

The Study Beyond English Companion: Supporting Students with Exam Anxiety

A Guide to Support the Supporters

Study Beyond English 2026

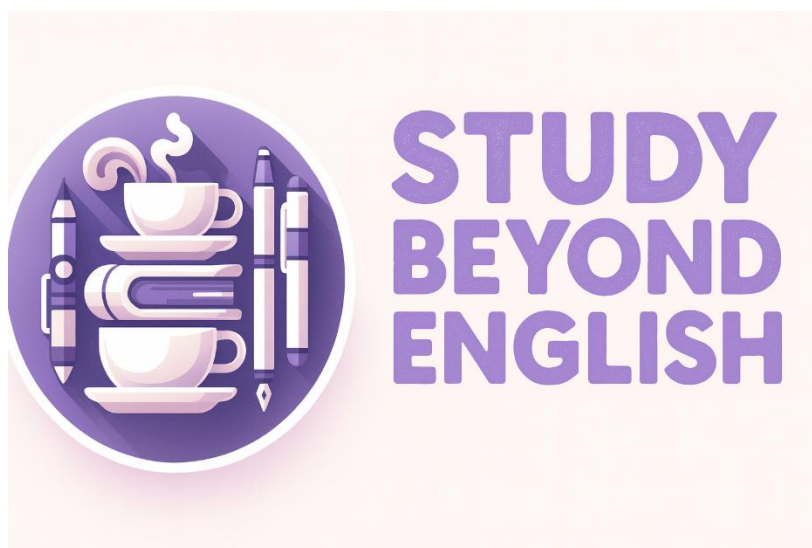
The "Deep Breath" Introduction

A Note from Fliss:

When I invited parents in for a chat, the fear was often palpable. But my starting point was never blame.

My mindset was always: "I am not managing to support your child with what they need yet. Help me understand the barriers."

This guide is your invitation to do the same. We are moving away from the panic of "what they haven't done" and toward the practical tools of "what we can unlock together." Whether it is treating an essay like a maths equation or finding mental clarity in a tidy room, we are here to support the *whole* child – not just the exam candidate.



Managing Exam Anxiety for GCSE English

Support for students, parents and teachers

Exam anxiety is one of the most common challenges young people face during the GCSE years. Many students feel overwhelmed by pressure, expectations and the fear of getting things wrong. These feelings can affect sleep, concentration, motivation and confidence. This page brings together calm, practical guidance that helps students manage exam stress and approach GCSE English with clarity and steadiness.

Understanding exam anxiety

Exam anxiety is a natural response to stress. It appears when a student cares about the outcome and feels unsure whether they can meet expectations. It can show up as:

- difficulty concentrating
- racing thoughts
- trouble sleeping
- stomach discomfort
- irritability
- avoidance of revision
- fear of forgetting information

These reactions are not signs of weakness. They are signs that the student needs support, structure and reassurance.



Why GCSE English can feel particularly stressful

GCSE English requires students to:

- analyse complex texts
- write clearly under timed conditions
- remember quotations
- express ideas with precision
- read and interpret unseen extracts

For students who struggle with confidence, reading speed or organisation, this can feel overwhelming. A calm, structured approach helps students feel more in control.

Practical strategies to reduce exam anxiety

1. Create a steady revision routine

Short, consistent sessions are more effective than long, stressful ones. A simple routine might include:

- twenty minutes of reading
- a short break
- twenty minutes of writing practice

Predictability reduces anxiety and helps the brain feel safe.

2. Break tasks into small steps

Large tasks can feel impossible when a student is anxious. Breaking them into smaller steps helps the student see progress. For example:

- choose one quotation
- write one paragraph
- revise one character
- read one extract

Small steps build confidence.



3. Use calm breathing before starting

Slow breathing helps regulate the nervous system. A simple technique is:

- breathe in for four seconds
- hold for one
- breathe out for six

This longer exhale signals safety to the brain.

4. Practise under low pressure

Timed conditions can increase anxiety. Begin with untimed practice, then gradually introduce gentle timing once the student feels more confident.

5. Use supportive tools

Students who struggle with reading confidence or processing speed may benefit from tools such as:

- EchoGuide for reading aloud
- audio versions of set texts
- colour coded notes
- mind maps
- scaffolded writing frames

These tools reduce cognitive load and help students focus on understanding.

6. Normalise mistakes

Students often fear exams because they believe mistakes mean failure. When parents and teachers model calm responses to errors, students learn that mistakes are part of learning.



How parents can support a child with exam anxiety

Parents play a powerful role in helping young people feel safe and capable. You can support your child by:

- keeping routines steady
- encouraging breaks
- supporting healthy sleep
- offering reassurance rather than pressure
- focusing on effort rather than grades
- creating a calm space for revision

Your presence matters more than your subject knowledge.

How teachers can support anxious students

Teachers can reduce anxiety by:

- breaking tasks into manageable steps
- modelling calm thinking
- offering clear structures
- avoiding sudden high pressure tasks
- checking understanding in small moments
- creating predictable classroom routines

A calm classroom helps students feel safe enough to learn.

Managing anxiety during the exam itself

Students can use simple strategies during the exam to stay steady:

- take a slow breath before opening the paper
- read the questions twice
- underline key words
- plan before writing
- take short pauses to reset



- focus on one paragraph at a time

These steps help the student stay grounded and reduce panic.

Supporting neurodiverse learners with exam anxiety

Students with dyslexia, ADHD or processing differences may experience stronger anxiety during exams. They may need:

- extra time
- quiet spaces
- chunked instructions
- supportive technology
- clear routines

These adjustments help them show their true ability.

How EchoGuide supports anxious readers

Some students experience anxiety specifically around reading aloud in preparation for English exams. EchoGuide supports them by:

- highlighting the next word
- listening to their voice
- offering gentle feedback
- helping them maintain eye contact
- reducing the fear of losing their place

This creates a calmer reading experience and builds confidence over time.



A final message for students

Feeling anxious does not mean you are not capable. It means you care. It means you want to do well. With steady routines, supportive adults and the right tools, you can manage exam stress and approach GCSE English with confidence. You are stronger than you think.

A final message for parents and teachers

Young people need calm, consistent support during the exam period. When adults create environments where mistakes are normal, routines are predictable and effort is valued, students begin to relax. Confidence grows in safety. Study Beyond English is here to help you build that safety.





[Study Beyond English](#)

hello@studybeyondenglish.com

[Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Tiktok](#) | [Youtube](#) | [Pinterest](#) | [Etsy](#)

