



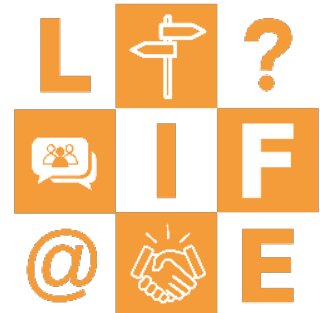
26th February 2024

Dear Parents/Carers of Y11 Students

I'm writing to you today in my capacity as Lead Practitioner for Personal Development, but also as someone who - like all of the staff at Stokesley - cares hugely about the wellbeing of our students.

Your child is about to embark on a challenging few months, as they tackle one of their biggest challenges yet: their GCSE examinations. In my experience, this means that you too - as parents and carers - may well also be in for an emotional couple of months as you try to navigate the stress, hormones, extremes of emotions and try, too, to get the balance between supporting and nagging that can be so very difficult at the best of times!

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### **But what can you expect?**

Well, in lots of ways this bit - the bit before the exams really start - is the most difficult. Why? Because students are still trying to balance what to revise, when to revise it and also their normal school and home lives alongside this. Once the exams actually start, their revision tends to organise itself: with one exam out of the way they prepare for the next one and fall into this pattern until the end of the exam season. You'll know your child by now and will know whether they're someone who likes to deconstruct an exam, or simply forget that it happened and move on, but try - if they want to do it - to give them the time to talk about their exam, or respect their decision not to talk about it, even if it goes against your personal need to know!

### **So how can you support them?**

The best thing that you can do - in my humble opinion - is to simply be there for them when they need you. Maybe you're the provider of exceptional snacks, great hugs, are a TV watching companion or are able to work alongside them. You don't need to be any more to them than you have always been, but they'll just need to know you're there. Perhaps, too, be prepared to take a deep breath and count to ten on more occasions than you would usually allow! We know ourselves, don't we, that we're not our usual rational selves when we're under stress? Your teenagers may well be the same. Remember that it's temporary - this time will pass and you'll have your normal child back! Try, too, to encourage them to keep doing the things that make them happy. Having an hour or so out to watch TV, to do some drawing, to play football or netball or to go to the gym will make them more effective in the long run, but they may find it hard to see this in the midst of a revision timetable. You can be that voice in their ear.

And finally, it's a while ago now but I delivered an assembly this time last year to students about *choosing* to be happy, and about choosing the *right* coping strategies. I know that at times this is

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difficult for them to do, especially with a combination of exams and hormones, but that's exactly *why* I delivered the assembly. I want them to enjoy their lives, to see the fun in things, to grab challenges and opportunities by the horns and see them for what they are. I told them that life would be boring if they were all the same, and that GCSEs are simply another opportunity to prove to themselves where their strengths are, not to make themselves feel down or unhappy.

You can support us here hugely as parents and carers by - as I am sure you already do - reiterating these messages. Every single student in year 11 is a unique, wonderful and incredibly individual and I wish them every success over the next few months.

If I can be of any support at all, to you or to your child, please don't hesitate to contact me on the email address below.

With warmest regards

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