Exam Anxiety

A quick-reference guide for parents and teenagers
The Thinking Pod | Parent Insight®

BEFORE THE EXAM

The aim: preparation without pressure.

For parents

Keep routines as predictable as possible.

Encourage manageable revision and regular breaks.

Avoid repeatedly asking whether your child has revised enough.

Listen to their worries without immediately trying to fix them.

Help them prepare everything they need the night before.

Remember that your calm response matters more than finding the perfect words.

What you can say:

“It’s understandable that you’re nervous. Let’s think about what might help you feel more prepared.”

“You don’t have to know everything. Just focus on what you can do.”

DURING THE EXAM

The aim: helping your child manage anxiety, not eliminate it.

A simple coping plan for your teenager

If anxiety begins to rise:

Pause. Put both feet on the floor.

Notice. Recognise what’s happening: “I’m feeling anxious.”

Breathe. Allow your breathing to slow gently.

Ground. Notice the chair beneath you and your feet against the floor.

Refocus. Read one question carefully.

Begin. Start with something you feel able to answer.

What they can remind themselves:

“I can feel anxious and still do difficult things.”

“One question at a time.”

“I don’t need to know every answer to make a start.”

AFTER THE EXAM

The aim: connection rather than evaluation.

Avoid immediately asking how many questions they answered correctly.

Don’t compare their performance with friends or siblings.

Give them permission to rest.

Allow them to talk about the exam if they want to.

Avoid lengthy discussions about mistakes or what they should have done differently.

What you can say:

“It’s finished now. Would you like to talk about it or do something else?”

“Whatever the result, we’ll work out the next steps together.”

REMEMBER

Your child needs to know that your relationship with them is not dependent on their results.

Exams matter, but your child’s emotional wellbeing matters too.

The Thinking Pod

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Understanding changes everything.