

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

EXAMINATION STRESS PREVENTION

Introduction:

Each one of us has loved to hate studies, and still managed to get through. We have always envied the so called “scholars” of our class, who could score twice the marks with half the study. But as is true with every game, there are certain rules to study well without getting stressed. Certain methods, ways and techniques to study better and also practice relaxation. When one plays the game of study with these rules, it becomes beautifully simplified and extremely easy. And that’s what you, as a mother, need to teach your child.

There are many challenging situations that one comes across and to tackle them effectively can be quite daunting but nevertheless, we will try to provide solutions to challenging situations that are mostly experienced by mothers and children.

With the increase in suicides and depression among students, the crippling effect of academic stress is now making waves in the life of students. While bags are getting heavier and the syllabi slightly tougher the maximum amount of pressure is felt right before exams or at the time of approaching of exam results. This results in major lifestyle changes such as smoking, disturbed sleep, taking medication and increased intake of caffeine.

Hence it is time that we sit down with our children and tell them that it's not really as tough as it seems. Enjoying academics is not unattainable; it's just a bit challenging. We easily say life is a game so in that case why should studies be any different, it is a game too and just like every other game there are certain rules to study. There are certain ways and techniques to study better. Only when one plays the game of studies according to the rules and techniques does studying become beautifully simplified and extremely easy and to our astonishment we find ourselves being one the ‘envied scholars’. Not every one of us is a born book worm or one who enjoys studying but it is something that can be inculcated in a child if the right approach is taught to him or simply the right technique. Learning should be made fun and we’re going to elucidate some ways of how exactly that can be done.

Problem 1: The child is either sleeping too less or too much, or eating too less or too much.

Reason: The child's sleep and appetite may have been disturbed due to high stress levels.

Solution: Do not force him to sleep and eat.....He too wants to understand what is causing the stress, talk about his fears and apprehensions. Make him feel understood. Provide adequate support to him. Try to establish consistent sleep and meal times. The child should be encouraged to indulge in some physical activities and relaxation exercises like deep breathing or recreational activities.

Problem2: Usually the child spends hours cramming the night before and complains that he is not able to complete his syllabus.

Reason: Here, the child maybe suffering from high anxiety and also, mental block due to inefficient ways of studying pattern.

Solution: Here, memory enhancement in the form of **PQ4R** is recommended. The PQ4R method is to P: Preview (the summary) the chapter: question (what you have learned?), R: - read, R: reflect, R: recite, R: review .Mnemonics may be used. Mnemonics are the triggers of memories. These include use of the below to remember better:

- images
- structures
- smells
- touch
- emotions
- colours
- sounds
- tastes
- positions
- language

Problem 3: Complains of not being able to concentrate on studies.

Reason: Here, the child maybe suffering from high anxiety, stress and mental fatigue which may prevent him from focussing on his studies.

Solution: Help your child to practice deep breathing exercises\ meditations twice a day for 10-15 mints. Auto suggestion is also an effective exercise which instils positive thoughts and mental frame of mind. This is done by repeating to one self positive and encouraging statements. This is a relaxation self-therapy which should help the child attain a mental relaxation free from worries and stress. Here, it is important that your child gets enough breaks in between his studies to prevent him/her from having mental saturation or fatigue.

Some tips:

- Set aside a place for study and for study only!
- Choose a specific place
- Always study at that specific place
- Study area should be conducive to studying
- Avoid certain things in the study area like television, etc.

Problem 4: Your child has become very moody and irritable.

Reason: This may be due to hormonal changes during puberty, or an inability to deal or cope with the pressure of studies and the hassles of growing up. It is also a period of high insecurity with regards to his capacity and goal.

Solution: As a parent, try to be more tolerant of his mood swings .Also make your child understand these mood swings may be due to physiological changes in the body Don't be too quick in your reaction (negative reaction eg. anger out-bursts) towards his hostility due to his mood swing. Teach him appropriate ways of managing his emotions like open communication , sharing his state of mind with peers 'n' parents , appropriate anger management techniques etc.

Problem 5: Your child often complains off getting lost in the details of reading and has trouble identifying the main ideas!

Reason: High level of distractibility and monotony is the prime reason.

Solution:

- Here it is important for the parent to explain to the child the Essentials of READING that include
- Recitation: saying out loud and running a finger along the lines , while one is reading and memorizing,
(You may initiate sitting with him while he reads to encourage him and occasionally read out to him also)
- Writing: taking notes as they go through the notes ,
- Visualization at the end of reading such that he remembers the location of what he read
- Questioning your child to reinforce his reading and recall:

Problem 6: Your child seems to be thorough with his/her preparation and yet fails to perform in the exams.

Reason: Exam anxiety is at its highest.

Solution: Help your child to practice the following cues so as to boost his performance.

Help your child to learn deep breathing in neutral situations such that he starts his exam by deep breathing and normalises his anxiety...

Encourage him to strategise by the following rules:

- Make him comfortable ,your task is to do best you can now
- Teach him to take time to read through all the questions and instructions carefully
- Pick out the questions that relate well to his revisions
- Plan his answers.
- Manage his time, estimate the time needed to answer each questions or each sections of his exam.

- Answer questions in a strategic order by answering the easiest questions before going on to the difficult ones. This will have an effect of building the level of confidence.
- To answer essay type questions, prepare a broad outline of the important ideas and the order in which one wants to present them before writing the answers.
- If his panic gets worse; teach him to put down his pen and relax \deep breathe.
- If he feels unwell, he must ask the invigilator if he may leave the room for a short while.

Problem 7: Your child is having problem with time management with regards to his study.

Solution: It is the aim of this time management grid (shown below) to help us maintain an optimal level stress by helping us to prioritize the studies work. A daily record is to be made for effective productivity.

Encourage making daily, short term and long term goals with adequate reinforcements at the completion of these goals

Urgent and important\ Q1	Urgent but not important Q2
Not urgent but important Q4	Neither urgent nor important Q3

**For any further queries, please feel free to mail in to
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