

Exam Stress- Helping Your Child Manage Exam Stress

Exams can be a burden on children regardless of their age and academic level. The time and preparation combined with taking the exam and waiting for the results to come through, can all lead to an elevation in both a child's and parent's stress levels.

Stress can be constructive because it helps motivate and focus individuals on certain goals and achievements. However, often this stress can sabotage a child's performance. This adverse reaction that children have towards the excessive pressures of exams is subjective, thus varies from one child to another. As a result, some children might feel strain and develop stress symptoms much more easily than others.

The increased pressure during examination periods forces the child's body to go into a "fight or flight" response. In turn, this reflex causes an increased amount of adrenalin release which leads the child to experience various somatic symptoms. These somatic symptoms can include: headaches, bad sleep, poor appetite, agitation, fatigue or nausea.

The stress caused by exams is often very overwhelming for children and can trigger more serious problems including panic attacks, depression or eating distress. As a result, it is vital for parents to help their child work out a plan for dealing with exam stress. Parents could start by helping the child organize a revision timetable that is both realistic and flexible. This timetable will help clear priorities and balance between studying and other daily demands.

In addition to the studying routine, the timetable should also contain regular study breaks and time for the child's relaxation. Taking a break to go outside and play, watch a TV show or take a 20 minute power nap is not a waste of a child's time but rather a great way to clear their minds. Teaching a child how to relax is crucial because it helps relief stress and increases their quality of study.

Parents often feel worried because their child is not getting enough sleep. Sleeping well plays a significant role in decreasing stress levels. Parents should encourage their children to relax before slumber in order to help them unwind and sleep better. Taking a warm bath or reading a bedtime story can facilitate a goodnight sleep. Children should get around 8 hours of sleep in order for them to function through long periods of study.

Another technique to boost a child's energy level is encouraging healthy eating. Fresh fruits, vegetables, grains, proteins and cereals are excellent for the brain. Moreover, feeding kids when they get hungry is essential because it helps keep their blood sugar and hydration levels steady. It is important to cut down a child's ingestion of caffeinated drinks or food that might lead to agitation. Increasing the intake of coffee, tea or sodas might give a short lift before making one feel sick and unable to concentrate properly. In addition to stimulants, junk food should be avoided given that it causes a sudden sugar high that will quickly fall leaving a child fatigued.

The tension of studying often makes children reluctant to talk to others due to fear of what others might think of them. In reality, fellow classmates and friends are living similar situations. Therefore, parents should encourage their children to study with friends because it helps revision and provides an opportunity to share their reasons for worry. Parents should also allow their child to talk openly about pressures in order to help put them back in control. On the other hand, leaving the child to hide under a tranquil exterior only saves the problem for later and keeps building stress until it finally becomes unbearable.

Nonetheless, parents should avoid comparing their child's abilities and studying habits with other children. Each child revises their studies in a unique way, so parents should make sure that their child is choosing the studying method that works best for them. Moreover, parents should be realistic about what skills, qualities and levels their child can achieve. It is crucial to base parental expectations on the child's past performances and doing the best they can. A test result does not dictate whether a child is a success or a failure, all it measures is how well they can present the material asked by the examiner. Hence, parental expectations should be taken by the child as support rather than pressure. Children should find out what their parents hope for them in order to help reinsure their self-confidence. Exams are a time that most parents and children despise because they bring along a whirlwind of anxiety and fear of failure. It is natural for some children to struggle with coping all the stress, worry and tension. However, structured study along with a relaxed body and mind can help ease a child's stress. It is important to remind the child that exams have an end, thus the stress they are undergoing will eventually fade away as soon as their exams are over.