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FROM PANIC TO PEACE

As exams draw near, stress tightens its grip. Amidst anticipation, readiness tends to fluctuate. Explore expert tips for a serene exam experience



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SCORING HONOURS WITH CARTOONS & CRICKET



Exploring the world of cartoonist BV Panduranga Rao, who recently got inducted into the prestigious India Book of Records 2024 for the 13th time

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IN FOCUS, WOMEN EMPOWERMENT
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DARK SIDE OF WILDLIFE SELFIES



Despite their allure, wildlife selfies carry a dark reality that threatens the very animals they seek to capture, researchers weigh in. **PAGE 11**

Bindu Gopal Rao

It's 2:00 am and tenth standard student Vishal Koushik is burning the midnight oil. He has this Mathematics Pre-Board Exam and his nerves are playing havoc. Elsewhere, Nina Sharma, his friend, is also doing the same at her home; worried that she might miss something if she slept early. Both these students are classic examples of students battling exam stress. So, how does one manage exam stress? Experts weigh in.

Watch the signs

Physical symptoms such as trouble sleeping, feeling sick in the stomach, muscle twitching, headaches, shoulder/back pain, constant fidgeting, nail biting, grinding of teeth, being on the edge emotionally (frequent short episodes of lashing out, crying) eating too much or too little, dryness of the eyes are all signs of exam stress.

"Feeling emotionally overwhelmed, not motivated, no drive to study, sudden changes in behaviour which is atypical of the person (overtly happy or sad, participative, or secluded); unable to take breaks, not able to enjoy things they usually enjoy, irritability, confusion, excessive mood swings or social withdrawal even when there are no exams or deadlines (situationally inappropriate), these are signs to consider," says Rohini Kesavan Rajeev, senior psychotherapist and founder, The Able Mind.

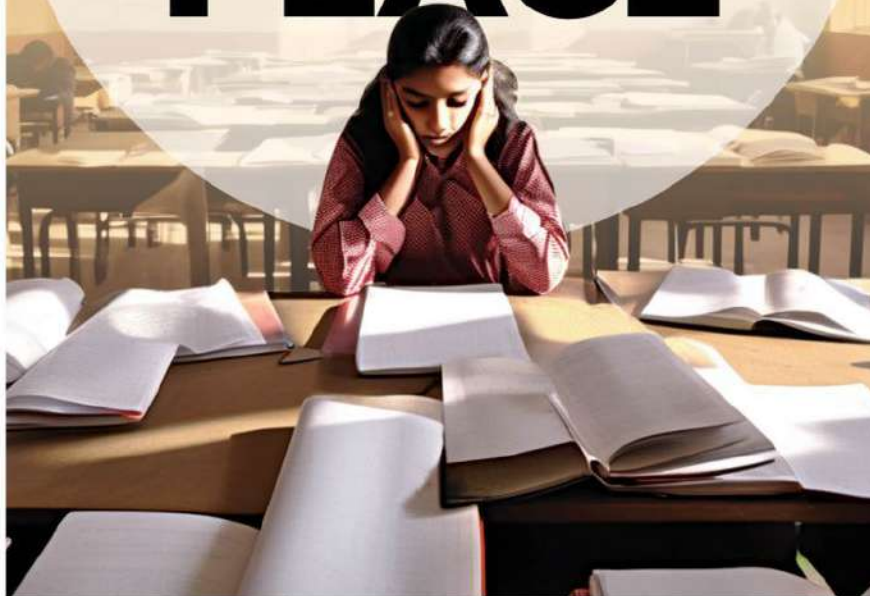
Do it right

To handle exam stress, students must make sure that they prepare a timetable that aligns with their capacity to study. Setting unrealistic goals is only going to contribute to stress. Plan to study one difficult subject and one easy, help handle the stress. For example, if the student is studying Physics, then post break he/she should study a lighter subject which will help students relax and will cause less stress. Basically, not to follow a routine of studying difficult subjects continuously but to interchange tough and lighter subjects.

"Also make sure that you take small breaks in between so that your mind gets a little rest and gets ready for the next round of revision. Furthermore, refrain from comparing yourself to others. Everyone has a different pace of learning and comparing the amount of syllabus you've covered is only going to distract

As February winds down, exam stress looms large. But fear not! Our Bangalore brings to you expert-backed tips to ease your mind. Read on...

FROM PANIC TO PEACE



you and add to your stress. Practicing last years' question papers can significantly help you in giving an idea of what kind of questions come in exams and prepare you well for the final exams," says Dr Rahul Chandhok, head consultant, Mental Health & Behavioral Science, Artemis Hospitals.

Learn to destress

Getting worked up and worried

before an exam is common to almost all students across age groups, but such behaviours are experienced more by older children who start associating marks with ability and social acceptance (peer/teacher/parent). Archana Singhal, Counsellor, family therapist and founder, Mindwell Counsel, says, "Engage in physical activity to release endorphins and reduce stress. Eat nutritious foods that fuel your body and brain. Ensure you get

enough restful sleep to recharge your mind and body. Spend time doing activities you enjoy taking your mind off exams. Talk to friends, family, or a counsellor about your feelings and concerns. Your worth isn't defined by your grades. Practice self-compassion and acknowledge your efforts, regardless of the outcome. Take breaks and engage in activities that bring you joy to maintain a healthy balance."

Help yourself

Exam stress might make students feel alone, but they don't have to manage it alone. Sakshi Maheshwari, clinical psychologist (Child & Adolescent Psychology), Niyama Digital Healthcare, says, "Take a paper and write in your strengths, positives and paste it anywhere near the table where you are studying. We often tend to disregard our positives when we

UNLOCKING SUCCESS

- Avoid binging on junk food or high caffeine products as they would make you feel lethargic
- Pick foods with a high nutritional value which are light and easy to digest, to help you concentrate better
- Take small breaks and break your tasks as achievable targets throughout the day
- Make a small daily checklist which will make you feel more accountable for your work
- Make a distraction free zone or zen room for yourself where you can study without any interference or noise
- Good sleep is essential for your mental activity.
- Moving your body will release endorphins which will release the happy hormone
- Focus on being fully present in the moment and experiencing what is going on around you as that moment unfolds

*** Tips by Divya Mohindroo, counselling psychologist & founder, Embrace Imperfections

are under stress. You can use a schedule and keep check-marking the activity that you complete. This will show you how much is completed. If you feel tired, burdened, or unable to concentrate, use some breathing relaxation exercises. Like closing your eyes and inhale and exhale for 5-10 minutes or taking a stroll where there are lots of green plants, or if you have a pet just play with them. Relaxation exercises will take away the tiredness from both your body and brain."

Experts suggest that rewarding oneself when you achieve a targeted goal, helps. This can be achieved by doing any activity that you like.

The right attitude

As part of the support system teachers and parents must never compare the children with peers, siblings, or friends. "As comparison instigates negative thoughts in the child and promotes them to take extreme steps. Children get psychologically affected if we pressurise them too much. Not only psychological issues, or a physical problem, stress can even lead to cardiac issues as well," cautions Deanna Fugle, Licensed Counsellor and Senior counsellor, JAIN International Residential School (JIRS).

Positive affirmations in the mornings and practicing yoga daily helps in reducing stress, improving focus and thereby do well in the exams.



Make sure that you take small breaks in between so that your mind gets a little rest and gets ready for the next round. Furthermore, refrain from comparing yourself to others - everyone has a different pace of learning. Practicing last years' question papers can significantly help you and prepare you well for the final exams

RAHUL CHANDHOK,

Head Consultant, Mental Health & Behavioral Science, Artemis Hospitals