

ADHD EDUCATION

EXAM STRESS >

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH ADHD DURING EXAMS/HIGH PRESSURE PERIODS

Coping with school can be very challenging for someone with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The symptoms of the condition – including lack of focus, restlessness, difficulty with completing tasks and poor organisational skills **(1)** – can turn managing school life into a complex task. This extends beyond just the academic aspect of school, but also involves social and behavioural difficulties.

Certain periods in a school year, such as exam time, create additional stress, meaning that your child with ADHD may need more support than usual to handle them successfully.

First and foremost, exams or other high-pressure periods necessitate sticking to your child's treatment plan as much as possible. This is not the time to miss doses or to skip therapy sessions. ADHD medication has been shown to improve productivity, accuracy with tasks and reading speed **(2,3)**. Prioritize your child's treatment even more than usual and they will likely reap the benefits. With anxiety levels already high, try to minimise stress and distractions at home as much as possible:

- **Set up routines and stick to them** as much as possible. Eliminate clutter and try to keep your home, particularly the area in which your child will be studying, organised and clean **(4)**.
- **Pay attention to what your child is eating.** Provide healthy snacks that help to stabilise blood sugar, as food that cause big fluctuations in sugar can affect concentration and mood **(5)**. Stick to low glycaemic index (GI) foods where possible.
- The day before the exam, pack everything that will be needed and **ensure that your child gets a good night's sleep.** Arrive to the exam early so that you don't have to rush on the day.



PRIORITIZE YOUR CHILD'S TREATMENT... AND THEY WILL LIKELY REAP THE BENEFITS.

It is important to realise that your child is not only facing the academic challenge ahead of them in terms of studying, recalling information and doing well in an exam. They are also likely to be battling their own perceptions of what they can achieve, especially if they tend to receive poor feedback from others, or if they have performed poorly in the past. There is a chance that your child feels as though they work harder and spend more time studying than their peers, but are unable to achieve the same results.

Children with ADHD often have a high frequency of negative self-statements **(6)** and can develop a self-limiting opinion of themselves. Dealing with stigma and/or labelling from those around them can also contribute **(7)**. Avoid focussing on your child's ADHD, but rather on your child as a whole. Make sure to give appropriate praise when your child has done something well, rather than only pointing out where they are falling short. If your child is feeling overwhelmed, try to assist them by breaking down big tasks into smaller ones that may feel more manageable.

Lastly, recognise that exam time can be difficult for you as a parent too. You may often feel frustrated and exhausted. Try to be aware of your own moods and attitudes, and give yourself time to relax and destress where possible.

Being in a good frame of mind will help you to respond more positively to your child and their efforts and this can have a significant impact.

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SOURCES >

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