



new formats e.g. post-it notes; group discussion; flashcards; mind maps; audio recordings; watching Ted Talks, YouTube science demonstration and movies of books; speaking it out loud; teaching the information and using study apps are just a few of the ways students can vary their revision and boost retention – which also makes studying considerably more appealing for young people!

Go digital

This young generation undoubtedly loves screens – and there are countless apps that really motivate students to revise whilst also ticking the boxes with regards to maximising their different learning styles. With Quizlet and StudyBlue, for example, you have mobile flashcards,

study guides, and quizzes, or you can choose from an extensive collection of student-authored flashcards and flashcard decks. I am also increasingly recommending GCSEPod to the schools, parents and students that I work with; not only does the audio visual content, presented in short sharp bursts, meet the needs of all kinds of preferred learning styles but the online format, accessible on any desktop or mobile device, appeals to today's digital natives and naturally encourages students to vary how, when and where they study.

Keep it short

Overwhelming research points to 30 minutes as the optimum study framework for memory retention. Many students are spending hours and hours continually

revising, when a concentrated 30-minute study spurt, followed by a short break and then 5-10 minutes spent recapping what they have studied, and consolidating it, works best. Then they should take a longer break, before moving on to a different subject. It is really important that students mix up their study and don't focus solely on one discipline; each time you start a new subject your brain has to 're-load' – really working that memory muscle."

Use your nose

Yes, really! Students really should be encouraged to use their olfactory senses when it comes to study – peppermint oil in particular, as there is much research to show how peppermint stimulates the Hippocampus region of the brain, which is the

area responsible for laying down long-term memory. However, the scent needs to be agreeable with the individual student so if they don't like peppermint encourage them to try something else – such as orange, or perhaps a favourite perfume. Identifying a preferred scent can help to create an 'anchor' for the student which reminds them of focus and concentration.

Learn confidence

Confidence is probably one of the most important factors in exam performance – and I firmly believe that it's something we can all learn. Everyone, even those of us with very low self-esteem, will have experienced feeling confident at some point, however briefly. Being taught how to access and recall these confident feelings, as well as having the tools to relax and focus the mind (mindfulness) and improve concentration, will without a doubt help students achieve their full potential in a test situation.

When it comes to exams, our young people need to know that luck has no role to play. We now know so much more about how the brain functions and how memory works, and it is essential that we use this information to help students to take control of their own learning. Instilling confidence and a sense of feeling fully prepared will help protect their mental health and wellbeing and, it can be hoped, avoid the unnecessary stress and anxiety that so many young people now feel.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jo Wallis is a mindfulness trainer and also a registered hypnotherapist and can be contacted at successtechniques.co.uk