Exams & Mental Health

Understand the impact. Notice the pattern. Know what to do.

WHAT IS IT?

Exam pressure is common. Some stress can motivate and help someone prepare, but too much can affect how they feel, think, behave and cope.

Concern grows when it feels overwhelming, lasts or disrupts sleep, daily life, relationships, school or sport. A coach should support—not diagnose.

5 WAYS EXAM PRESSURE CAN AFFECT SOMEONE

01 Worry & emotions

Someone may feel tense, irritable, low, overwhelmed or frightened of failing or disappointing others.

02 Thinking & focus

Overthinking, negative thoughts and poor concentration can make revision, decisions and instructions harder.

03 Sleep & body

Poor sleep, headaches, stomach aches, tiredness or appetite changes can affect energy and recovery.

04 Confidence & interest

Pressure can reduce confidence and enjoyment. They may avoid revision, withdraw or stop activities they usually like.

05 Balance & perspective

Long revision, fewer breaks and dropping exercise can make stress harder to manage. Results do not define their value.

A coach notices and supports—a coach does not diagnose.

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Notice. Respond. Connect.

SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN SPORT

What a volunteer coach may notice—and what to do next.

- More worried, tense, irritable, negative or low than usual.
- Missing training, withdrawing or losing enjoyment in sport.
- Fear of mistakes, failure or repeatedly seeking reassurance.
- Poor concentration, forgetfulness or unusual mistakes.
- Poor sleep, tiredness, headaches, stomach aches or appetite changes.
- Feeling hopeless, unable to cope, or talking about self-harm or suicide.

Look for change, patterns and context. These signs can have many explanations.

01 NOTICE

Spot Changes in behaviour, mood , attendance or performance.

No obvious sign?
Check in anyway.

02 TALK

Say what you have noticed, or simply remind them you care. "Ive noticed.." "I'm checking in.."

Follow safeguarding procedures.

03 LISTEN

Give them time. Ask open questions. Do not interrupt, judge or rush to try and fix everything.

Take notice and care to listen.

04 CARE

Stay calm, kind and non-judgmental. Repeat back what they tell you. Respect privacy within the safeguarding limits e.g. Coach, Parent and Safeguarding Officer.

Ask what would help.

05 CONNECT

If anything worries you follow the safeguarding procedures and connect them with the right lead, trusted person, GP or support service.

Immediate danger call 999.

URGENT / MEDICAL

Please reach out to teachers/adults as soon as you feel overwhelmed. If a young person has seriously harmed themselves, is in immediate danger or at immediate risk, call 999 or go to A&E. Stay with them and follow instructions. If urgent but not an emergency, contact a GP or GP out-of-hours service. Follow safeguarding procedures.

WHERE TO GET HELP IN NORTHERN IRELAND

GP / LOCAL SERVICE

NI SERVICES DIRECTORY

TEXT "TEAMMATE" TO 85258

LIFELINE 0808 808 8000

SCHOOL / COLLEGE Teacher, Pastoral lead

HELP!

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5 WAYS TO REVISE BETTER

01 Test Yourself

Close your notes and see what you can remember. Try flashcards, a short quiz or write everything you know on a blank page. Check your answers and fill in the gaps.

02 Spread Revision Out

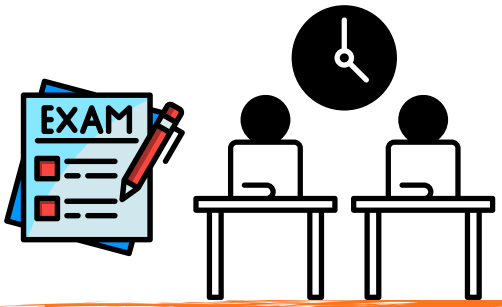
Revise each topic more than once across different days. Revisiting information helps you remember it for longer. A little and often works better than one huge cram.

03 Practise Exam Questions

Answer practice questions without looking at your notes. Mark your work, find out why you lost marks and try those questions again later. Mistakes show you what to practise next.

04 Explain It in Your Own Words

Explain the topic aloud as if you were teaching someone else. Ask yourself: What does it mean? Why does it happen? Can I give an example? If you cannot explain it, return to that part.



05 Protect Your Brain

You need 8–10 hours of sleep. Take regular breaks, eat normally, drink water and keep moving. Staying up all night usually makes memory, concentration and emotions worse.

TAKE 5 FOR WELLBEING

Five evidence based everyday actions to help maintain and improve wellbeing.

CONNECT

Spend time with people who help you feel supported.

BE ACTIVE

Walk, run, cycle, play sports and games.

TAKE NOTICE

Pause & take notice of the world around you. Chill & relax.

KEEP LEARNING

Try something new or build a skill your value.

GIVE

Offer time, kindness or encouragement to help others.

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