CAYP
Psychology

The CAYP's Calm Exam Resource

Clinically informed strategies
from our team of clinical psychologists

What's going on for your child

- Increased pressure and expectations
- Changes in routine and structure
- Fear of getting things wrong or failing
- Cognitive overload from large amounts of information

For many children, this doesn't look like worry. It looks like avoidance, frustration or shutdown.

Getting started

- Begin with just 10 minutes
- Focus on one small topic
- Sit with them to get started
- Use a timer to create a clear end
- Remove distractions before starting (phones, noise, clutter)
- Agree exactly what "done" looks like for that session

Reducing pressure helps the brain engage.

When it turns into a battle

- Avoid long lectures or repeated reminders
- Acknowledge how it feels first
- Offer two simple choices
- Step away if emotions are high

Connection reduces resistance.

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After school meltdowns

- They've held it together all day
- Their nervous system is exhausted
- Home is where they release that pressure

What helps:

- Downtime before revision
- Food + rest first
- Lower expectations on harder days

Helping to stay focused

- Short bursts (10–20 minutes)
- Reduce distractions
- Sit nearby if needed
- Use simple checklists

Focus builds gradually, not instantly.

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Supporting confidence

- Focus on effort, not just results
- Highlight what they can do
- Keep feedback calm and specific
- Avoid comparisons

Small wins build confidence over time.

Managing heightened emotions

- Acknowledge how they're feeling before problem-solving
- Keep your tone calm and steady
- Give space if emotions are high
- Avoid reasoning or explaining in the moment
- Come back to it once they're calmer
- Focus on helping them feel safe, not "fixing" it straight away

For parents

- You don't need to get it perfect
- Some days will be harder than others
- Step away when things escalate
- You are doing more than you think

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Revision techniques

Active learning

- Practice past papers under timed conditions
- Blurting (write everything you remember, then check)
- Teach the content to someone else
- Use flashcards (question on one side, answer on the other)
- Self-testing instead of re-reading notes
- Write exam-style questions and answer them
- Use retrieval practice daily (recalling from memory)

Making information stick

- Spaced repetition (revisit topics over time)
- Use acronyms or mnemonics
- Create mind maps to connect ideas
- Break content into small chunks
- Use colour coding for key themes
- Link new information to something they already know
- Use visual imagery to remember concepts

Understanding

- Explain answers out loud
- Ask "why does this happen?"
- Compare topics (similarities and differences)
- Create summary sheets in their own words
- Use examples to understand abstract ideas
- Turn notes into questions

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Revision support

Getting started:

- Start with the easiest or smallest task
- Begin with just 5–10 minutes
- Sit with them to help them get going
- Remove other options (clear desk, close tabs, reduce distractions)
- Agree a simple starting point before they begin
- Focus on "just starting", not finishing everything

Staying focused:

- Use 10–20 minute focused bursts
- Use a timer
- Set a clear goal for each session
- Work in a quiet, low-distraction space
- Study at a desk or table (not bed)
- Use checklists to track progress and stay on task

Making learning more engaging

- Use videos to explain tricky topics
- Use apps or quizzes
- Turn revision into a game (e.g. quiz each other)
- Study with a friend (if helpful)
- Use whiteboards instead of paper
- Change environment occasionally

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Revision support

Organisation

- Create a simple revision timetable
- Plan one subject per session
- Rotate subjects to avoid burnout
- Keep materials organised and easy to access
- Prioritise weaker areas (but not only those)

Wellbeing

- Take regular breaks
- Eat before revising
- Get enough sleep
- Avoid long, late-night sessions
- Balance revision with downtime
- Keep expectations realistic

Exam preparation

- Practice timing answers
- Learn command words (e.g. "describe", "evaluate")
- Review mark schemes
- Practice writing full answers, not just notes
- Familiarise with exam format

Not every technique works for every child. The goal is to find what helps your child engage and feel more confident.

About CAYP Psychology

CAYP Psychology (pronounced “cape”) is an independent, clinical psychology-led service offering expert therapy and assessments for children and young people aged 0–18 (or up to 25 for autism assessments).

We support a wide range of emotional, behavioural, developmental and learning needs, and provide specialist assessments for autism, ADHD, dyslexia and intellectual disabilities.

We work closely with both schools and parents, and our reports are frequently used in EHCP applications and education tribunals.

Alongside our clinical work, we also partner with schools to offer:

- Parent training and webinars
- Psychological training for staff
- Teacher supervision and support
- SENCo consultation and guidance
- Whole-school approaches to supporting children’s needs

With nearly 100 highly qualified clinicians across more than 40 UK locations and online, we are proud to deliver thoughtful, values-driven support for children, families and schools.

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