

Worry and exam-nerves toolkit

For the child who gets a tummy ache before spelling or lies awake before an oral, and for the adult beside them at 9 pm.

1 What to say when your child is worried

Name the worry first, then make it smaller. Keep it short; a worried child takes in little.

Your child says	Try saying	Instead of
"I'm going to fail the spelling test."	"You're worried about spelling. Let's practise the three words you find hardest."	"Don't be silly, you'll be fine."
"My tummy hurts." (before school or a test)	"Worry can make a tummy hurt. Let's breathe together, then see how it feels."	"You're making it up."
"Everyone is better than me."	"What is one thing you do better than last term?"	"Why can't you be like your cousin?"
"I can't sleep. I keep thinking about the oral."	"Let's write the worry on a slip and put it in the box. We'll look at it after school."	"Just go to sleep."
"What if I get a low mark?"	"Then we find out what to practise next. A mark doesn't change how much I love you."	"You must get full marks."
"I don't want to go to school."	"Something feels hard at school. Tell me the hardest part."	"You have no choice."

2 Worry sort: for your child to fill in

Write each worry in one box. Then pick one thing from the left box to do today.

Things I can do something about
For example: practise my spelling list, pack my bag the night before, ask my teacher.

Things I can't control
For example: which questions come out, what my friends score, the weather on sports day.

Breathing cards and worry slips

Cut out the cards. Practise one at bedtime, so it is ready when a worry comes. One card fits in a pencil case.



Box breathing

Trace the square with your finger. Breathe in for 4, hold for 4, breathe out for 4, hold for 4. Go round three times.



Five-finger breathing

Spread one hand. Trace up a finger as you breathe in, and down as you breathe out. Do all five fingers.



5, 4, 3, 2, 1

Name 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell and 1 you can taste.



Squeeze and let go

Make tight fists and count to 5, then let go. Lift your shoulders to your ears, then drop them.

3 Worry box slips

Your child writes the worry, then folds the slip into a box or tin. Open the box together the next day, never at bedtime.

My worry

How big is it today?

☐ small ☐ medium ☐ big

One thing I can do

My worry

How big is it today?

☐ small ☐ medium ☐ big

One thing I can do

My worry

How big is it today?

☐ small ☐ medium ☐ big

One thing I can do

My worry

How big is it today?

☐ small ☐ medium ☐ big

One thing I can do

My worry

How big is it today?

☐ small ☐ medium ☐ big

One thing I can do

My worry

How big is it today?

☐ small ☐ medium ☐ big

One thing I can do

Exam-week routine

For weighted assessments, SA and PSLE papers. Tick what you plan to do together. Fewer steps done calmly beat a long list.

① The week before

- ☐ Plan revision early, with the most important subjects first.
HealthHub (HPB)
- ☐ Short revision blocks with breaks to move around.
- ☐ A quiet place to study, or study with a friend if your child prefers.
HealthHub (HPB)
- ☐ Keep usual bedtimes: at least 9 hours of sleep for ages 7 to 13.
24-hour activity guidelines (KKH)
- ☐ Keep at least an hour of active play a day, on average.
24-hour activity guidelines (KKH)
- ☐ Regular meals and enough water.
HealthHub (HPB)

④ After the paper

- ☐ Ask "How did you feel?" before "How did you do?", and listen.
HealthHub (HPB): listen to how they feel after each paper
- ☐ No comparing with classmates or cousins.
HealthHub (HPB)
- ☐ Plan something to look forward to when the exams end.
HealthHub (HPB): plan a post-exam activity

② The night before

- ☐ Pack the bag together: stationery, water bottle, anything the teacher listed.
- ☐ Stop revising after dinner. Read or play something calm.
- ☐ Write any worry on a slip and put it in the box.
- ☐ Same bedtime as usual. Practise one breathing card in bed.

③ The morning of

- ☐ Breakfast, even a small one.
- ☐ A breathing card in the pencil case.
- ☐ One short line at the gate: "Do your best. See you after school."

When to get help

If worry keeps getting in the way of sleep, eating, school or play, or you are worried, you do not need to wait.

- Talk to the form teacher or the school counsellor. MOE says every school has one or two school counsellors.
- See your family doctor (GP) or a polyclinic. MOH says GP clinics and polyclinics in its mental health programme help with mild to moderate conditions.
- For you, any time of day: national mindline, call 1771 or WhatsApp 6669 1771.
- For an older child or adult aged 16 to 30: CHAT (IMH) offers a mental health check.
- If your child talks about hurting themselves, go to a hospital emergency department, or call 995 in an emergency.

A toolkit to talk with, not a test. It does not measure, score or diagnose anything.

Sources, checked 18 October 2026: HealthHub (HPB), Exam stress-busting tips (reviewed 15 November 2022); College of Paediatrics and Child Health Singapore, Singapore Integrated 24-Hour Activity Guidelines for Children and Adolescents (summary on kkh.com.sg, January 2021); MOE, Enabling an ecosystem of support (updated 16 October 2026); MOH, Mental health services and Primary mental healthcare services (MOH pages, updated 2025 and 2026). SCDF, Emergency Medical Services (checked 12 October 2026). Links: raisingangels.sg/downloads/worry-and-exam-nerves-toolkit/