



# 5 Ways to support autistic students through Exams.

## 1 Tell the truth.

It is often the subtle and not so subtle pressures from what teachers and parents say that causes so much stress. These exams may be helpful and important but they are NOT the most important thing in their lives.

## 2 Find out what they are thinking and really listen.

Writing/ mapping out of what they say does certain things:

- Prove that you are listening to them.
- Gives you insights and information you may not have realised.
- Enables you both to work together to highlight what is the biggest worry and what possible solutions there could be.

## 3 Aim to explain and manage the anxiety.

A few nerves can help us be more alert and focussed, but the amount of anxiety many young people feel is way over this point. Young people are in a state of high alert, their systems so full of anxiety that they are fighting the urge to 'fight, flight or freeze' and some do have many meltdowns or shutdowns at this time. So, we really should be concerned with reducing anxiety so the young person can be calm enough to think clearly and do their best.

## 4 Keep routine, reduce demands.

Prepare for the changes of environment, routine and what to talk about after the exam. Keep as much of the regular routine that the young person wants. Familiarity will help them feel safe. Also plan some routines for the days they are not in school, don't make them all revision days, but allow Playstation time and a routine for bedtime if possible (good luck with that!) Plan in meal routines.

## 5 For those mainstream autistic students who are unlikely to do well in exams;

Keep it in perspective for them. Give regular and undemanding times of support. If they have not revised all year it is unlikely they are going to start now. If they can be persuaded to do a bit, find the thing that will engage them the most.