Talking to your children about exam worry

All children, at some point, will start to feel nervous about their upcoming exams. There are often lots of reasons for this ranging from literally, not having revised enough to thinking they have not revised enough when we all know they have spent ages pouring through their books!

Whatever the reason for their anxiety we have put together this document which will help you to talk to your child about their concerns so that they are mentally ready to do their best in the test situations.

Have you: Discussed the purpose of the exams? They are there to help your child and their teachers to know their strengths and weaknesses, and to help them continue their learning.

Have you: Asked open questions to decipher exactly what aspect of exams makes them nervous? Questions like:

"Is there any subject in particular which worries you?" Ask them if they would like you to go through anything with them.

Or

"What specific topic of the subject are you revising?" If a child says they are revising French dig down deeper and find out which part, as there are lots of different sections to each subject and they may need support working out which areas to focus on.

Have you: Reassured your child that just want to see what they know and that the world will keep turning!

Have you: Offered the opportunity to seek additional support? This can be with their academic learning from their teachers or the learning support department or support for their mental health or anxiety from the Safeguarding Team, Mental health Team (this is Mrs Fuller for Years 3-8) or any member of staff they feel comfortable talking to?

-Have you: Recommended tips to help build children's capacity for controlling their own emotions and as a tool kit for stressful situations. For example: Mindfulness, meditation, exercise, time spent outside in nature and listening to calming music. Our Safeguarding page on www.theprep.org.uk has useful child centered links.

Have you: Addressed any existing negativity bias (promote growth mindset). Lead by example, don't be hard on ourselves!Try not to say, "I was rubbish at that one at school and always hated it!"

If you would like any further information or to talk through strategies then please contact your child's tutor or email sophie.fuller@theprep.org.uk .

Preparing for exams

Are you, "Wahoo! It is exam time!" Or more like, "Better start revising. I have my first exam tomorrow!" Either way these tips will help you succeed and do your best when exam season starts!

- ·Make a realistic revision schedule

Work out how much you have to do and the time you have to do it in, then break it down into manageable chunks. Mix up your subjects so you do not get bored.

- ·Find a revision style that suits you

Studying alone in a quiet room suits some people, but not everyone likes working in silence. Try playing music quietly in the background, or revising with a friend (but do not let them distract you!).

- ·Customise your notes to make them more personal

Experiment with colour coding, notes on postcards, diagrams or whatever helps you learn your topic. Remember to keep them for next year too so you do not have to write them all out again!

- ·Make sure you understand everything

If you come across something you do not understand, try to find a new source of information that will help you understand it. Just memorising it will not help you in your exam. Do not be afraid to ask your teacher, parent or a friend for help if you need it.

- ·Take regular short breaks

Studying for hours and hours will only make you tired and ruin your concentration, which may make you even more anxious. A break every 20 minutes is about right.

- ·Reward yourself

For example, you could take a long bath or watch a good movie once you have finished your revision session.

- ·Do something physical

When you're not revising, use your spare time to get away from your books and do something active. Exercise is good for taking your mind off stress and keeping you positive, and it will help you sleep better.

- ·Ask for help

If you're feeling stressed, it's important to talk to someone you trust, such as a family member, teacher or a friend. Lots of people find exams difficult to deal with, so do not be embarrassed to ask for support.