

Youth in Action: Tackling Today's Toughest Issues (ECYW6009)

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What does “Tests, Targets and Education” mean?

- Young people spend 6 hours a day, 5 days a week of their childhood and adolescence in school, in education.
- It causes a lot of stress, a fair amount of anxiety and depression in young people, especially when exam pressures are high.
- Young people are expected to perform well in National Tests and class tests from as young as six and seven.
- Students are pressured to get good grades more than working for the love or enjoyment of the subject.
- There is so much hyper-focus and competitiveness around standardised testing and exams.
- Therefore, young people whose potential and talents lie outside of academia and formal education are marginalised.

(Palmer, 2015)

Statistics:

- According to a study published by The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, there was an almost doubled increase (13% to nearly 26%) in perceived pressure in young people between 2009 and 2021.
- The most pressure reported was in females in the older school years, with up to 57% of females in Year 11 reporting a lot of pressure in 2021.

Tests, Targets and Education:

- Physical health
 - Mental health
 - Emotional health
 - Peer pressure and Grade pressures
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- How can parents/carers best support their young people?
 - Resources to help young people
 - How are youth workers best placed to support young people?

Physical Health

- High levels of stress, anxiety and depression can cause individuals to exercise less.
- High levels of revision needed, so there is less time to exercise or to get outside.
- Therefore, some individuals' physical health may decline due to pressure from school and education.

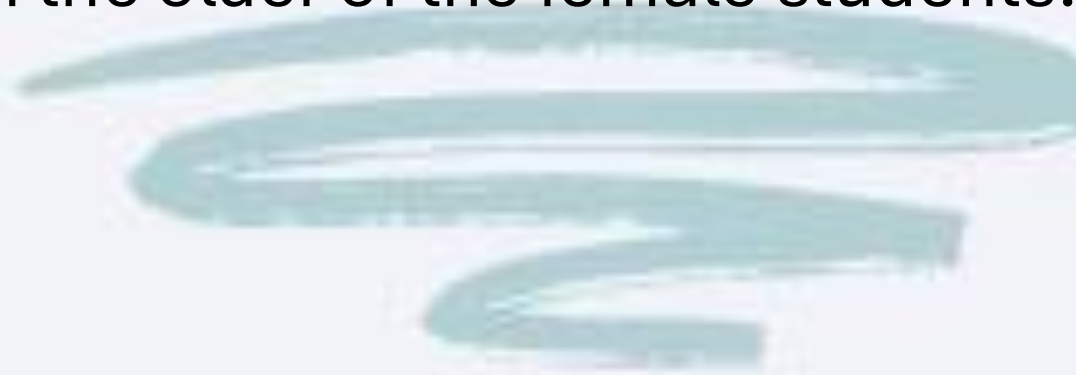
Mental Health

- High levels of stress and anxiety
- General declining levels of mental health in young people.



Emotional Health

- According to the study from ACAMH (2025), feeling a lot of pressure in school and education often leads to emotional problems, such as being less able to regulate certain emotions due to high levels of stress and anxiety.
- This decrease in emotional health also followed the same pattern of being higher in the older of the female students.



Peer Pressure and Grade Pressure

- During exam times, young people can be affected by peer pressure because of the competitive nature of the exam period.
- Schools also tend to put a high level of importance and emphasis on getting high grades when exam times come around.



How can parents/carers help and support their young people?

- Make sure your child eats well
- Help your child get enough sleep
- Be flexible during exams
- Help them study
- Talk about exam nerves
- Encourage exercise
- Try not to add to the pressure
- Make time for treats
- Know when to get your child more help if and when they need it

Signposts to resources:

- Mind – Counselling
- Mind – online resources
- GTBAL
- Better Help (paid)
- Finch (free)
- Calm/Headspace
- 111 op2 Crisis team
- School team/teachers/school youth worker
- Youth clubs/youth workers

Revision Resources:

- BBC Bitesize
- WJEC website/revision books (other curriculums have the same)
- Twinkl - GCSE revision guides
- Collins Revision resources for GCSE and A-Level's



Why are youth workers best placed to support young people?

- Youth workers are best placed to support young people through their school experience because;
 - Most exam and grade pressure comes between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, but some young people may already feel academic pressure starting in Year 7 at the age of eleven.
 - Youth workers are meant to build strong, sustainable, supportive and meaningful relationships with young people (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019).
 - Youth workers work with a head, heart and hands policy, which encompasses everything that young people need when going through the pressures of being in the education system (Arfin et al, 2022).

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