

Ideas to support your child

How to make stress their / our (!) friend

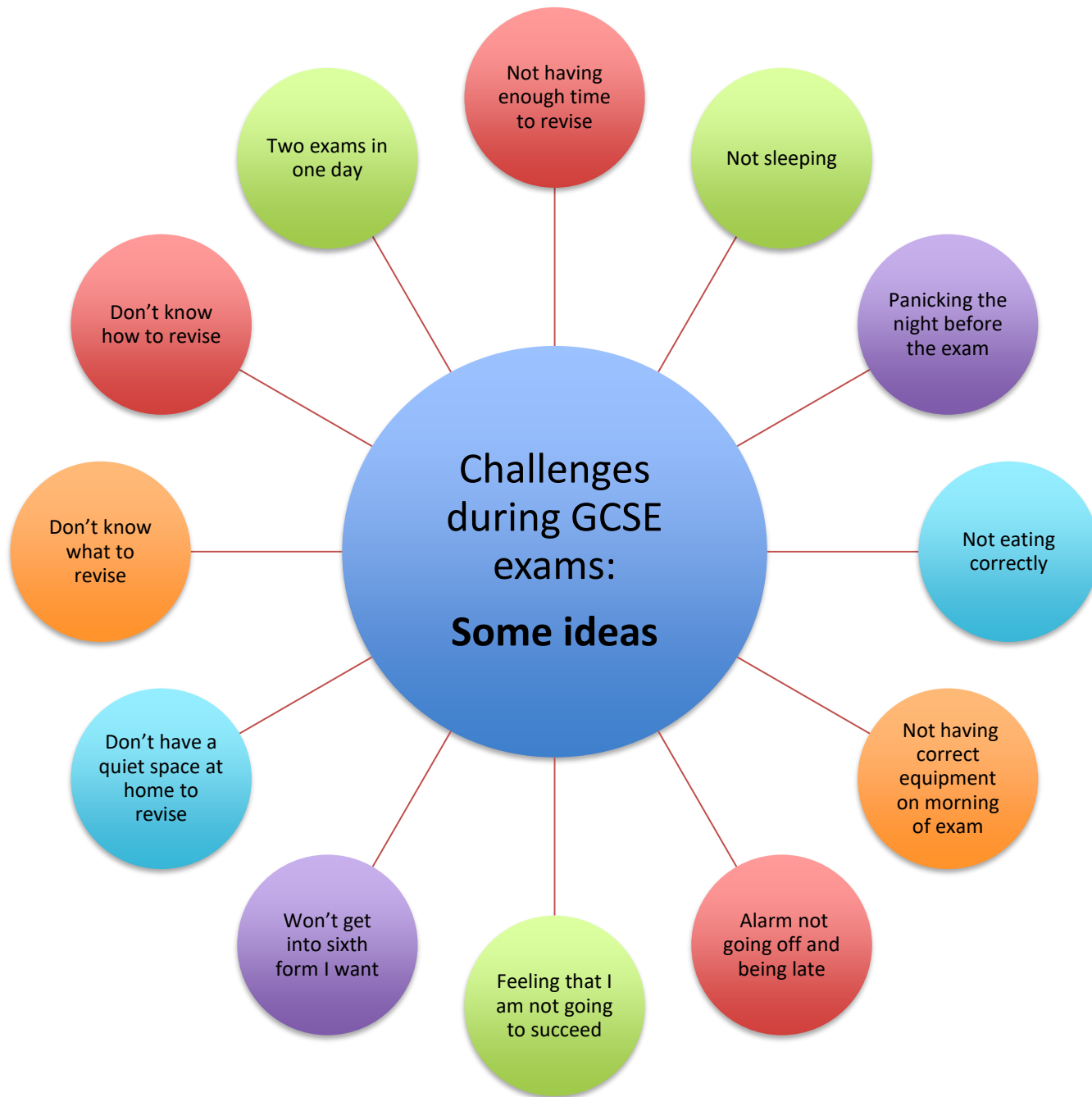
Finish this sentence

For my child, the coming months will be....

- Crucial
- Intense
- Stressful

What are going to be their challenges?





Key points from video

- We need to look at stress differently
- Stress is perhaps only harmful...to those who believe stress is harmful and a bad thing
- The research suggested that those who viewed stress in a healthy way were amongst the least likely to be harmed by it.
- Changing how you *think* about stress can make you healthier

Useful info sheet

Have a look through the 'Helpful Strategies and discuss any other strategies to help you deal with the challenges ahead



STRESS FROM TRANSITIONS: MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR CAMPUS EXPERIENCE

We use the word stress as short hand for the stress response, which is the way your brain and body let you know you have a challenge or problem that needs to be addressed. This is the signal that underlies adaptation and is key for the building of resilience.

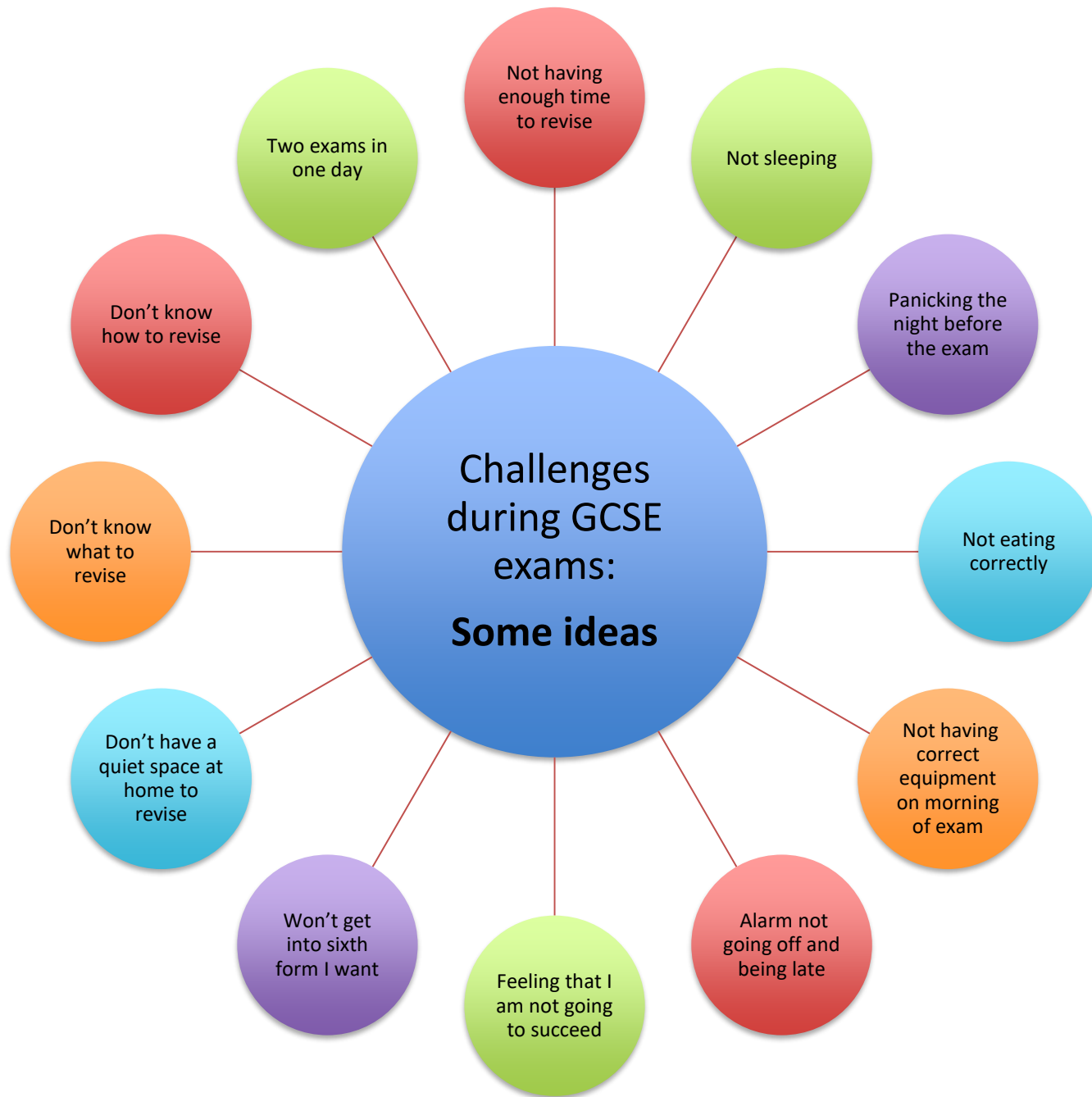
UNDERSTANDING & MANAGING THE STRESS RESPONSE

The stress response is the way our brain tells us that there is a problem in our environment that we need to deal with. This is the signal that causes us to adapt and become more resilient. The word "stress" has been used as short-hand for the concept of the stress response, but it has taken on a negative connotation that leads to unhelpful ways of thinking about and managing our stress response. *Using clear language to describe our experiences helps us learn how to use the stress response to promote, instead of reduce, our health and mental health.* People also often substitute the word "anxiety" when they mean the stress response; however, anxiety (which is a constant state of hyper arousal) is not the same thing as the stress response.

THE MYTH OF EVIL STRESS

Until recently, most people believed that the stress response was bad for you and consequently, was something that should be avoided whenever possible. We have been bombarded by media and product marketing that has made us believe that stress is our enemy and that our focus needs to be avoiding or decreasing the stress response. Just type the words "avoiding stress" into Google and you will see how common this perception is and how many products sell themselves as essential for stress relief! The reality? *Most stress that we experience daily is actually good for us and avoiding it could be harmful. The only stress that can really cause us harm*

HELPFUL STRATEGIES	WHY?
Figure out what the problem really is	Take some time to think through the situation that is causing you stress. What about the situation is bugging you the most? What is the real problem? Identifying the problem is an important step to being able to develop a solution.
Consider the solutions	Is there a solution to the problem? Remember that even a difficult solution is still a solution. Solving the problem, even when it's difficult or when it takes a lot of time is always the best coping strategy. Ask people for help. After all, that is how human beings have solved problems for centuries.
Accept what you can't change	If there isn't a solution and you can't change the situation, you may just need to accept that and move on. Consider that door closed and start looking for another one that you may be able to open.
Be realistic	Try to put things in perspective. Not every stressor is the end of the world. Consider whether you're really going to be concerned about this in a week's time, a month's time, or a year's time. If this situation was happening to your friend, would you see the situation differently? What advice would you give them?
Acknowledge your feelings	It's OK to feel angry or upset once in a while. You don't have to bottle up your feelings. Admitting that something is really bugging you can often make you feel a lot better. But don't stop there. How can you mobilize your energy to help you meet the challenge? Move from feeling to thinking. Move from experiencing the problem to solving it.
Build healthy relationships	Anytime you're experiencing stress, talking to friends and family can make a big difference. Developing healthy relationships with people you can count on is an important part of preparing to deal with stress. Plus, many people have gone through what you are experiencing and can not only be supportive but can also suggest strategies that might help you solve the challenges you're facing.
Limit or avoid drugs and alcohol	Drinking too much or doing drugs will not solve the problem. They affect your ability to make good decisions and are only a temporary fix. When the substance wears off, your problems are still there and your stress may end up being much worse. Too much drinking or drug use can also lead to numerous physical and mental health problems.
Eat a healthy diet	A well-balanced diet makes you mentally and physically stronger. It gives your body the fuel you need to succeed. Limit foods that are high in fat or sugar, or that are highly processed. This isn't always easy to accomplish – especially if you're living off of cafeteria food or boxed mac and cheese. For help with healthy eating, check out: https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/healthy-eating.html
Be active	One of the best ways to relax and de-stress is to get active. Exercise is good for the brain and body. Research shows that for the biggest impact, 30 minutes of vigorous exercise per day (e.g., going for a run, playing soccer, spin class, or aerobics) is key. If you're not there yet, start out by making simple decisions, like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - walking to class, or to meet friends when possible. - getting off the bus a stop early or two, or parking further from campus and walking the rest of the way. - taking the stairs whenever available. - taking a walk with a friend instead of going for coffee or drinks. <i>Remember that exercise is not about losing or maintaining weight - it's about keeping your body/heart/lungs/brain strong for now and for the future.</i>



Helpful strategies to support your child

1. Give emotional support:

- Be there – cajole and encourage in equal measure
- Liberally administer hugs and a listening ear to emancipate the oxytocin

Helpful strategies to support your child

2. Provide and encourage a healthy diet
 - A well balanced diet is essential for physical and mental health
 - Limit foods that are high in fat or sugar
 - The NHS “Live Well” website is a wonderful source of information on this topic

Helpful strategies to support your child

3. Encourage exercise and activity

- Exercise releases endorphins – the “happy hormone” – which can reduce “bad” stress
- Simple changes to lifestyle – walking, taking the stairs, getting off the bus a stop early – can help build exercise into a daily routine
- Again, the NHS “Live Well” website is great on this!

Helpful strategies to support your child

4. Ensure good sleep!

- 8 hours + is recommended for most people – teenagers need even more
- Ensure consistency:
- Going to bed at a similar time each night
- Establishing a bedtime routine
- Avoiding distractions (especially technological)

Helpful strategies to support your child

5. Help with time management

- Help construct the revision timetable – make sure your child adds in time for relaxing, exercise and fun
- Talk to your child each day about how their time has been spent and what might need adjusting for tomorrow....