

# PARENTING

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# TIPS

## Helping your Year 12 student through the HSC

The following is part of an address delivered by Richard Cracknell, Counsellor and District Guidance Officer, at a Year 12 parent evening in Inverell.

*"The most obvious forms of support parents can offer are the practical, physical things:*

- *Provide a good place to study. Ideally it should be quiet, a comfortable temperature, with good ventilation, good lighting, adequate desk or table space and free from distractions such as TV, noise, a telephone, interesting conversations, little brothers and sisters.*
- *Provide good, balanced meals.*
- *Encourage sensible levels of sleep...encourage moderation in late night parties and alcohol consumption.*

*"Less obvious but of equal or perhaps greater importance are the things you can do to provide a positive and understanding emotional environment.*

- *Be supportive and encouraging.*
- *Highlight strengths and successes. Encourage your child not to dwell on failures....Encourage them to see mistakes as something we can learn from.*
- *Appreciate that most students will be experiencing quite a high level of stress, frequently without any obvious indicators. Many fear that they might let their family down. (Beware of setting unrealistic expectations). Others fear that they will not be able to match the performance of siblings or relatives.*
- *Appreciate that people under pressure can become supersensitive and explosive from time to time. Family members are usually the first targets. Try not to overreact to such outbursts.*
- *Avoid confrontations especially over minor matters, like leaving lights on, leaving the lid off the toothpaste and not doing chores.*
- *Don't panic when they announce on the evening before the examination that they know nothing. (Reassure them, even if you think they could be right. "Just do the best you can. We know you're giving it your best shot." is a good standby.)*
- *Avoid nagging. (That doesn't mean you can't give a nudge or gentle reminder from time to time. Note that sometimes one parent can do this more successfully than the other.)*
- *Encourage confidence by reassuring them. If you have doubts, keep them to yourself.*
- *Be realistic in your expectations as to where the HSC leads. For the majority of HSC students, university study is an unrealistic option.*
- *Encourage your child to seek help from teachers or the school counsellor if he or she is having any difficulty with subjects, study organisation, stress or anxiety about examinations.*
- *Make reasonable concessions, such as release from some household chores as study programs become more demanding. (However, you should only do this because you want to, not as a means of "blackmail".)*
- *Encourage a reasonable balance between work and leisure. Planned leisure periods are an essential component of a good study program.*



Dad's reassurance and good humour did much to boost Neil's confidence and reduce his pre exam stress levels

- *Take an interest in what your child is doing, if he or she will allow you to (some won't). This can include the subjects or topics being studied, how he or she has organised study timetables and programs and leisure pursuits. (Note: "Taking an interest in" does not mean interfering.)*
- *Remember the occasional hug and "I love you" do not go astray, even when they are 18 years old.*
- *Encourage and allow your child to be as independent as you can possibly stand. The more independent he or she can be in meeting the demands of Year 12, the better prepared he or she will be to succeed.*

Having said all this:

*Parents of Year 12:*

*Don't feel too badly when you forget not to nag, when you get picky, and complain bitterly that your child has the time to attend the eighteenth birthday party of every Year 12 student but doesn't have time to help with the washing up. As parents, we are only human and because we can't help being over-involved, we also feel the pressure of Year 12 from time to time.*

*Year 12 students:*

*Try to understand when we behave in a less than supportive and encouraging way. Chances are that it stems from the fact that, as your parents, we care too much.*

*Finally, it is inevitable that some students or parents will be disappointed when the HSC results finally arrive and a Year 12 student fails to achieve as well as he or she had hoped. Should this happen in your family some of the following rationalisations may be of help:*

- *Tertiary education is not the only path to a successful and fulfilling life.*
- *Look at how much growing up you've managed to do over the last two years. You are much better prepared to leave home and go out into the world now than you were two years ago. It certainly hasn't been a waste of time.*
- *If you really want to go on to tertiary education later there are many other pathways. Interestingly, the success rate of mature age students is much higher than for those who go straight from school.*
- *Once you've got yourself settled into a job or a training course somewhere you'll probably never look at your HSC again; it'll probably just sit in the bottom drawer and gather dust."*

#### **During examinations**

Parents' support and encouragement as well as that of relations and friends are vital during examination periods. Students under stress can misread timetables and so parents can provide a backup by also having a record of the examination timetables. Timetables need to be pinned up in a place where they can be consulted readily and checked frequently. Appropriate examination times should be highlighted.

#### **Examinations: application for provision in cases of misadventure or illness**

During the HSC examination period the Board of Studies makes special provision for students who are ill or experience other circumstances that may impact on their examination performance. Students in the examination should talk to the examination supervisor about anything affecting their performance. Illness requires a medical certificate. In cases of illness or misadventure during the HSC examinations your child's school should be contacted immediately.

#### **Media hype**

In more recent years HSC results have become a prominent focus of the media. This can be of grave concern to students who may not have done as well as they expected. It is important to remember that there are often a number of different pathways to career choices. It is worth reminding your child that HSC results are not a measure of human qualities. They are a measure of certain styles of learning at a specific time in a person's life. People often find their particular niche at a different stage in life after a range of different experiences. [Beyond the HSC](http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/beyond/careers/) (<http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/beyond/careers/>) includes some suggestions and information.

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**Source:** The NSW HSC Online is a Charles Sturt University initiative.

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