

Top Tips for Parenting through the Exams

Organisational Skills

1. Why do I need to be organized? –
 - a. To know where things are
 - b. To use time efficiently
 - c. To be punctual
 - d. To remember things
 - e. To be prepared for school
2. Use technology and set reminders for deadlines for assignments due, homework due, application dates
3. Study environment- have a clearly defined space such as desk and dedicated shelf /box for storage
4. Use a paper clip to mark the current page in workbooks/textbooks so no searching for 'where was I'...
5. Timings- do you know how long it takes to get ready for school, get ready for bus etc. Identify this and work backwards to know your start time to avoid the stress of rushing/being late
6. SMART Learning Goals- Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed e.g. *I'm going to run a marathon next year* is not as clear as *I am going to run for 10 minutes this week, 20 minutes next week* etc.
7. Sufficient good quality sleep- no less than 7 hours
8. Subject specific folders/plastic wallets to hold all books, workbooks, worksheets, misc. notes related to each subject

9. Consider Colour Coding by Subject; Colour code timetable using highlighter e.g. green for science, blue for maths, Using the same coloured stickers, stick a colour sticker on each textbook, Apply same colour sticker to workbooks etc.

“Students need to master the skills needed to learn before they can learn” (Grime 2010)

NOT Fake news: Top tips from science

1. Sleep deprivation disrupts learning and decision making
2. Emotional regulation improves planning and decision making
3. Practice does make better and enough practice does make perfect (or highly skilled at least)
4. You are what you eat
5. The brain continues to develop into late 20's and possibly later, (*“you are not all grown up, lots of growing still to do”*)

Thinking Skills

Metacognition is the term used to describe thinking about thinking. It is useful to understand how the brain processes information.

Help your child understand HOW? It is important that students get into the habit of recognizing how they arrived at a solution to a problem as this will help them apply this reasoning to new situations.

- Can you tell me how you did that?
- How else could you have done that?
- What do you think the problem is?

Clarify don't criticize; Try to encourage clarification of incorrect answers rather than dismissing them as incorrect.

- Yes but you could look at it another way
- Can you think of a better way to do this?

- When is another time you need to...?
- How do you know that is right?

Motivate

- Set realistic goals
- Consider telling someone else about your goals as this may improve motivation
- Ask yourself what will change if I do nothing?
- Acknowledge and affirm all success- what have I achieved today, however small?
- Acknowledge unhelpful thoughts but don't dwell on them
- Visualise success, imagine how it will feel to have achieved your goal, what will others see, how will you see yourself?
- Take action, Don't over think JUST DO IT

“If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading” (Lao Tzu)

“Nothing we can do changes the past but everything we do changes the future” (Ashleigh Brilliant)

Parenting through Exams.

The whole house does the leaving cert! When your child is sitting exams, it can be a stressful time for everyone in the house. Parents try to support their children through this difficult time, but it can be challenging at times when the young person is feeling stressed and anxious and even lashing out.

Parents need to be encouraging, patient, and adopt a coaching role during this time. It's important that your child knows that you are proud of them regardless of the outcome of the exams and that you are there for them at all times.

If you are a parent of an exam student, there are a few things that you can do to help:

- Help your child meet their needs: Remember the **CAN DO** Code
 - **Connect:** With family and friends.

- **Active:** Exercise and have fun.
- **Notice:** How you are feeling right now.
- **Do Good:** Help others, be kind.
- **Open to learning:** something new such as a new way of getting organised or studying.
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- **The Pygmalion effect:** Young people will live up (or down) to adults expectations of them. Young people who are encouraged and supported will always do their best. As a parent, it's important to encourage your child in a realistic way, letting them know that they are capable and that their best is good enough for you.
- **Avoid Criticism:** When we are worried about someone we can often become critical of them. This transfers our own anxieties onto our child, who by the way already has their own worries. Criticism will more often than not lead to conflict with your child. By communicating positively with them and always being encouraging, your child is more likely to try a little harder.
- **Communicating calmly with understanding:** This can be the most challenging for parents. Remaining calm and reassuring at this time is a difficult task, but one that is very rewarding. Remember that you are a safe space for your child where they can rant and offload their worries. They often do this in a combative way, which makes it difficult not to react, but if you can stay calm, it will be a huge benefit to your child.
- **Listening to understand:** When we are having a conversation with someone, we are often not fully listening. Instead, we are thinking about what we are going to say next. When young people communicate, they can often find it difficult to put into words what they really want to say. By fully listening, you are more likely to understand where they are coming from and therefore be able to help them.
- **Parent self-care:** It is also important for parents to take care of their needs. In order to help others we need to first, take care of ourselves. This is not selfish. If we are always putting others before ourselves, we will become stressed and exhausted. Make time to connect with friends and take time out for yourself.