

Exam Stress – ‘A Natural Feeling’ Some Useful Tips

Common reactions to examination stress

<p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sleep disturbances ■ Changes in appetite ■ Cold and other respiratory infections ■ Backache, cervical ache ■ Headaches and migraine ■ Lethargy ■ Fast, shallow breathing ■ Allergies ■ Muscle tension ■ Frequent urge to pass urine 	<p>Psychological / Emotional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Anxiety or fearfulness ■ Withdrawn or restless ■ Low self esteem ■ Depression / sadness ■ Increased risk of self harm ■ Irritability ■ Frustration and aggression ■ Inability to concentrate ■ Unable to relax <p>Behavioural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Alcohol abuse ■ Smoking / use of tobacco and other drugs ■ Abuse of over the counter medications (OTC) (e.g. anti-anxiety, anti-depressant, sleeping pills) ■ Eating disorders ■ Relationship issues / peer pressure
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Please note: *If any of the above features of stress increase in intensity and frequency, it would be wise to seek opinion of a medical professional or a counselor.*

Stress Builders & Stress Busters

Stress Builder	Stress Buster
I'll never get this assignment on time.	If I stay focused and take it one step at a time, I'll make steady progress
My teacher did not respond to my saying good morning. He's probably displeased with my work, and I'll get a bad evaluation	I'm jumping to conclusions. My teacher may have been in a bad mood. So far all my evaluations have been positive, so unless I get some negative feedback, I'll assume my teacher is pleased with my work
I can't get my mistake on Q10 out	No one is perfect. I did my best. I'm

of my mind. The paper is ruined. I have disappointed everyone. I over-reacting to one mistake when the overall paper is fine

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE & LIVING.....

Nutrition and eating healthy: Keeps the brain healthy

Recommended dietary allowances

	AGE (years)	ENERGY (kcal/day)	PROTEINS (g/day)
<i>Males</i>	11-14	2,800	45
	15-18	3,000	56
<i>Females</i>	11-14	2,400	46
	15-18	2,100	46

Good nutrition: It's a Juggling Act



Food Funda !!! Revise it too !!

Nutrients	Examples of food items
Carbohydrates: These are the energy foods and provide energy to carry on daily tasks.	Potatoes, grains, bread, wheat
Proteins: They are required to build and repair the body cells, bones, muscles, organs and blood. Regular intake of protein is required especially during the growing years.	Beans, fish, soy, egg, peanuts, tofu, cashew nuts, almonds, egg yolk, green peas, yoghurt,
Certain foods such as eating dry fruits, almonds are good for brain	

<p>Fats: A small amount of fat is required in our daily diet. They provides essential fatty acids, helps regulate bodily functions. However, low fat diets are recommended</p>	<p>Butter, eggs, cheese, nuts, oil</p>
<p>Vitamins and Minerals: They do not provide energy as carbohydrates and fats do. They help the enzymes that release energy from carbohydrates, proteins and fats. Natural foods are best sources for vitamins and minerals.</p>	<p>Spinach, green peas, tomato juice, watermelon, sunflower seeds, lean ham, lean pork chops, soy milk, broccoli, red bell peppers, meat</p>

Healthy eating habits

- Balancing food choices over time is what counts..
- **Breakfast** provides the energy needed through an active morning, skipping breakfast may cause trouble concentrating.
- The golden rule for food safety is to keep hot foods hot & cold foods cold.
- Fast foods do not supply good nutrition but if taken in moderation won't ruin a healthful diet, especially when consumed with green salads.
- Replace French fries with an apple.
- Add roughage to your diet – Dalia, Corn etc will help prevent stomach discomfort and you will feel lighter.
- Drink plenty of water, it keeps the brain hydrated. A hydrated brain can remember more than a dehydrated brain. Of course do not go silly or else you will be spending all your time in the toilet.

Barriers to physical activity

- Self-efficacy – 'I don't need it'.
 - Preference for indoor activities: TV electronic games & computers).
 - Low energy level: 'junk food' slows down desire for physical activity.
 - Low level of Motivation.
 - Time constraints.
 - Emphasis on academics - forced decrease in physical activity.
- **Physical Exercise and Sports** help improve general circulation, facilitate increased blood flow to the brain, and are instrumental in raising the levels of norepinephrine and endorphins - all of which may reduce stress, improve mood, induce a calming effect, and perhaps as a result improve achievement.

Too much a sleep or too less ?

Sleep deprivation often leads to fatigue, inattentiveness and listlessness, irritability, impatience, fussiness and even aggressive behavior.

Try taking short breaks and maintaining adequate sleep routine which will help you to remain alert and responsive, studying till late or getting up early is immaterial.

STUDY SMART

Three kinds of time tables can help you to plan your time efficiently:

- A semester planner (this will enable you to map out tasks for the semester).
- A weekly timetable (this will ensure that you structure your time in the short term while allowing flexibility).
- A diary with daily 'things to do' (TTD) lists (these will keep you on track).

Help is generally around the corner....!

If you don't understand something, get help right away.

- **Ask your teacher:** That's a teacher's job! Most teachers are required to offer extra help. It may be before or after school. Let your teacher know you are coming for extra help. Make a list of concepts that you find confusing. This will help you use the time wisely. Bring your notes and books. Go over your notes, so your teacher can see if you copied something down incorrectly.
- **Review the books and your notes:** After you go for extra help, reread the textbook and your notes. Summarize the information in your own words. Reviewing the material this way helps you remember it.
- **Ask your parents:** Some parents remember a lot of what they learned in middle school. They may even be experts in the field. Even if they are not getting their ideas helps you look at the information in a new way.
- **Ask your older brothers and sisters:** If you are lucky enough to have older siblings, ask them to go over confusing problems with you. After all, they took the same classes a few years ago.
- **Help from a tutor:** studying from tutor helps to understand concepts, and have frequent practice sessions before the examination.

WAYS TO STAY MOTIVATED

- **Connect with your classmates-** Try having someone to keep you on track in your work, so that you can reap the benefits of being accountable as well.
- **Discuss what you learn-** Find a friend or relative who has similar interests or who would enjoy hearing about your studies and let them know what's going in your class.

• **Chart your progress**-Design your map of studying and you would see certain satisfaction coming after watching your goals be accomplished. When times get hard, you can always turn to your chart and see how far you have reached.

• **Reward yourself**- Reward yourself for doing well in your studies. It may be just the extra push that you need to succeed.

PLAN TO PERFORM

Few days before the examinations

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a revision time table. • Make your books, notes and essays more user friendly with summary notes, headings, subheadings, highlighting and revision cards. • Find out what way of revising suits you- alone or with a friend, morning or late at night, short, sharp bursts or longer revision sessions. • Take notes of important points when revising as an aid for future revision. Look at past examination paper and try answering some of the questions. • If you feel stressed out, talk to someone you feel comfortable to. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect new notes and materials from friends, read and learn them till the last minute without time for revision. • Sit for long hours continuously to read by not taking breaks for bath, food, relaxation and sleep. It makes you feel more tired, reduces concentration and makes studying boring and anxiety producing. Or keep awake whole night and reading for few days before the examinations. • Excessive use of Coffee or Tea or Cigarettes to keep awake the whole night. • Give up studying totally.

One day before the examinations

- Don't look for some new notes before one day. Don't try to learn anything new, rather focus on already prepared ones..
- Talk with your family members to come out with your stress
- Try to have light dinner.
- Don't cram all night before an examination.
- Have a relaxing night before the examinations.

On the day of the examination

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have a light but adequate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Don't skip your breakfast, getting

<p>breakfast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check whether one has taken all the necessary things – pens, pencils, geometry box, and hall-ticket – a checklist of all items is essential ▪ Leave for the examination hall well in advance ▪ Avoid people who panic, wait in a place where people are calm ▪ Go to the toilet before entering the examination hall ▪ Take deep breaths, making a suggestion or a prayer to do well and keep yourself relaxed. 	<p>hungry during the middle of the examination can be distracting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoid negative thoughts, for example 'I have not prepared well', 'I may fail in this examination' or 'I have not covered all the portions'. ▪ Avoid revising things just before entering your examination hall.
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In the examination hall

- Do not hurry into reading the question paper.
- Read the directions slowly and carefully. If there are any doubts clarify with the instructor, teacher or invigilator.
- Feel comfortable before you start your answers.
- Do the simple questions first to help you build up your confidence for the harder questions.
- If you do not know a question, move on to the next after leaving some space; try it later. If not sure of an answer, do not spend long time thinking and recalling answers. Go to the next question. Handle the less known questions later.
- Do not worry about supplementary sheets that others are taking.
- Try and revise your answers finally. Try to finish a little earlier. Then go through the paper to correct mistakes/ underline important points etc. Highlight important points – underline, write in capital etc.
- If you are feeling stressed during a test, try **relaxation techniques**, such as :
 - Take in a deep breath, and then take it out. Try to release the tension with each breath you exhale.
 - Tighten up your hand or feet muscles for 5 seconds and then release the tension to keep you relaxed. Repeat this couple of times.
 - Visualize a peaceful and relaxing setting to feel light and relaxed.
 - If you experience extreme test anxiety even after following these tips, seek help from your school counselor.

1. Handling Suicide

A lot many suicides are impulsive while others are well planned. Impulsive students are likely to decide on the spur of the moment. **Hence it is important to buy time.**

Indicators for increased chance for suicide

- Withdrawal behavior for few days
- Mention of suicide repeatedly.
- Suicide note
- Disinterest in studies.
- Changes in eating and sleeping patterns
- A history of serious psychological problems.
- A history of impulsive, poorly controlled and destructive behavior.
- A history of continuing academic problems and learning difficulties.
- Adjustment difficulties with family, school, peers etc.

Interventions

1. Counseling needs to be practical and useful.
2. Long lectures with a moralistic tone are not advised. These make the already depressed student guiltier and his intent stronger.
3. Efforts should be made to encourage him/her to meet his teachers or school counselors or talk to him/her parents. The more he talks about his problems to various people, he is likely to feel much better.
4. A student who is severely depressed and expresses absolute helplessness about future is more at risk than a student who talks about casual things.

2. Must Dos for students: For improved concentration, motivation, work blocks

- ❖ Know your concentration span, study with breaks.
- ❖ Work out best time for concentration.
- ❖ Group study for difficult subjects.
- ❖ Do not let previous results discourage you – identify your weak areas from previous exams. And work on them.
- ❖ Time management plan must be made for all subjects.
- ❖ Choose a study place with minimum distractions and autosuggest to your self about your resolution.
- ❖ Try to coincide study time with the time, you would be giving an exam.
- ❖ In case of average achievers, master what you know and are comfortable with.
- ❖ For low achievers, master the essential information first.
- ❖ Prioritize the workload. Give your best concentration time to the toughest subject.

- ❖ Repeat your learnt work so the recall in exam is easy. Work not repeated or revised is easily forgotten.
- ❖ Try to plan your revision time by drawing up a timetable. Build in time for the things you enjoy – like watching your favorite TV programme, going out with your friends, or going to play football in the park.
- ❖ Give yourself a few treats – pamper yourself with a long hot bath, or listen to your favorite CD for an hour after you have finished your revision.
- ❖ Relax with what you know before entering the exam hall.
- ❖ Do not get anxious about the result – cross that bridge when you come to it...options await.

3. Must Dos for parents

- ❖ Student can fail to do well if they fail to cope with stress. Parents should guide their children in planning, organizing and setting a timetable.
- ❖ To avoid a stress situation for the child the parents must provide right kind of motivation and a conducive environment.
- ❖ Help the child to develop self-discipline self-direction, self-confidence and a sense of achievement.
- ❖ Just good schooling and tuition are not substitutes for emotional cushioning.
- ❖ Help the child in maintaining his confidence especially when he seems discouraged by his dropping marks or grades. Do not displace your anxiety on the child.
- ❖ The achievement goals should be realistically set according to the child's capability.
- ❖ Do not mix academic issues with family conflicts.
- ❖ Praise your child when he does well. Encourage the child's performance with positive statements like, "well done", "you can do better", rather than saying "that was not enough".
- ❖ Work out your child's schedule with him instead of nagging him. There could be learning problems.
- ❖ Do not harp on previous failures or results.
- ❖ Under achievement may be due to some children believing it is safer not to try than to try and fail.
- ❖ If achievement expectations are too high then some children would prefer to be criticized for being lazy than being considered not good enough.
- ❖ Humor relieves tension. Be light and humorous with the child.
- ❖ Try to gain your child's confidence and discuss his problems with him. Help him to find a solution.
- ❖ Exams are not the end of the world.
- ❖ Accept that expectation for every one to do well is unrealistic, as many won't pursue this for long.

MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON EXAMS

- *How do I deal with exam related stress?*
Recognize your negative thoughts. Once you closely examine these thoughts you'll see how unrealistic they are. Challenge the thoughts that say you are a failure and that you can't succeed. Remind yourself that it was just another exam and with effort, you will do better in your next attempt.
- *What if I do badly?*
Replace self-criticism with self-correction. Judging yourself harshly now won't help you do better in the future. Take the position of an observer. What if a good friend told you he had failed? Would you call him a failure? Most probably you would emphasize his good points and help him put the situation in perspective.
- *How do I deal with my family's disappointment if my results are not good?*
Be open and honest with them. Share what you feel about the result and what you think went wrong. Reassure them of your concern and efforts. Above all, do not have a negative bias against your parents because sometimes they need more reassuring than you do.
- *What if I don't get the marks I'm expecting?*
Concentrate on your achievements and be realistic about your expectations as well. Usually we know when we have made a mistake, so take these into account while drawing up expected marks. If you are still dissatisfied with the results, the option of rechecking is always open.
- *We have heard of irregularities in the assessment system. What if my marks are adversely affected?*
Have faith in the system. There will always be rumours about unfair checking, but one cannot ignore the fact that results over all these years have more often than not, been fair.
- *I think there is too much pressure and I can't cope with it.*
Take professional help. If you feel that there is pressure and you are unable to handle it and your self-esteem is coming down and you are unable to cope, then you must consult a psychiatrist to help you tide over this phase.
- *Everyone tells me to concentrate on my studies.*
Don't stop enjoying life. One of the common mistakes an individual makes is to totally change his lifestyle. This is under the assumption that if he isolates himself from all leisure and fun times with friends and family and only study, then he will do better.
- *How much sleep is required?*

The human body requires an average of 8 hours of sleep per day. But there is no hard and fast rule. Each one of us has to understand our body rhythm and know by trial and error how many hours of sleep keeps us fit.

- *What happens if we sleep less than what our body requires?*
If you sleep less for a day or two your body copes up by taking more sleep over next two days. If continued for long then the body gets into what is known as **sleep deprivation syndrome** because it accumulates so many hours of **Sleep Debt**. Then you get symptoms of feeling tired and sleepy, headaches, body aches, poor digestion, inability to concentrate, irritability, short tempered ness etc

- *Should I study in the morning or at night?*
First understand whether you are an **owl or a lark**. IF you can get up early in the morning and feel fresh then you must sleep early and get up early and study. If on the other hand you can study late at night but cannot feel fresh when you get up early to study then you must sleep late after studying and get up later in the morning.

- *How do you get a good night sleep?*
Try to keep a fixed time every night for sleeping as far as possible. Avoid afternoon prolonged sleeping, a short nap may be helpful. One hour before bed-time avoid stimulating your sensory system by too much noise like loud music, too much TV, arguments or fights. Three hours before sleep time avoid taking any food or liquids, which contain caffeine, like aerated coal drinks, drinks containing chocolate.

- *To keep awake for studying students drink lots of coffee. What is the harm?*
Caffeine in small doses acts as a stimulant and keeps you awake, so a cup once a day may be Ok. Excessive coffee drinking gives side effects like tremors, fast pulse rate, irritability, acidity and stomach pain. Coffee also causes addiction.

- *Why exercise during exam time?*
Most children will say they have no time for exercise during exam days. They are already stressed out with lack of time, how can they waste time in exercise? The fact is that exercise is all the more necessary during exam time because not only is it a "stress buster " but also has many other health benefits needed to keep fit during exam.

- *How does exercise help you mentally?*
Regular aerobic exercise releases some good chemicals in our body. These are called endorphins. These make you feel happy. They counter the effects of stress, depression and anxiety that all students suffer from during exam time. So after exercising you get a "**Natural kick**" which is

longer lasting and safe unlike drugs or stimulants like caffeine. It also helps you in weight loss and that will make you feel good about your self.

- *What are long-term benefits of exercise?*
Regular exercise will not only help you during exam but later in life you will have longer life and less risk of obesity, high blood pressure, heart attacks, diabetes, cancer and mental depression.
- *Why do adolescents feel hungry all the time?*
The body demands more calories during adolescence. Boys require about 2800 calories and girls about 2200 per day. Teens who are big and tall and participate in lot of physical quire more.

DO NOT MISS BREAKFAST If you miss breakfast then by the time you have lunch nearly 10 -12 hours have gone by after your last meal. This means your blood sugar level has gone and you have nothing to provide your body with energy. This low blood sugar or hypoglycemia causes short-term memory problems, difficulty in concentration problem solving.

DO NOT HAVE A VERY HEAVY DINNER You will feel very heavy and sleepy and will not be able to study well.