



BEACON

DEALING WITH EXAMS!

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SMT MANIBEN M. P. SHAH WOMEN'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS)

Psychology is a science of the behavior of living organisms. The application of this knowledge to real life is an art. 'Beacon' is an endeavor of Department of Psychology to bring about a confluence of this science and art. We have always been involved in the pursuit of attempts to ensure mental well being of one and all, at least in our sphere of influence. This is one more step in that direction.

FROM THE HOD'S DESK

Examinations are an integral part of everyone's life and yet one of the most dreaded of all events. The fact that one will be assessed is disturbing to people. So how can one handle these examinations without pressure? This is the theme chosen by our students for this edition of Beacon. My compliments and best wishes to the team.

Dr Archana Patki

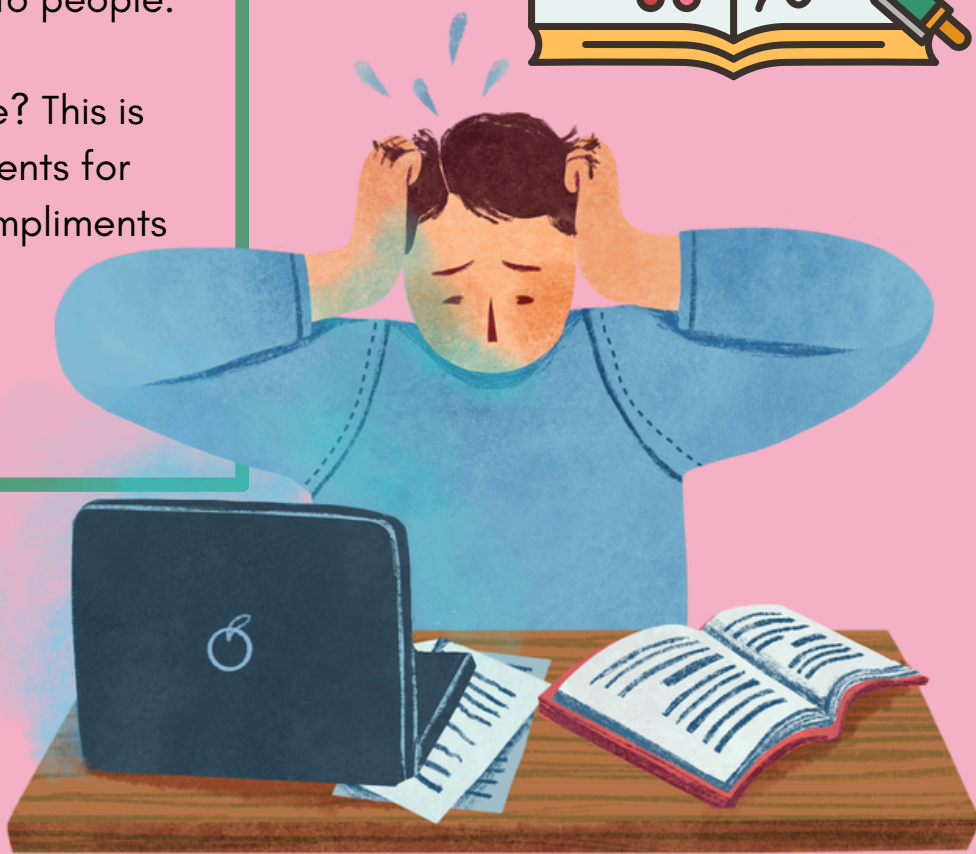


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EXAM FEVER

Tests are near,
Subjects are not clear,
Topics as a conjure,
Pops in my fantasy,
And haunt me to terror.
Maths is full of operations ,
Science comprises of accelerations,
History explains monarch's endurance,
Geography alerts us to avert Mother Nature
English points personification,
Psychology embraces emotions,
Food and Nutrition talks about adulteration.
I try my finest,
To attain concentration
To focus on my examination.
But oh!
What to say...
My brain works from the day I was born,
And only stops;
when I enter the examination hall.

ANGELINA CHARLIE, SYBA



CONQUERING EXAM ANXIETY: A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND EDUCATORS

Exam anxiety, also known as test anxiety, is a common experience among students of all ages. It encompasses a range of emotions, including fear, worry, and nervousness, which can negatively impact performance during exams. Several factors contribute to exam anxiety, such as fear of failure, perfectionism, lack of preparation, and pressure from parents or teachers. While it affects individuals differently, research suggests that certain populations, such as high achievers and those with learning disabilities, may be more susceptible to its effects. High achievers often set unrealistic expectations for themselves, leading to heightened anxiety when faced with academic challenges. Similarly, students with learning disabilities may experience exam anxiety due to difficulties with processing information or recalling learned material. Furthermore, societal pressure to succeed academically can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and increase stress levels among students. Consequently, it is crucial for schools, parents, and children to work together to address and alleviate exam anxiety.



Schools play a pivotal role in mitigating exam anxiety by creating a supportive learning environment that fosters student well-being. Implementing strategies such as stress-reduction techniques, mindfulness exercises, and promoting a growth mindset can help students develop resilience and cope with academic pressure. Additionally, providing adequate resources and support services, such as counselling and academic assistance, can empower students to seek help when needed and build confidence in their abilities.

Parents also play a crucial role in supporting their children through the challenges of exam anxiety. It is essential for parents to foster open communication with their children and create a safe space where they feel comfortable expressing their concerns and fears about exams. Encouraging a healthy balance between academics and extracurricular activities can help alleviate stress and prevent burnout.

Moreover, parents can model positive coping mechanisms and provide practical support, such as helping with study schedules and offering encouragement and reassurance during stressful periods.



For children experiencing exam anxiety, it is essential to develop coping strategies that address both the physical and psychological aspects of stress. Deep breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, and visualisation techniques can help reduce physical symptoms of anxiety, such as rapid heartbeat and tense muscles. Cognitive-behavioural techniques, such as reframing negative thoughts and setting realistic goals, can help shift perspective and build confidence in one's abilities. Additionally, establishing effective study habits, such as breaking down material into manageable chunks and practising self-care activities, such as adequate sleep and nutrition, can enhance overall well-being and academic performance.

In combating exam anxiety, it is crucial to foster a supportive and collaborative approach among schools, parents, and children. By acknowledging the multifaceted nature of exam anxiety and addressing its underlying causes, we can create an environment where students feel empowered to overcome challenges and achieve their full potential. Through proactive measures such as implementing stress-reduction strategies, promoting open communication, and fostering positive coping mechanisms, we can cultivate resilience and well-being among students, ultimately paving the way for academic success and personal growth.

PRISHIKA JAIN, MA PART 1

EXAM STRESS: DOS AND DON'TS



- **Jay, a teenager who is preparing for his final exams, experiences moderate level of stress that actually helps him to perform well in exams.**
- **While at the same time, Spruha, who also has potential to do well, comes under extreme pressure as she wants to top ; hence in spite of studying well, she panics and goes blank in exam.**
- **Parag, who always bunk the classes doesn't feel stress till the exam day.**

In today's time we see many Jay, Spruha, Parag around us who experience exam stress. Most of the time they themselves are blamed for their stress, by parents, family, society, saying that 'They are lazy, have not prepared well and hence experiencing stress.' However there are multiple cause and effects of stress that are explained with different layers of aspects to the term stress.

The terms like 'anxiety, pressure, tension, worry, panic, etc.' express a kind of discomfort. In psychological terms, such discomfort that one experiences in seemingly demanding situation is known as 'stress'.

In medical term stress is defined as psychological / physical reaction to an illness. It is body's natural response to any pressure which is expressed by physiological symptoms (like sweating, fast heartbeats, dry mouth, headache, tensed muscles etc.); similarly psychological symptoms are seen that include difficulty to concentrate, sleeplessness, constant worry, getting blank (Spruha's example above) etc.

Though exam stress is common phenomena for all; we may find individual differences in stress responses with reference to one's temperament, relatively stable traits, and appraisal of situation. Here it is important to note that experiencing moderate level of stress is normal. Positive form of stress has beneficial effects on one's motivation & performance (as experienced in Jay's example above). However it becomes problematic issue when it deviates from normal level of stress and interferes with one's day today ability to perform leading to impaired performance. It may alter / disturb your daily routine like disturbed sleep and eating patterns, constant feeling of hopelessness, fear etc. such uncontrollable emotions may lead to losing hope in life , developing negative self systems etc. in turn person may ends up with drastic decisions like dropping out or committing suicide.

Generally academic exams are meant to be medium of checking one's degree of learning, accomplishment in a subject matter. But the research has observed that these assessments may affect (impair) one's learning process (memory consolidation) through stress.

Dos

- S** – Study according to exam, paper pattern in advance.
- T** – Talk to others
- R** – Relax, meditate. For relaxation fr some leisure time indulge in your hobbies .
- E** – Eat well , nutritious food. Avoid dieting / fast food.
- S** – Sleep well for at least 6 hours.
- S** – Set realistic goals.

Don'ts

- Don't hesitate to ask help; if you are facing any problem share it with your parents, teachers, friends. In case of extreme anxiety talk to any therapist.
- Don't compare yourself with others. Remember, you competition should be always with yourself, with aim to achieve better than your previous performance.
- Don't doubt yourself.
- Don't be harsh with yourself,
- Minimize your screen time.

SUNETRA JOSHI, SYBA

A STUDENT'S JOURNEY THROUGH THE EXAM TANGO

Examinations have long been a cornerstone of the education system, serving as a pivotal measure of student learning and academic success. However, beneath the surface of this seemingly straightforward evaluation method lies a complex web of emotions, perceptions, and attitudes that students harbour towards exams. Let's delve into the multifaceted lens through which students view examinations.

The Pressure Cooker:

For many students, examinations represent the epitome of stress and pressure. The looming deadlines, the weight of expectations, and the fear of failure converge to create a high-stakes environment that can feel suffocating. The pressure to perform well can lead to sleepless nights, heightened anxiety, and a constant sense of unease.

The Necessary Evil:

While some students view examinations as a necessary rite of passage, others see them as an unavoidable burden standing between them and their academic goals. These students recognize the importance of assessments in gauging their understanding of the subject matter and acknowledge their role in driving academic progress. However, they may lament the emphasis placed on exams over alternative forms of assessment that could better capture their abilities and potential.

The Measure of Competence:



Examinations serve as a yardstick by which students measure their own competence and knowledge mastery. Scoring well on an exam can validate months of hard work and dedication, boosting confidence and self-esteem. Conversely, performing poorly can evoke feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, prompting students to question their abilities and worth.

The Learning Barrier:

Critics argue that examinations hinder genuine learning by promoting rote memorization over critical thinking and conceptual understanding. Students may feel compelled to memorize information solely for the purpose of regurgitating it during exams, rather than engaging in deep, meaningful learning experiences. This disconnect between examination performance and true comprehension can foster resentment towards the assessment process.

The Gateway to Opportunities:

For many students, examinations serve as the gateway to future opportunities, be it admission to prestigious universities or entry into desired career paths. The results of these assessments can have far-reaching implications for their academic and professional trajectories, shaping their futures in profound ways. Consequently, the stakes are high, and the pressure to excel is palpable.



Stress is an inevitable companion on the journey of academic pursuits, yet its manifestations vary greatly among students. From the overachiever striving for perfection to the struggling student grappling with self-doubt, each individual navigates a unique terrain of stressors shaped by their personalities, experiences, and circumstances. Let's explore how different types of students experience and cope with stress in distinct ways.

The Perfectionist:

For the perfectionist student, every assignment, exam, and project is a high-stakes endeavour fraught with pressure to excel. They set impossibly high standards for themselves and experience intense anxiety at the mere thought of falling short. Fear of failure looms large, driving them to devote excessive time and energy to their studies, often at the expense of their well-being. Despite their outward success, perfectionists may suffer from chronic stress and burnout as they relentlessly pursue unattainable ideals.

The Procrastinator:

Procrastination is the constant companion of the student who habitually puts off tasks until the last minute. While they may appear carefree on the surface, procrastinators often experience a mounting sense of panic and guilt as deadlines loom ominously closer. The adrenaline-fueled rush of last-minute cramming can provide a temporary reprieve from anxiety, but the cycle of procrastination and stress perpetuates, taking a toll on their academic performance and mental health.

The Overwhelmed Overachiever:

The overachiever is a familiar presence in academic settings, juggling a multitude of responsibilities with unwavering determination. While their ambition and drive propel them to remarkable achievements, they are not immune to the suffocating weight of overwhelm. Balancing a demanding course load, extracurricular activities, and social obligations can push them to their limits, leaving them feeling depleted and exhausted. Despite their outward success, overachievers may struggle in silence, reluctant to admit vulnerability or seek support.

The Struggling Student:

Behind the facade of confidence and competence, the struggling student grapples with feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. Academic challenges, whether due to learning disabilities, lack of resources, or personal circumstances, exacerbate their stress and erode their self-esteem. They may feel isolated and overwhelmed, unsure of where to turn for help or support. The fear of failure looms large, casting a shadow over their academic journey and exacerbating their stress.

The Balanced Seeker:

Amidst the chaos and tumult of academic life, there exists the balanced seeker, who strives to maintain equilibrium amidst the storm. They prioritize self-care, time management, and healthy boundaries, recognizing the importance of maintaining a holistic approach to well-being. While they are not immune to stress, they possess the resilience and coping strategies to navigate challenges with grace and poise. The balanced seeker seeks support when needed and cultivates a sense of perspective, recognizing that academic success is but one facet of a rich and fulfilling life.

LEARNING STYLES AND STUDY TECHNIQUES



Exams are essential to students' academic journey as they evaluate their knowledge and understanding of a subject. However, exams can also be a source of stress and anxiety for many students. Exam anxiety can cause various physical and mental symptoms, including a rapid heartbeat, sweating, shortness of breath, and negative thoughts.

To cope with exam anxiety, it is empowering to understand your learning style and use it to your advantage. There are different types of learners, such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, reading/writing, and verbal learners. Discovering your learning style can be a game-changer, as it allows you to tailor your study techniques to suit your preferences and maximise your learning potential. Once you identify your learning style, you can tailor your study techniques to suit your preferences. For example, if you are a visual learner, you can use mind maps and diagrams to organise your thoughts and ideas. Auditory learners can record lectures and listen to them repeatedly to reinforce the material. Kinesthetic learners can memorise the material using flashcards, role-playing, and hands-on experiments. Reading/writing learners can take extensive notes and summarise the material in their own words. Verbal learners can benefit from group discussions and debates. They can also use self-talk to reinforce their learning.

Apart from identifying your learning style, there are other ways to cope with exam anxiety. One of the most effective ways is to practice self-care. This includes getting enough rest, eating a healthy diet, and exercising regularly. Taking breaks and engaging in enjoyable activities can also help reduce stress levels and improve your overall well-being. Moreover, avoiding cramming and studying well before the exam date is essential. This will give you ample time to revise the material, identify weak areas, and seek help. As college students, we all face exam anxiety at some point in our academic journey. However, we can cope with this anxiety by adopting effective study techniques and strategies and performing better in exams. These techniques can boost confidence, reduce stress, and help us approach exams positively.

Firstly, it is essential to identify your type of learner and what study techniques suit you best. Some people are visual learners and benefit from using diagrams, mind maps, and videos to aid their understanding. Others are auditory learners and prefer listening to lectures and recordings, while some are kinesthetic learners and learn best through hands-on activities and experiments. One study technique that has been proven to enhance long-term memory retention is spaced repetition. This involves revisiting material regularly rather than cramming everything in at once. On the other hand, interleaved practice consists of mixing different types of material during study sessions to achieve mastery. This helps to prevent the brain from becoming too familiar with a kind of information and thus forgetting it.

Elaboration is another effective study technique that involves asking detailed questions about the material, such as "How does this work?" or "Why is this important?". This can help to boost understanding and retention. Self-explanation is a similar technique that involves explaining concepts to yourself or others in your own words to unlock deep comprehension.

Retrieval practice involves regularly recalling information from memory, reinforcing it and making it easier to remember in the long term. Dual coding is a technique that combines visuals and words to strengthen learning. Mnemonic devices, such as acronyms or rhymes, can also optimise memory with creative strategies.

The Pomodoro Technique is a popular time-management strategy that involves setting a timer for 25 minutes of focused study, followed by a short break. Chunking information is another technique that breaks down complex material into smaller, digestible pieces for easier understanding. Note-taking is also essential for proactive learning and active recall.

Mind maps are a visual way of organising and understanding complex concepts, while SQ3R is a comprehensive strategy for efficient reading. Peer learning involves collective learning and can be a great way to amplify knowledge.

The Feynman Technique is a strategy that involves simplifying complex ideas to understand them better. This technique encourages learners to break down complex concepts into simpler components and then explain them in their own words. By doing so, learners can identify areas where they may have gaps in their knowledge. They can then focus on filling those gaps to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the material.

Repeated retrieval practice is a study method that involves remembering information multiple times. According to psychology researcher Jeffrey Karpicke from Purdue University in Indiana, this method is ideal for human learning and memory because each time a memory is recovered, it becomes more accessible. Karpicke conducted a study where students attempted to learn words from foreign languages using four different study methods. These methods were studying the list once, studying until they had successfully recalled each word once, studying until they had successfully recalled each word three times consecutively, and studying until they had recalled each word three times spaced throughout the 30-minute learning session.



The last method involved spaced retrieval practice, resulting in the best outcome. When tested a week later, students in this group remembered 80% of the words, compared to only 30% for those who had recalled the information thrice or once. Those who had studied the list just once remembered the words less than 1% of the time. Karpicke advises that students should not assume that recalling something they've learned once means they have memorised it. Just a few repeated retrievals can produce significant effects, and it's best to do this in a spaced fashion.

Other research suggests that online flashcard programs like Study Stack or Chegg can help practice retrieving information. Self-regulated learning researcher John Dunlosky from Kent State University in Ohio recommends that thinking of the answer is effective for flashcards with single-word answers.

By employing these methods, learners can enhance their retention and recall of information, develop a deeper understanding of complex ideas, and bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Choosing which technique to use will ultimately depend on individual learning styles and preferences.

MISHA GADA AND KRYSHA SHARMA,
MA PART 1