



# Family Matters

*Making Family Life Easier*

## **Families & Exam Stress**

With examinations fast approaching, families with a child doing the Junior or Leaving Certificate will be familiar with the stress that brings; not just for the young person sitting the exams but for parents as well.

Countless arguments about study and homework take place on a regular basis. A typical scene that many parents can relate to at this time is their child sitting down to study but then in a short while becoming distracted by something that catches their eye on T.V. or another text comes through (that just has to be answered now!!). As a parent you find yourself questioning or as they see it nagging them about when they are going to study.

For other young people they would rather be on the x-box or hanging out with friends than studying. Again you find yourself constantly reminding them of how important the exams are and how little time is left or bribing them with promises of cash for grades.

Or perhaps you have a son or daughter who spends all their time studying, from the time they come home from school until late into the night.

## **As a parent what can you do?**

Although a parents' questions and reminders about study are motivated by concern and interest, young people often experience this as extra pressure. So what can parents do to encourage their child to study without nagging, reminding and bribing them?

*Help them develop internal motivation:* Motivation is key to learning. Students who achieve are often internally motivated, which means their drive to study and succeed comes from within themselves, from their own goals. As a parent you can support your child by encouraging them to set goals (grades they would like to achieve in each of their subjects for example) as well as ways of realistically achieving these goals in the short time that is left. A useful way to start this exercise is to ask your child what grades they would like to see on their statement of results when they open that envelope in August or September and then what they need to do to achieve those results. Helping them to develop a realistic timetable can also be useful in motivating them.

*Calm atmosphere:* At this time parents often relive their own exam experiences and worry about their children's future which can result in them experiencing as much and at times more stress than their children. In order to have a calm and positive atmosphere in the home, it is important for parents to take care of themselves as well.



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Taking time out to recharge your batteries by doing the things you most enjoy doing with the people you most enjoy being with can have a positive effect on all the family.

*Clare Crowley Collier, Therapist, Educator & Facilitator for Teenagers and Parents*