

~~EXAM STRESS~~ Success!



The human body expresses its anxiety through what we commonly refer to as 'stress'. There are different situations that cause the body to go through stress. Exam time or any form of testing is one such situation. Regardless of what age we are, exam time is always a crucial and stressful time for many of us.

For most of us, exams are characterised by a combination of a desire to do well and a wish to get exams over and done with. The physical symptoms of stress are fatigue, dizziness, loss of appetite and migraines. Mental symptoms include depression and being unnaturally irritable or subdued.

WHY DOES EXAM STRESS TAKE PLACE?

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Exam stress can be due to a combination of factors.

- Your child may be nervous that he/she may not be able to revise everything in time for the exam.
- There may be anxiety that they may not be able to remember what they revise.
- Peer group pressure - will they perform as well as their friends?
- Fear of failure - what if they fail? What will everyone think of him or her?

Parents can feel very helpless watching their children go through the stress and pressure of exams. However, there are ways that you as a parent can help your kids.

The weeks leading up to exams are very important.

- Try to ensure that your child has completed his revision in time for the exams - the revision timetable should help achieve this.
- Using past exam papers, set your child a mock exam which you should assess. This will help highlight the areas that your child needs to devote more time to.
- If there are any weak areas, make sure your child gets help in advance - either extra tuition or consult their teacher to see if there is anything they can recommend.

During the exams, follow the ROSE rule - this is only a recommendation but it usually works!

- Recap
- Organise
- Sleep
- Eat

The ROSE rule covers the four vital elements required during exam time. These are organisation of study time, good nutrition, plenty of sleep and obviously a recap of what your child has been learning over the past few weeks.

Get your child properly organised for the exam day.

- Organisation of their study. With your child, work out a study timetable for the day before each exam - this should cover what they need to study as part of their preparation for the exam day.
- The goals to achieve the day before the exam need to be realistic. As far as is possible, as a parent, you should try and ensure that most of the revision has been done well before the actual day of the exam.
- Don't leave large chunks of learning to be done the day before the exam.
- Organise their clothes, food and pens for the next day.

Revising during exams.

- In the weeks coming up to the exams, a good thing to encourage your child to do is a bullet point summary after each module. In other words, when he is revising, get him to do a recap of the topic at the end of each module. This will make him feel very much in control during exam time as all the information will be in bite size, easy to remember chunks.
- On the day before the exam, your child's main aim should be to recap what he/she has revised in a particular subject over the last few weeks.
- Help your child prioritise topics in a particular subject area. By looking at past exam papers, you can get a rough idea of what topics are favourites with examiners.
- Praise your child when he accomplishes a task.
- Work out realistic timings for study - a lot of people feel fresh and alert first thing in the morning. Some prefer to study late when everyone's in bed.
- Have a calendar with exam dates against subjects and get a thick black pen to cross off exam days once they're over. This will make your child feel that there is an end in sight!

SLEEPING zzz

- Ensure that your child gets sufficient sleep. Exam stress sometimes results in children not sleeping very well.
- Your child should have regular breaks during the exam study period- maybe the break could be a short nap if they're tired or a walk to get some fresh air. The human body functions better if there are regular gaps in an activity like studying.
- Discourage your child to drink caffeine-rich drinks just before they sleep as this might affect their sleep.
- Make sure you have your alarm set for the next morning. Some students like to get up early and revise any last minute material. After a good night's sleep the brain has had a chance to absorb the material they have studied the night before.

EATING mmm!

- A healthy, balanced diet is essential at all times but especially during the exam period. Remember a healthy body is a healthy mind.
- Make sure your child eats healthy nourishing food as opposed to junk food.
- Try and avoid caffeine rich drinks like cola.
- Sometimes, due to exam stress, children often suffer loss of appetite. In a situation like this, give them a light meal like a sandwich.

One way to encourage children is to give them an incentive or reward if they do well in their exams. In a situation where your child hasn't done particularly well but you know they've worked hard - give them the reward anyway. The main thing is that they do their best. Exam results may or may not reflect this. It's advisable not to lay too much importance on exams, as they are only a test! There is much more to life than that.