

How to cut VCE stress

We are now well into the exam period for those three letters which have the capacity to cause great stress to year 12 students and parents at this time of year – VCE.

The acronym for Victorian Certificate of Education sounds harmless enough, but sometimes it seems that it stands for Very Confronting Experience.

Reducing the stress to a liveable level is a good idea for everyone in a VCE household.

Tip one for major stress reduction is to get into a routine. Even if your year-12 child is the most disorganised in history, it's never too late.

Their routine should include good breaks for light exercise, catching up with friends, walking the dog or spending quality time stroking Fluffy the cat and feeling the stress levels slowly drop.

Study periods should be about half an hour each, with a 10-minute break.

Students should plan a timetable and stick to it, allowing for relaxing, eating, sleeping, socialising and studying.

Be realistic about the results you expect to achieve – if you have never been a straight-A student, it's not likely to happen now. Just do the best you can. Nobody should expect more.

Students should be encouraged to tell their family and friends how they are feeling. If they hold in their fears and doubts and grumpiness, it's like a pressure cooker, and eventually it will blow.

Kids Helpline, Lifeline and Reach Out For Kids are great sources of support. If students find they have major sleep disturbances, are crying for no reason and just unable to relax, it's vital they seek help to get them over this stressful patch.

Alcohol, drugs or too much caffeine will give you a temporary high, but then you will crash.

There's a world of difference between meeting a friend for a relaxing latte and drinking 10 cups of coffee a day to stay awake.

Bribe siblings to test you and leave sticky-notes all over the house with key pictures of explanations to help you. That's what you will remember when you enter the exam room.

Parents need to cut their kids some slack at this time. Keep communication going but don't nag them about the state of their rooms.

Remember, it's only a few weeks and then it's over.

Survival tips

- **Get into a routine that balances study and relaxation time, and stick to it**
- **Be realistic about the results you expect to get**
- **Remember that it's only for a very short time and then it will all be over**
- **Kids Helpline on 1800 551 800 and www.reachout.com.au are excellent sources of help for stressed VCE students**