seem like they have something to hide?
- ★ Do they seem scared?
- ★ Are they self-harming?
- ★ Have they suddenly stopped partaking in hobbies/pastimes?
- ★ Are they no longer engaging with services/young groups?
- ★ Are they limping (from 'warning stabs' to legs and buttocks)?

★ What to do If you are concerned that a child or young person is caught up in County Lines, please contact 'Front Door for Families' on 01273 290400 for advice and support.



★ Youth yoga classes now on - see advert (left).

Yoga can help you to build your flexibility, strength and focus while helping you to relax and feel calm. The studio is opposite Tesco in Hove and above Mishon Mackay estate agents. The entrance is from Vallance Road. For more information please email Ellouise.Hill@Brighton-hove.gov.uk or call 01273 296625

★ Useful contacts and websites

www.findgetgive.com
www.childline.org.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk
www.wheretogofor.co.uk

★ Survey and competition for Year 7s

If your child is in year 7 at secondary school, we would love to hear from them about their experiences - good and not so good - of moving up to secondary school. For a chance for them to be entered into a prize draw to win a £20 Amazon voucher, they just need to complete a quick survey at this link:

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/WDTZTM9

★ Slow down your breathing

Panic is often triggered by hyperventilating (quick, shallow breaths) so if you feel yourself losing it during an exam, sit back for a moment and control your breathing. Take deep breaths in and out through the nose, counting to five each way.

(From bbc.co.uk).



★ 'Where to go for' is a Brighton & Hove website that lists all the services available for young people aged 12 – 25 including the subjects shown on the right. Visit: www.wheretogofor.co.uk.

- Activities
- Food
- Money/benefits
- Advice & guidance
- Housing
- Refugee and asylum seekers
- Health
- Sexual health
- Carers
- Learning / training
- Substance misuse
- Disabilities
- LGBTU
- Violence & abuse
- Friends & families
- Mental health & wellbeing
- Volunteering & employment
- Black & minority ethnic

★ We'd love to hear from you! If you have a question or would like to make a suggestion for future editions, email newsletter@safety-net.org.uk. For an online edition, visit www.safety-net.org.uk or www.brightonandhovelscb.org.uk