



Year 9 and Year 11 information evening

Supporting your child with mental health and/or exam anxiety

Tonight: calm, practical support



Parents do not need to become therapists or revision teachers.

- Notice what has changed
- Help the nervous system settle
- Keep expectations realistic and steady
- Know when to involve school or health services

Connection first. Solutions second.

The same stress can look different

YEAR 9

Belonging, friendships and identity

- Growing academic expectations
- More independence, with uneven organisation
- Worries may appear as irritability or withdrawal

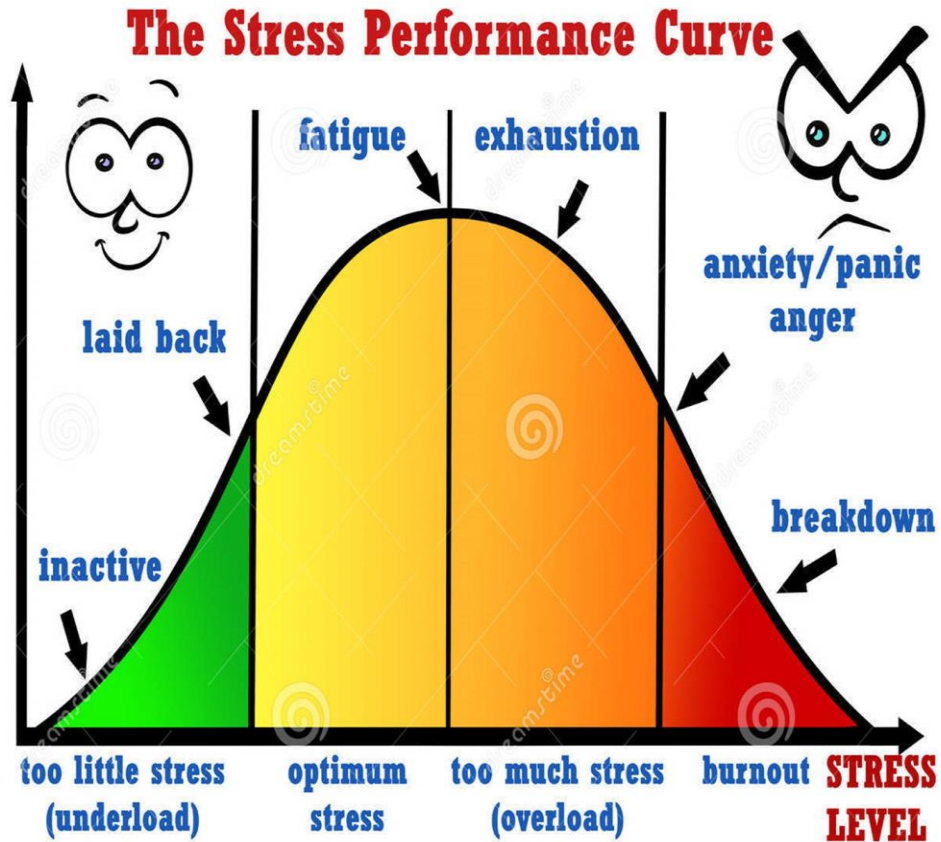
YEAR 11

Exams, choices and the future

- Pressure can feel constant rather than occasional
- Comparison with friends becomes louder
- Avoidance may grow when the task feels too big

In both year groups: behaviour is communication.

Some stress helps. Too much blocks performance.



TOO LITTLE

Hard to begin

USEFUL ZONE

Alert, focused, prepared

TOO MUCH

Freeze, panic, avoidance

Our goal is not zero anxiety. It is manageable anxiety.

Look for change, pattern and impact

BODY

Headaches, stomach aches, poor sleep

BEHAVIOUR

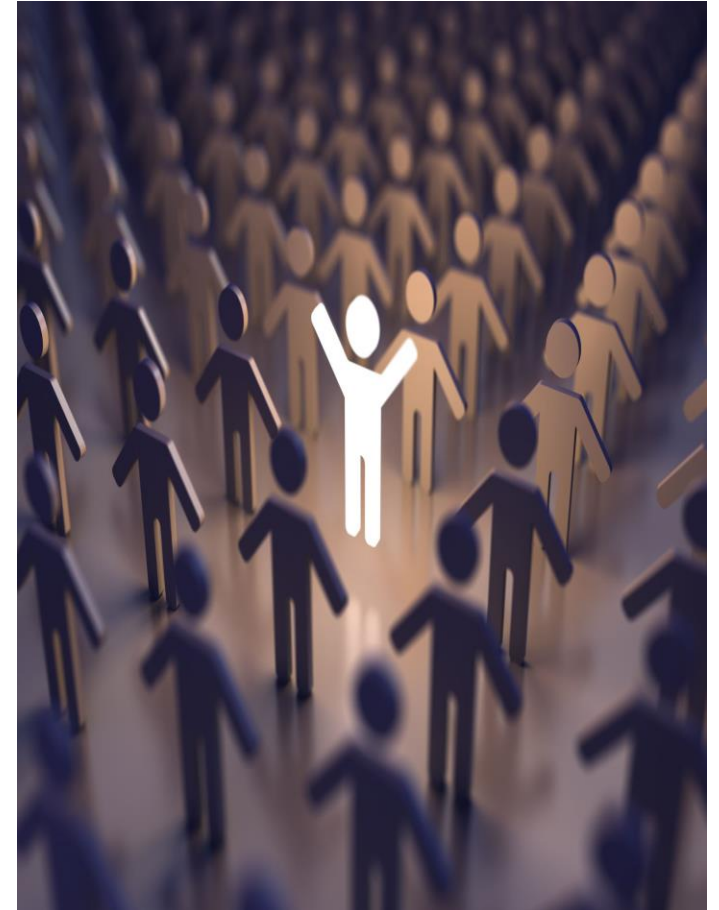
Avoiding, snapping, checking, shutting down

THOUGHTS

“I’ll fail.” “Everyone else is ahead.”

EMOTIONS

Fear, shame, anger, hopelessness



One difficult evening is normal. A sustained change needs attention.

The window of tolerance

OVERWHELMED

Fight | flight | panic

OPTIMAL ZONE

Able to think, listen, learn and solve problems

SHUT DOWN

Freeze | numb | withdraw

More pressure narrows the window. Safety, predictability and rest widen it.

Sometimes “won’t” is actually “can’t yet”



What looks like...

procrastination

defiance

laziness

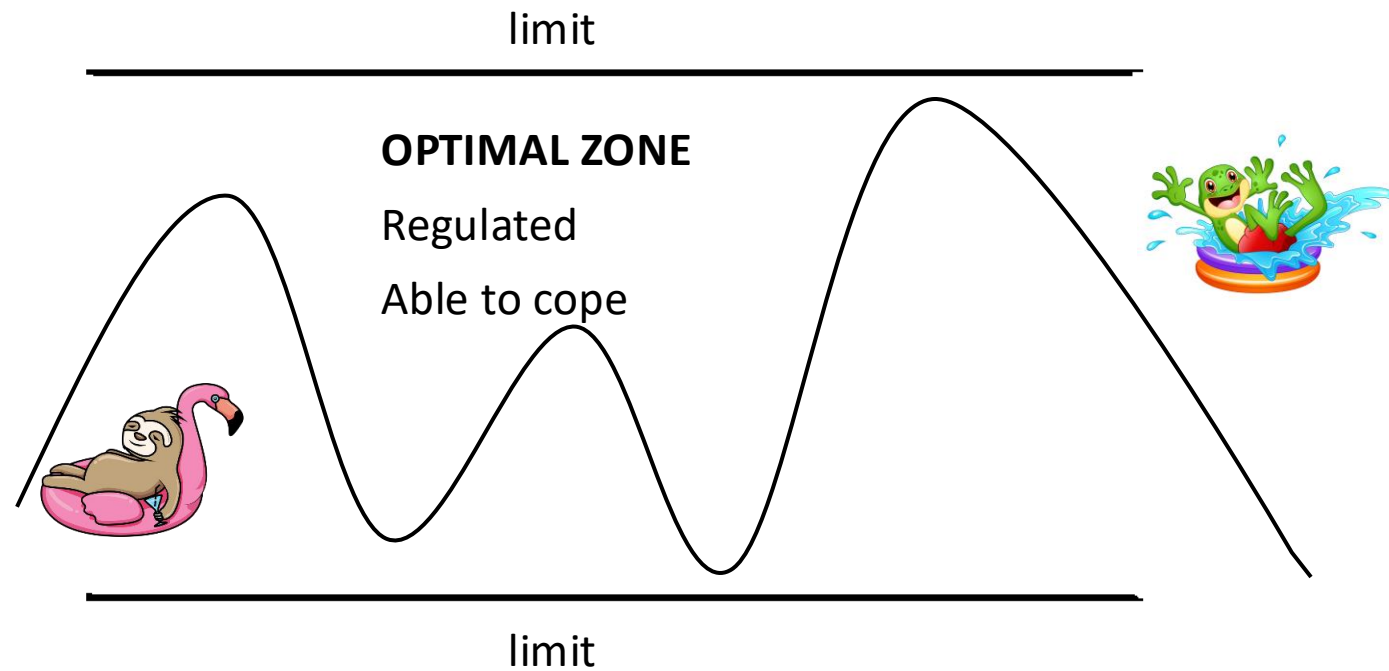
may be...

overwhelm

fear of failure

no clear first step

**Curiosity does not remove boundaries.
It helps us choose the right response.**



*Dan Siegel

A simple parent response: the 4 Rs

1

RECOGNISE

Notice the signs and name what you see.

2

RESPECT

Listen without minimising or rushing.

3

REGULATE

Help the body settle.

4

RESPOND

Agree one small next step.

Listen for the feeling underneath

TRY

- “You seem really overwhelmed.”
- “Which part feels hardest?”
- “Do you want me to listen or help you plan?”
- “We can take this one step at a time.”

AVOID

“Don’t worry.” “Just get on with it.” “In my day...”



RESPECT

INSTEAD OF....

TRY.....

You were doing so well, don't spoil it now

Big sighs/eye rolls

Why didn't you....?

That's what happens when....

You don't know you're born

It's just your hormones

If I'd had your chances

But you can do this so just get on with it

In my day.....

Don't worry, it will be fine...

Come on, don't cry...

You seem.....

I see

Mmmm...

Oh?

Go on....

That sounds.....

I'm hearing that.....

You wish that.....

Regulate before you reason

PAUSE

Lower your voice. Slow the pace.

SPACE

Reduce noise and give a little time.

BODY

Water, food, movement, breathing.

RETURN

Come back to the problem when calm.

Try: breathe out slightly longer than you breathe in, five times.

Revision works best when it reduces uncertainty



A helpful revision block

1 Choose one precise task

2 Work for 20–30 minutes

3 Test recall, do not only reread

4 Stop, move, then decide what is next

Starting is often the hardest part. Make the first step tiny.

Protect the basics

8–10 hours of sleep is the usual teenage need

PHONE

Agree a wind-down period and a charging place outside the bed if possible.

CAFFEINE

Energy drinks and late caffeine can worsen sleep and anxious feelings.

Sleep usually helps performance more than late-night cramming.

Support without strengthening avoidance

Short-term relief



A better pattern

- Acknowledge the fear
- Reduce the step, not the expectation
- Agree support and a time to try
- Celebrate effort and return

A plan for the difficult morning

THE NIGHT BEFORE

- Bag and equipment ready
- One agreed wake-up time
- No last-minute new revision target

AFTERWARDS

- Food, movement and decompression
- Avoid a long post-mortem straight away
- Notice what helped and keep it

IF PANIC ARRIVES

- Name it: “This is anxiety.”
- Slow the breathing and the conversation
- Use the agreed contact or safe place

When to seek more help

SPEAK TO SCHOOL / GP

- Anxiety or low mood persists
- Sleep, eating, attendance or daily life changes
- Usual strategies are no longer enough

ACT URGENTLY

- Talk of suicide or not wanting to live
- Self-harm with immediate risk
- You cannot keep them safe

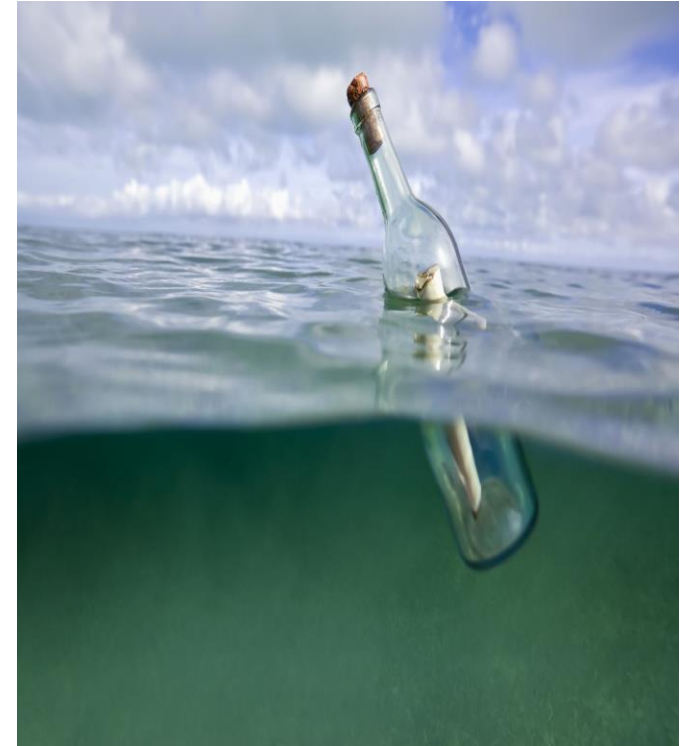
Immediate danger: 999 or A&E

Urgent mental health help: call 111 and select the mental health option

Please involve us early

Tell us what you are seeing at home.

- Tutor or Head of Year for emerging concerns
- Student Support for additional pastoral help
SENDSCO for support for students with SEND
- GP or health professional for persistent or significant symptoms



Small concerns are easier to address before they become big ones.

Four things to take away

1

Behaviour communicates something.

2

Calm first. Problem-solving second.

3

Small steps beat overwhelming plans.

4

Ask for help early.

Useful resources: [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) | [youngminds.org.uk](https://www.youngminds.org.uk) | [annafreud.org](https://www.annafreud.org) | [mindedforfamilies.org.uk](https://www.mindedforfamilies.org.uk)



Remember to take
care of yourself.
You can't pour from
an empty cup.

YOUNGmINDS
fighting for young people's mental health

www.youngminds.org.uk

 **Anna Freud**
National Centre for
Children and Families

www.annafreud.org

 **MindEd**
for Families

www.mindedforfamilies.org.uk

 **mind** for better mental health

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