

# Exam Stress

*A Natural Feeling...*  
*...Let's LEARN to DEAL with it*

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“Literature, music and the arts, all are necessary for the development and flowering of a student to form an integrated total personality.”

*Rabindranath Tagore*

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\* Achievement seems to be connected with action. Successful men and women keep moving. They make mistakes, but they don't quit.

**Conrad Hilton**

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\* You are not here merely to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand.

**Woodrow Wilson**

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\* Someone has defined genius as intensity of purpose: the ability to do, the patience to wait.. . . Put these together and you have genius, and you have achievement.

**Leo J. Muir**

## **4 STEPS TO ACCOMPLISHMENT**

- \* Plan purposefully
- \* Proceed positively
- \* Prepare prayerfully
- \* Pursue persistently

### **This book Includes**

- \* Study and Memorization Tips*
- \* Diet, Exercise & Sleep*
- \* FAQs by Parents*
- \* FAQs by Students*
- \* Mantras for your mind, body & soul*



“SUCCESS DOESN’T MEAN  
THE ABSENCE OF FAILURES;  
IT MEANS THE ATTAINMENT  
OF ULTIMATE OBJECTIVES. IT  
MEANS WINNING THE WAR,  
NOT EVERY BATTLE...”...

## Chap 1 - INTRODUCTION



**L**ife, the most precious gift of god to mankind is the unfolding of new hopes and desires. Each moment weighs heavy with the expectations to achieve. Each day opens with series of challenges. The struggle to succeed with intensity and activity thus forms the very essence of life. As Charles Darwin also suggested that there is a natural process of selection in every field all the time.

**Examinations play a important role in the process of selection of people.** As challenges are a part of one's life at different stages, one of the challenges during school years is learning to handle examination pressure. Surveys have shown that large majority of school going students experience tension, worry and stress during examinations. Therefore, **equipping oneself to face these emotions in simple ways is the wisdom to move ahead in life with a healthy competition.**

Doing away with examinations is not a solution to end such tension. **Competition is a part of life and cannot be eliminated.** Although our immediate interest is the formal examinations we encounter in everyday academic and professional life, let us not overlook that in due

course everyone realizes that living honourably is also an examination. **Our success depends upon our attitude.** When we are positive and take a positive outlook at what confronts us, we are successful. When we harbour doubts, we buckle. In the same way, it is important that we learn to be positive whenever we are preparing for examinations.

To counteract the tension linked with it, the solution lies in developing the correct attitude towards examinations and in understanding how to deal with them more pleasantly. **Our attitude and confidence will take us towards success along with our awareness of our own strengths and limitations.**

## Chap 2 - UNDERSTANDING STRESS



***When we say “STRESS”, it means.....***

Stress in individuals is defined as any interference that disturbs a Person's healthy mental and physical wellbeing. **It occurs when the body is required to perform beyond its normal range of capabilities.**

### ***Stress statements***

- Too much change too quickly can be a cause of stress.
- Stress can be caused by pleasant and unpleasant events.
- The cause of stress may not always be apparent.
- Usually stress is a result build up of 'related and unrelated events.'
- Often your stress is more apparent to others than to yourself.
- Reactions to stress can be emotional, physical and behavioral.
- There is no magical formula for a stress free life but there are easy techniques for minimizing stress.

### ***The fear factor.....?***

Fear springs from ignorance, **fear is a negative response to a problem.** The reason why examination produces so much stress in students is the fear and shame associated with failing or getting low marks. Parents also fix targets for children without being aware of their levels of competence and abilities. Thus, they pass on their anxieties about the expected performance of their children. This further leads the children to fear their ability to rise up to the expectations of parents. Peer pressure is also one of the major factors that add to this stress.

### ***A Hurdle or Stepping stone.....?***

We need to view examinations not as hurdles in life, but as stepping stones to greater progress. **Examinations are stepping stones to rise higher**, just as we do in a staircase, slowly moving towards the top. Some steps are easy to climb. Others are not. However, examinations are crucial since they provide a means to test the level of knowledge attained by a student.

***“Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.”***

## Chap 3 - WHAT MAKES ANXIETY HAPPEN?

Because we can't outlaw tests, we might have to figure out how to ease the test anxiety. Anxiety is a feeling a person gets when he or she expects something stressful to happen. Focusing on the bad things that **could** happen can make us feel more worried. A student might think, "What if I forget everything I know?" or "What if the test is too hard?" **Too many thoughts like these don't leave much room in your mind to concentrate on remembering the answers to the test questions.**

People with test anxiety can also feel stressed out by the physical reaction and think things like "What if I throw up?" or "Oh no, my hands are shaking." These thoughts can get the person even more upset, making the anxiety even stronger. Now, the person feels worse and is even more distracted and unable to concentrate.

### ***WHO GETS TEST ANXIETY?***

Anyone can get test anxiety, but someone who really wants to get every answer right might be more prone to feeling this way. Students who worry a lot also might feel anxious at test time. **Perfectionists and worriers** find it hard to accept mistakes they make or to get less than a perfect score. This creates more pressure for them.

***WATCH OUT...!! SOME TELL TALE SIGNS OF STRESS.....  
BUILDING UP !!***





*“Ragini, 16 year old girl, who although was a good student, stopped studying a month before her examination. Her mother developed severe hysteria about her daughter’s examination. She had fainting spells if she felt her daughter wasn’t studying hard enough. The effect on Ragini was a complete blanking out.”*

*“Charu is a 16-year-old student of science who has just given her Boards examination. She has always been a rank holder, and sees herself as a motivated, intelligent, hard driver. She is actively involved in extracurricular works such as debating, dramatics, and creative writing. She is all set to top in her class, as well as prepares for various competitive examinations. She thrives on high stress situations, loves meeting deadlines, and taking on new challenges. In simple words, Charu does not see stress as distress.”*

*“Mridul, 15 year old student confessed that he is very prone to crying and often vomits these days. He has already lost 5 kgs, despite the fact that he is a bright student and has studied hard enough throughout the year.”*

*These are case studies of few children highlighting their reactions to examinations. Inner fears and doubts are devastating for children and get expressed through various physical and psychological reactions.*

## **COMMON REACTIONS TO EXAMINATION STRESS**

<u>Physical</u>	<u>Psychological/Emotional</u>	<u>Behavioral</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Sleep Disturbance</li> <li>*Changes in appetite</li> <li>*Cold and other respiratory infections</li> <li>*Back ache, cervical ache</li> <li>*Head ache and migraines</li> <li>*Lethargy</li> <li>*Fast, shallow breathing</li> <li>*Allergies</li> <li>*Muscle tensions</li> <li>*Frequent urge to pass urine</li> <li>*Dizziness</li> <li>*Nausea</li> <li>*Indigestion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Anxiety or fearfulness</li> <li>*Withdrawn or restless</li> <li>*Low self esteem</li> <li>*Depression/ Sadness</li> <li>*Increased risk of self harm</li> <li>*Irritability</li> <li>*Frustration and aggression</li> <li>*Inability to concentrate</li> <li>*Unable to relax</li> <li>*Feeling mentally drained out</li> <li>*Fussy, gloomy or suspicious</li> <li>*Being constantly frightened or irritable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Alcohol abuse</li> <li>*Smoking</li> <li>*Using other drugs</li> <li>*Abuse of medicines</li> <li>*Eating disorders</li> <li>*Relationship issues</li> <li>*Peer pressure</li> <li>*Not attending classes</li> <li>*Procrastination</li> <li>*Short spans of concentration</li> <li>*Easily distracted</li> <li>*Withdrawal</li> </ul>



**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.

## **Chap 4 - UNDERSTANDING & MANAGING EXAMINATION STRESS**



## ***A. HEALTHY LIFESTYLE & LIVING.....***

Following a healthy lifestyle is one of the best way to prevent Examination Stress as:

- There exists a **strong relationship** between nutrient intake and the mental state of a person.
- **Stress and anxiety** leads to inadequate and wrong eating habits which disturbs delicate biochemical balances in the body thus causing micronutrient deficiency.
- The right foods can help in your levels of concentration, ensure that you sleep more soundly and lower your **anxiety level**.
- In one of the recent studies conducted by National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad, it has been found that good nutrition ensures smooth functioning of the nervous system, which gets strained during examinations and makes children sharper. **The study also points out that proper nutrition helps in managing examination stress and maintains alertness during examinations.**

## **WHAT TO EAT AND DRINK**

- **Well balanced diet**, including health beverages may aid you to beat the examination blues. It boosts memory and improves concentration – all of which are associated with good academic performance.
- Students should **avoid drinks** like tea and coffee which contain caffeine, which according to studies, lessens the process of grasping.
- Instead, go for health **drink fortified** with micronutrients and vitamins, which according to NIN's Study helps relieve examination stress.
- **Appropriate fortified beverages** consumption rich in fibre and micro-nutrients like vitamins and minerals help in giving students that extra edge while preparing for their examinations as they help not only to manage stress but also to improve concentration.
- Foods rich in carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins and minerals should be included in the diet. Ideally, whole grain cereals such as oatmeal containing soluble fibre and beta-glucan, pulses, nuts, milk and milk products, fresh fruits, green leafy vegetables and fortified health drink like Horlicks should be included in a day's diet.

- Eating the wrong kind of food can make you sluggish or lead to infections all of which have a direct impact on their performance.

## 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.

**REMEMBER, 'YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT,' THE OLD SAYING GOES – AND IT'S TRUE. FOOD GIVES YOU THE FUEL YOU NEED TO CONCENTRATE, TO STUDY AND TO DO YOUR BEST.**

## CAN A PERSON IMPROVE HIS MEMORY THROUGH USE OF CERTAIN DRUGS AND MEDICINES?



This is a thought that lures many youngsters. Some pharmaceutical companies are marketing preparations that make such claims. **The truth is that lack of certain nutrients in the food does affect one's receptivity of knowledge.** A certain amount of tension builds up during the learning process. This tension can be controlled through a positive attitude and the use of mind medications that help users physically and psychologically.

However, rather than rely on drugs, the best option is to ensure a Balanced diet with lots of green, leafy vegetables and fruits that supply the necessary vitamins and minerals. When one eats a balanced diet, there is no need for additional supplements.

## EXERCISE AND REJUVENATION

Research shows that kids who play sports or who are physically active do better in school. **It is advantageous to do regular exercise** since it makes various organs of the body stronger. Regular exercise makes heart muscles become stronger, digestion becomes efficient and skin also gets a glow since the pores open up.

Consider the exercises that enable you to build skill related and health related fitness. Choose exercises that you enjoy so that you can have fun. If exercising is fun, you'll be more likely to stick with the program for life. If you face any kind of problem in carrying out these activities, consult your health care provider.

You can start with :

- Walking or cycling 15 minutes a day at least thrice a week.
- Swimming or playing any sport once a week.
- Going for a jog in the evening for 15 minutes thrice a week.

## BARRIERS TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- **Self-efficacy** – ‘I don’t need it’.
- **Preference for indoor activities**: TV electronic games & computer.
- **Low energy level**: ‘Junk food’ slows down desire for physical activity.
- **Low level of Motivation**.
- **Time constraints**.
- **Emphasis on academics** - force to decrease in physical activity.

## WHY TO EXERCISE ?

**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.

**One should always take a break** amidst long hours study and should go for physical activities or exercise in form of sports. However, these breaks should not be too long as they may then affect the tempo of studies. Taking a break and going for physical activities like sports for around 10-30 minutes after every 45-50 minutes of continuous study rejuvenates your body, mind and soul. Studying regularly for more than 50 minutes leads to receding concentration levels. Sitting continuously at the study table for long hours is, therefore, a waste of both energy and time. In short, it is unproductive.

## WHAT KIND OF EXERCISE AND HOW MUCH TO EXERCISE?

Exercise has to be **aerobic-cardiovascular** type where your heart rate as well as respiratory rate goes up. How much exercise is very subjective thing to answer. But the exercise must be strenuous enough to make your respiratory and heart rate at least one and a half times of the normal rate and after reaching this level it should be maintained for minimum of 5 minutes.

If you don’t exercise, **your brain loses efficiency** but when you do a heavy exercise you become fatigued and drowsy so you should plan your exercise in such a way that you don’t fall in any of these categories.

## TOO MUCH A SLEEP OR TOO LESS A SLEEP: WHAT WORKS?

Sleep is important especially in growing and developing children. Not only does sleep provide an opportunity for the body to physically rest, it's the time during which, according to recent research, **the brain consolidates or reinforces** what a child has learned or observed during the day. Not surprisingly, sleep deprived children tend not to do well at school. Other symptoms of sleep deprivation in children include the obvious ones such as fatigue and inattentiveness. There can also be less obvious symptoms including irritability, impatience, fussiness and even aggressive behavior.

Teenagers also need to get enough sleep. Just because they are older does not mean they can get away with less sleep. In fact, most adolescents actually get much less sleep than they need. Staying up late a few nights in a row and then trying to catch up on the weekend does not help. In other words **catch up sleep does not count**. So, if on average, one seems to get enough hours of sleep over a week, but it is done so by catching up on weekends to make up for week nights of little or less than adequate sleep, it will not work. What counts is getting enough sleep each and every night. Thus, 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.

Remember though the amount tends to decrease with age, still the average adult needs at least **8 to 8.5 hours of sleep per night**.

## ***B. STUDY SMART***

### TIME MANAGEMENT

Managing your time effectively is an important part of studying. One common mistake is to try to create an overly restrictive schedule which doesn't work, and then feel very guilty that it doesn't work. Telling yourself that scheduling just doesn't work for you is another common mistake. Thus, plan according to your schedules, your goals, and your aptitudes rather than some standards. Try to be realistic and honest with yourself when determining those things that require more effort, those that come easier to you.



The following list will guide you through time management. **Think about when your brain works best** - Morning, night or the middle of the afternoon. Plan your TTD list accordingly. If you're going to read a difficult article for the first time doesn't start at 10.00 pm unless you are a natural night owl. Do something less demanding in the low times - organise your notes, or write the next day's TTD list.

**Schedule** - Have a regular study time and place each day - This helps put you in study mode. It's what Pavlov did with his dogs. ("Good doggy. Now study! Studyyy...") . Get everything you'll need together BEFORE you start studying.

**Prioritize** - Make a list of what you have to do and list it in order of importance. Schedule the important stuff first.

**Plan your sessions** - Do the difficult stuff first. That way, by the time you can barely add 1 to 1, that's all you have left to do.

**Take breaks** - Don't study longer than 50 minutes at a stretch. Use the other ten for a run around the block, or eat a snack. Hmm... Maybe run around the block AFTER the snack. Taking a 5-minute hot shower is another excellent solution.

**Avoid getting stuck** - If you can't figure something out, skip it, and get help later. Skipping everything is not allowed.

**Divide and conquer** - Break your projects up into smaller bits, and complete those bits one by one.

**Set Milestones** – *Setting milestones help to manage the time and task better. You can also set rewards for reaching those milestones.*

**Reward yourself** - The reward can be small, like treating yourself to some ice cream, or larger, like buying that new outfit you've had your eye on. *Rewards* also don't have to cost money, like going to play some basketball with some friends at the park. Enjoy yourself when you pass a milestone, stick to your reward plans to make them more worth reaching.

**Review regularly** – Regular reviewing benefits taking stock of the work done. We have said this before. It's important. Better read it again. Also monitor your progress at reasonable periods and make changes where necessary. If you find that you are consistently allotting more time than necessary to a specific chore, change your future schedule accordingly.

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