



Surviving year 12

Fact sheet for parents

Supporting your Year 12 student

Year 12 is considered by some to be the most important year of schooling. There is an enormous amount of pressure on Year 12 students and it comes from parents, teachers, schools and the students themselves. There are a number of ways parents can support their children as they work through their final year of schooling.

Balance

It's important that you make sure your teenager has lots of opportunities to play sport or pursue an artistic activity like drama or music. Also, try to make sure that they spend time with their family, and friends.

Routine

Parents can do lots of things to help teenagers develop smart study habits. These skills do not develop automatically and parents will need to be patient while these new habits develop and the old, unhelpful ones are discarded.

A study-friendly home

Environment

It is important to make your home a place where it is easy for your teenager to think.

Help eliminate distractions such as television, radio, MP3 player, talking, noisy younger children, or cluttered work areas. It is impossible to watch TV and study. Show how important schoolwork is by keeping the TV off during study time.

- Keep your conversation to a minimum and encourage younger children to use this time as their study time or quiet time, too.
- Provide physical conditions that help concentration, such as good lighting, cool temperatures and a table or desk with a supportive chair.
- The work area should be neat, have enough space for writing and reading, and should be kept clear of any clutter.
- Remind them to sit with good posture in a comfortable chair. Lying down may be so relaxing that it interferes with concentration.

Making time to study

You can support your teenager by helping him or her focus on their study.

- **Schedule study time.** Study times should be scheduled for whenever there are the fewest distractions or interruptions. If your teenager needs help to establish a routine, have a chat about which times could be best used for studying. Set that time aside on at least five days a week. Use the afternoon or early evening as study time, as this leaves time later in the evening for relaxing activities.

- **Plan study in two 50 minute blocks with a 15 minute break.** One 50 minute slab of study is better than several hours full of distractions and interruptions. Use a kitchen timer or an alarm clock to signal breaks and to indicate the end of study time.

At exam time

The exam results do not represent your teenager's future. The end of secondary school is the start of the next and usually more exciting time in your teenager's life. The moment the exams are over, celebrate. Such a celebration is crucial, as the message you will be reinforcing is that the final score is incidental. Getting through high school is a wonderful achievement in itself.

When the exam results arrive

This period can be even more uncomfortable than the exams because everyone feels so helpless. There is always the potential that your teenager might fall short of his or her predicted scores, and the goal of achieving a place at his or her chosen university, TAFE or apprenticeship might seem unreachable. This can result in weeks of anxious waiting. Everyone in the family is treading on eggshells, and when the results do finally arrive, quite often the family can be too emotionally drained to celebrate or regroup.

You need to recognise that feeling on-edge or uneasy is a natural response. Talk to your teenager about the way he or she is feeling and the choices and options available. Let him or her know that both you and their school are supportive.

When the results are not what your teenager hoped

Don't be fooled if your teenager appears to be indifferent to his or her results. Almost all students care deeply about their results and about the attitudes of their friends and relatives.

- Encourage your teenager to talk and reassure him or her. Reassure your teenager that failing an exam doesn't mean he or she is a failure, and that while you may all be disappointed in the results, you are not disappointed in him or her.
- If your teenager was after a score that would allow him or her into a particular university course, reassure him or her that all is not lost, with thousands of university places being offered through the preference process.
- Put things into perspective. Reassure your teenager that everyone loses out at some time or other, and failing an exam isn't the end of the world. He or she could re-sit and do better; or decide to go a different route next time.
- Encourage your teenager to look for positive ways forward, to consider all the options available. Your teenager may want to consider completing Year 13, working or travelling for a year, or doing an internship. A career counsellor or university advisor may be able to help.
- Tell your teenager that whatever happens, you will be behind him or her 100 per cent.

Do's and don'ts

Do

- guide, support and encourage your teenager
- encourage healthy eating, regular exercise and plenty of sleep
- take your teenager's efforts seriously
- create an effective work space in the house if your teenager can't study in their room
- take a whole family approach to supporting your teenager
- remind your teenager of his or her goals

- give your teenager positive feedback whenever possible
- encourage your teenager to take study breaks when necessary
- remember, the final year is about your teenager, not you
- help your teenager put, and keep, the year in perspective
- keep an eye on his or her emotional health – look for changes in sleeping or eating habits, and see your GP if you are worried
- let your teenager know that you're there when he or she needs you
- encourage your teenager to believe in himself.

Don't

- nag
- overload your teenager with domestic chores
- tell your teenager to work harder or he or she will fail.

References

- ¹ Mission Australia (2012) Youth Survey 2012; page 5.
- ² Gough D, Edwards H (2006) Pressure takes big toll on students. The Age Newspaper, April 16 2006
- ³ McGraw, K., Moore, S., Fuller, A. and Bates, G. (2008), Family, peer and school connectedness in final year secondary school students. Australian Psychologist, 43: 27-37
- ⁴ Robotham, J. (2003), Suicide linked to pressure of HSC. Sydney Morning Herald Newspaper, January 23, 2003

The research

According to the Mission Australia Youth Survey in 2012, coping with stress and school or study problems remain major concerns for respondents.¹ Research has shown that Year 12 can increase rates of depression, anxiety², suicidal thoughts³ and even suicide.⁴ In particular, the fear of failure and the apparent lack of prospects as a result of poor results in Year 12 were identified as major stressors for many young people. As well as managing school, many young people were also trying to cope with work, family and social commitments. The cumulative effect of these demands appears to be leaving many young people feeling besieged and struggling to cope.

Where to find more information

beyondblue

www.beyondblue.org.au

Learn more about anxiety and depression, or talk it through with our Support Service.

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