Collins 4parents

Preparing for GCSE 9–1 EXAMS



Author, Lee Jackson, shares his insights into how you can best support your child throughout their GCSE revision and during their exams. Lee has written many books for teenagers including *How to Succeed at School and College* and *Collins GCSE Study Skills*.

I really believe in changing our view of parenting into becoming our child's 'coach' not just their 'manager'.

COACHING OUR TEENS GETS THE BEST OUT OF THEM. WE BECOME AN ENCOURAGER NOT JUST A NAGGING VOICE.

BE POSITIVE WITH OUR CHILDREN

A positive attitude makes a real difference to our children's success.

Things to do:

- Find out where they are with their estimated grades (teachers/reports can tell you this).
- Help them to believe the positive truth about themselves (i.e. that they can do well, and certainly better than they probably believe).
- Encourage them to be positive towards their exams and their future.
- Encourage them to be positive towards learning and the school.

COACHING PHRASES TO USE WHEN TALKING TO YOUR TEEN:

"HOW DO YOU FEEL TODAY?"

"HOW DO YOU FEEL YOUR REVISION IS GOING?"

"WHAT DO YOU NEED FROM ME AT THE MOMENT?"

"YOU'LL BE FINE, YOU'LL MAKE IT, WE'VE JUST GOT TO GET THROUGH THIS TIME TOGETHER."

"IT WON'T BE LONG NOW, JUST GET YOUR HEAD DOWN FOR A BIT AND KEEP ON GOING, YOU'LL MAKE IT."

"AND THEN AFTERWARDS YOU'LL ENJOY MAYBE ONE OF THE LONGEST HOLIDAYS IN YOUR LIFE!"

REWARDS AND INCENTIVES

Rewards can work really well to help them keep motivated. Some teens respond to small financial rewards, treats or clothes etc, but many don't. Find out the 'little trophies' and the 'big trophies' that work for you, what you can use as a treat and reward for hard work not just great results. It's more about rewarding effort – if your child is putting in the effort then reward them daily with comments and the occasional treat. Then maybe talk about a 'big trophy' (reward) at the end. Some parents offer big financial rewards as an incentive, this might work for some, but can have downsides too. Be creative and reward effort in your own family style. We all need a carrot occasionally.

#RevisionthatSticks

SLEEP

In recent studies teenagers and their sleeping patterns have been looked into. There's no doubt that their bodies and minds are in growth mode and need sleep to help that, but good studying needs sleep too. Check your child's bedroom. Is their bed comfortable? Do they have blackout curtains? But most of all what pre-sleep routine do they have? Getting them into a good routine sets them up for good results and for the rest of their life. Late night food binging, distractions, arguments and too much screen time before bed can cause sleeplessness. So encourage them to eat well, and get ready for bed at a reasonable time with the right routine.

Focus

THE POWER OF FOCUS

Purely focusing on a piece of work or revision will make a big difference. Even just encouraging our children to switch off all distractions for an hour or so can mean the difference between getting the grade they deserve or not.

If we help our children focus and reduce their distractions in a quiet room ready for work. I'll guarantee them two things:

- They'll get on better with their work.
- When they do switch on their phone again they will still have friends! Trust me on this. It may sound very radical to them but it is worth it and more importantly, it does work.

REVISION TECHNIQUE

Research proves that repetition over a period of time helps learners to remember information better long term.

Collins Revision and Practice has repeated practice throughout, so that children can just get stuck in.

Find out more about Collins Revision at **collins.co.uk/revisionthatsticks**

collins.co.uk/parents

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REVISION PLAN

A good revision plan is a must – you make your own (don't take too long on it though!) or you can download one for free from Collins at: www.collins.co.uk/students

Rest and relaxation...

...is a good habit to encourage. It may not seem probable but is possible for teens to over work for exams! During the busy pre-exam season especially, just staring at books for hours isn't being productive. In the last few weeks, just weeks from their GCSE exams my twin daughters have been watching TV, seeing friends, going to youth group and doing fitness classes too, it's good to encourage exercise and breaks as much as work. The two feed each other. In fact I'm just writing this section after spending an hour having a coffee with my wife. I needed a break, and now I'm being more productive again. Encourage them to timetable fun/rest/exercise onto their revision/exam timetable too.

As the main exams draw near...

The amount of revision and work to do will seem overwhelming to your child. This is where prioritisation becomes the key to GCSE success. Get them to find out the key things to revise and prioritise those, then get them to do the hard stuff first, maybe the subjects they don't like to work on are actually the most important. Get the teachers help to prioritise, and do a plan so that they don't feel swamped by the amount they have to do. And remind them that it's only for a few months.

QUICK TIPS AND ADVICE

- Stay calm and be supportive, not pressuring.
- Be actively involved with school. Keep in touch with class teachers, regularly read and respond to comments in the planner, make yourself aware of what's going on.
- Encourage them to do their best and that their best is good enough.
- Tell them you are proud of them and that you love them.
- Get the fridge and cupboards stocked with nice treats and snacks for the duration of the exams.
- Make sure home is calm, warm, and that there is no tension.
- Make sure the journey to school is stress free too if possible.
- Recognise how stressful this time is for teens. Strike bargains, build in ice cream and video nights.
- They appear to not want to be with parents but they need to.
- Create a peaceful place for the children to study. Be interested in the subjects they are revising.
- The bomb site / dumping ground which is the offspring's bedroom will not be commented on for the duration.