

Some children will find exams a breeze and possibly even a pleasure. Yes, that's right, some students truly enjoy sitting exams! But many students will be loading pressure on their shoulders and adding more stress to their already challenging teenage lives. One technique which has seen success in many schools around the world is Mindful Practice.

Mindfulness is basically paying attention to (or noticing) the present moment with kindness and curiosity. It is simple. Very simple. We use our breath to anchor us to the present moment because our bodies and our breath are always in the present moment. They have no choice in that. It is our mind that wanders. Future thinking can create anxiety and worry while ruminating on the past can create sadness, regret and depression. Research shows that regular meditation can allow people to centre themselves in the moment which increases concentration and memory retention.

If you notice anxiety or stress in your child as they prepare for exams, you might like to try exploring the science of mindfulness – kindness, gratitude and neuroplasticity – together. We get better at the things we practise. Where the attention goes, the energy flows! So start simple, five minutes a day and build up as time passes. It might feel uncomfortable or silly to begin with but persevere, be kind and curious and allow yourself and your child time to develop this technique.

There are many free apps and websites online which can help you explore Mindful Practice. Some that are used in schools are Stop, Breathe & Think, Smiling Mind and Insight Timer. Have a look, give them a go and see if this technique might work for your child. Sometimes, taking a deep breath and reminding themselves they have got this is all it takes to get back on track in an exam.

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