



# Supporting your young person with exam stress

## Bacon's College

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# *educational wellbeing team*

We are the **educational wellbeing team** powered by Groundwork London.

We are a team of Educational Wellbeing Practitioners, Senior Practitioners and Supervisors, Whole School Approach Co-ordinators and Service Leads.

We work across schools in Southwark providing 1:1, group and whole school mental health and wellbeing support.

In secondary schools, we have a particular focus on working with young people with low mood and anxiety.



# Today's Session Aims

**Think about what stress is and how it affects young people**

**Discuss strategies to support your young person to manage exam stress**

**Think about how to support your own wellbeing as a parent or carer**

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*Is there anything in particular  
you would like to gain from  
today?*

# What is stress?

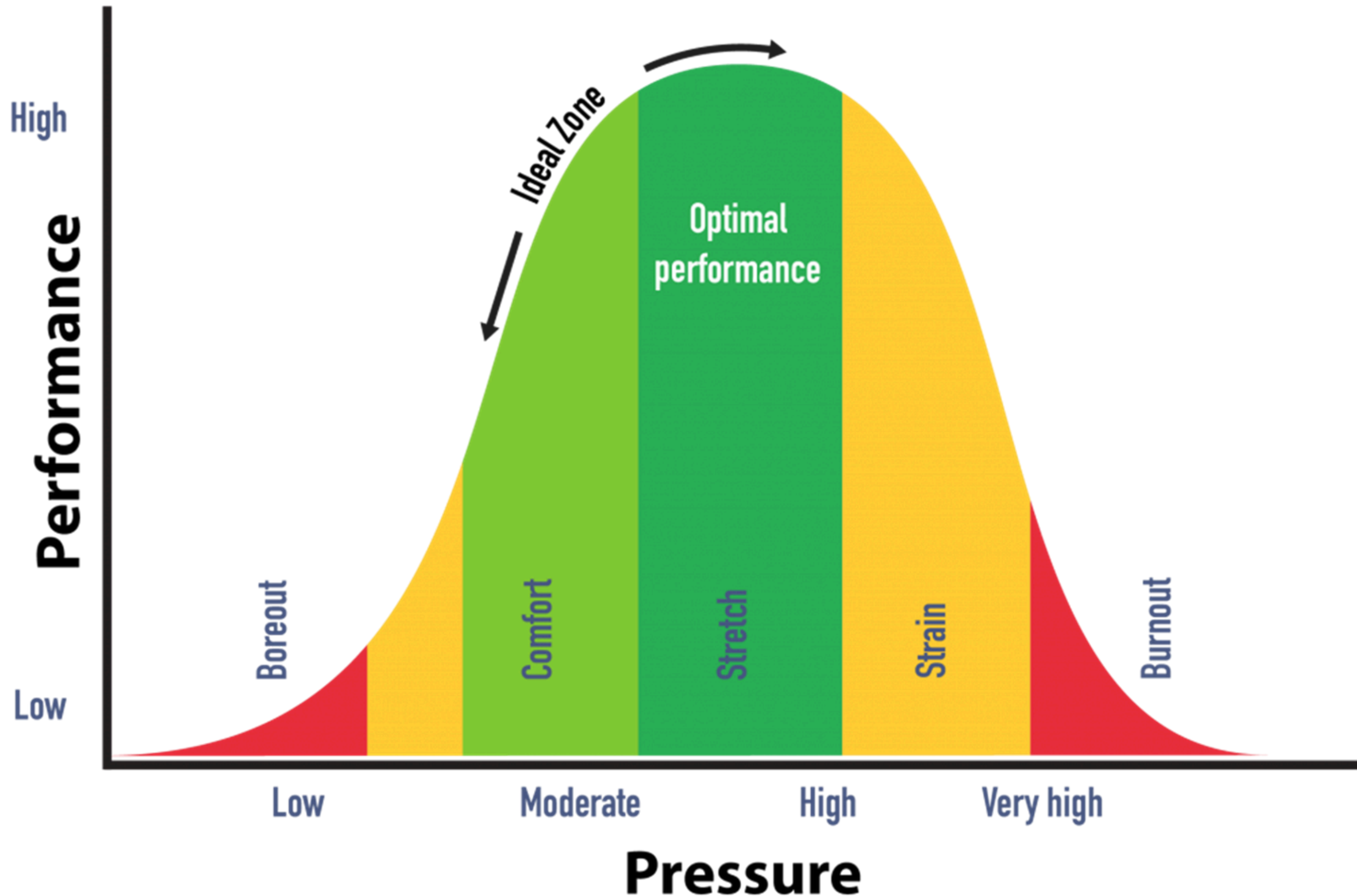
Stress is the body's natural response to challenge and pressure.

It impacts our thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

Short-term, low level stress can help us focus and improve performance. Long-term or intense stress is often exhausting and overwhelming.

Impacts of stress can be both positive and negative.

# Stress can be helpful





Young people are under a lot of pressure, so it's understandable that exams feel really stressful



# The Teenage Brain

Increased Hormone Production



Affects sleeping patterns as well as emotions and impulses.

Executive Functioning still developing



Planning, organisation, and impulse control are still developing, making it harder to manage deadlines and stay focused under pressure.

Heightened sensitivity to stress



The stress-response system is more reactive during adolescence. Exams may feel more intense, and calm thinking is harder.

Shifting sleep patterns



Teenagers often find it difficult to fall asleep early, leading to tiredness, reduced focus, and higher stress.

# Signs your child may be struggling to cope with exam stress

Exam stress is normal, expected and helpful as long as it's in **moderation**. Too much stress for too long can lead to burnout and poor mental health.

This could look like:

Sleeping  
and/or eating  
more or less  
than usual

Social  
isolation or  
giving up  
hobbies

Emotional  
outbursts like  
crying, anger  
or panic

Exams/revision  
become all-  
consuming *or*  
giving up on  
them

If you notice a significant change in your child's mood or character around exam time, this could suggest that they are struggling to cope with exam stress and may need further support.

# Procrastination



## What is Procrastination?

Delaying tasks, often due to fear of failure, overwhelm, low self-belief or perfectionism

## How Procrastination is related to stress:

- The more you delay, the more pressure builds up, leading to more stress as deadlines approach
- Procrastination can become a vicious cycle:



# Helping with procrastination

- Approach procrastination with curiosity instead of judgement
- Words of encouragement - you can do this, I believe in you
- Get started - action leads to motivation, not the other way around
- Break up tasks into smaller chunks - helps combat overwhelm
- Tackle most dreaded task first - “eat the frog”
- Offer rewards and incentives - improves motivation
- Encourage progress over perfection

# Time Management Skills for Exam Preparation

Set clear  
goals

Create a study  
schedule

Limit  
distractions

Balance  
study and  
breaks

Practice time-  
bound study

Review and  
reflect on  
your of the  
day

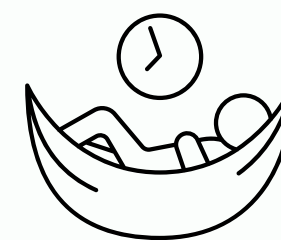
# Revision



Plan  
(but not too much!)



Manage  
your attention



Breaks



Study with friends



Self-care

It's natural for parents and carers to also feel stressed when their young person is taking exams!



# The Stress Bucket

Stress cannot be eliminated from our lives.

So it is helpful to encourage your young person to think about how they deal with stress.



# Be a supportive presence

- **Validate your young person's feelings:** tell them it's normal and understandable that they're feeling stressed about exams.
- Ask your young person **how *they* would like to be supported**. Some may want help scheduling their revision; others may want to be tested on flashcards; others may want someone to go on a walk with so they can have a break!
- Understand that some young people **may just want space** to get on with revision. Tell them that you're there for them if they need you.

# Encourage relaxation and downtime



## Spend time with others

- Social connection is important
- Receive support from peers



## Get plenty of sleep

- Improves learning and memory
- Vital for overall development



## Make time for hobbies and fun activities

- Form of relaxation
- Mental and physical health benefits

# Support their physical health



## Movement

- Releases endorphins (feel-good chemicals) in the brain



## Getting outdoors

- Source of vitamin D
- Boosts mood, memory and creativity



## Balanced diet

- Improves mood, concentration and overall health



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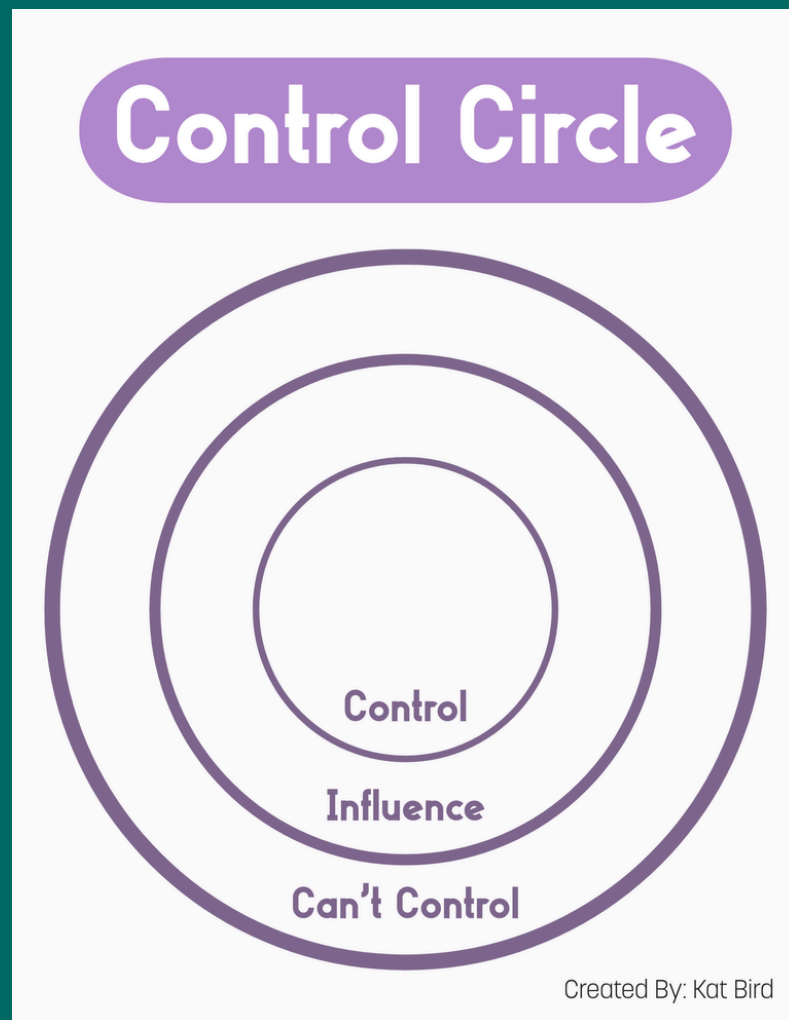
*Is there anything in particular  
that your child is worried or  
stressed about when it comes  
to exams?*

# Look after yourself!

- Be kind to yourself - this is a stressful time
- Ask for support
- Contact helplines such as YoungMinds Parents Helpline (0808 802 5544) or UCAS Exam Results Helpline 0371 468 0 468 (clearing helpline)
- BBC Sounds Podcast - Supporting Teens with Exam Stress:  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m002vcxp>

# Look after yourself!

## Knowledge is power

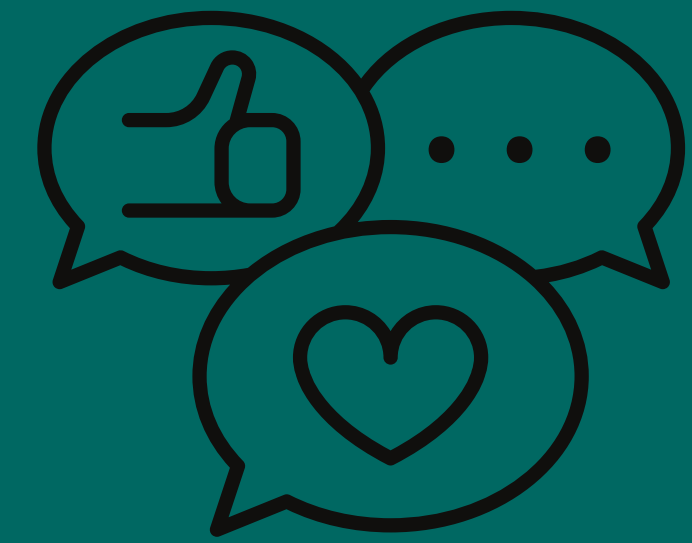


- Knowing what the next steps could be if your child's exams don't go according to plan can help alleviate worries for both you and them.
- Remember that exam results are not everything, and there are other options like appeals, resits, alternative qualifications (e.g. Functional Skills), vocational courses, apprenticeships, UCAS Hub, Clearing, Access courses

ANY QUESTIONS?



 Please take a minute to let us know how you have found today's session



Using this QR code



# Thank you!

We will send additional resources via email