

L I F E S T Y L E

One of the most obvious and successful methods of achieving full potential is exercising regularly. Exercise releases endorphins which help keep the mind focused and stimulated, whilst also relaxing and soothing the body. This not only benefits your child's state of mind and helps them relax, but it also takes their mind off the tests, something which many kids struggle to do on the build-up to exams. Exercise doesn't have to be focused and intensive, but can simply be running around a park with your dog or even playing a less intensive sport such as table tennis. Whatever your child finds the most fun is probably the best form of exercise to undertake.

Some children find as they're growing up that exams are exceptionally stressful and only bring anxiety, but depending on the perspective that you take on them, they could instead be seen as a way to prove their capability and show-off the hard work that they've put into achieve where they've gotten to. By encouraging your child regularly, even when it's not perhaps exam-related, it helps build this much-needed confidence, vital for success; for if they have the confidence and self-belief, they will go into the exam far less anxious and unsettled than they would otherwise as they know what they're capable of achieving: ultimately they have put in the work to succeed.

Furthermore, sufficient sleep is a significant element that needs to be addressed in order to achieve success. The NHS recommends around nine and a half hours to ten hours of sleep a night as a minimum for 10- to 11-year-olds. Understandably, this may not be possible every night of the week; however, you should prioritise sleep in whatever way you plausibly can. If you have the choice of letting your child do extra sports that may shorten this gap slightly, then so be it; it's the times, however, that they're staying up too late playing games or other means of electronic entertainment that should be reduced. Whilst it is true that in moderation these are fine, you shouldn't let your child waste precious hours of sleep as an alternative. Sleep brings countless benefits that may not otherwise be taken full advantage of if missed or reduced. For example, sleep helps reduce the body's levels of stress hormones, whilst also releasing growth hormones which help repair any damaged tissues. Additionally, it helps stabilise and in fact boost the body's immune system, thus decreasing the likelihood of illness which is crucial to avoid, come the exams or the run-up to them.



That being said, exposure to means of relaxation other than simply just exercise and rest are necessary to excel. Every child is different, thus meaning they value items and means of relaxing differently. If your child wants to play on their console with some of their mates, then let them. As a parent it isn't unusual to think that your child is wasting away precious hours on mainstream and popular games. However, this isn't necessarily the case. In some of these games, arguably, strategy is involved and so progression through these can help develop their problem-solving skills and ability to overcome challenges, important for maths. Whilst this isn't always the case with every game, it is undeniably an effective means of relaxation.

Sports and exercise aren't for everyone, so letting your child sit down and play a game with their friends is often an excellent way to soothe them and de-stress them. It goes without saying that if your child is abusing their right to this and is spending countless hours on it



regularly, making little room to revise and prepare or sleep, then a somewhat reasonable and effective means of getting them to revise this is simply removing it from them. By becoming addicted, it turns from being a reward and privilege for hard work, into instead a relentless distraction; thus, to counter this, merely remove the distraction. This will likely incentivise your child more too, knowing that once they've tried their best and put in the most they can, they can once again look forward to getting this privilege back.

Diet

Another aspect somewhat overlooked by parents whose children are taking 11+ exams in the foreseeable future is actually diet and hydration. 'Brain foods', such as salmon, chicken, eggs, milk and far more are a delicate step taken to help enhance your child's performance. Granted foods with high carbohydrate levels to release energy gradually over time are necessary, the most vital component in foods to look for is the deceptively grouped fatty-acid Omega-3. This fatty-acid helps the brain develop and grow, repairing and establishing new neural networks in the brain which in turn make it easier to send and receive information throughout the brain due to the increase in connections available, allowing for each piece in the network to not work as hard as it otherwise would have to. In addition to this, Omega-3 helps keep the blood vessels of the brain clear of blockages, permitting more oxygen to be present at any one time, and thus likely increasing attentiveness and focus.

As mentioned before, hydration is key. It helps the movement of muscles, strengthens the immune system, aids with digestion, helps develop and protect the brain, and affects mood too. Evidently, hydration is crucial, with the British Nutrition Foundation suggesting around 1.5-1.7 litres a day of water should be drunk.



The 11+ entrance exams are likely the most significant and nerve-racking exams they will have had to face so far throughout their education; however, this doesn't always have to be the case. By staying organised and maintaining high effort levels, your child's confidence will grow and consequently their performance too. After all, with the correct preparation and lifestyle, with means in place to boost performance, they should have nothing to worry about, knowing that they've put the effort in and as a result, will likely perform to the best of their ability. It's simply this consistency that will pay-off in the long-term and the satisfaction and pride brought with it will ultimately be worth the effort.