

# Take it easy, exams are not end of life

**DE-STRESS** Doctors say students must not be pressured and if they are showing signs of stress, they must get expert medical help



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**NEW DELHI:** Are you stressed out about your board exams? Stress is not only psychological, it manifests as various physical symptoms like headache, muscle pain, stomach upset, and sleep problems. It is very important to recognise these symptoms and manage the stress, otherwise it will wreck your system in the long run.

"Palpitations, dry mouth, sleeplessness, emptiness in the stomach and shaky hands are some of the symptoms of stress that we see often in our clinics. In fact, students not being able to concentrate is one of the earliest signs of stress," said Dr Achal Bhagat, senior consulting psychiatrist at Indraprastha Apollo hospitals.

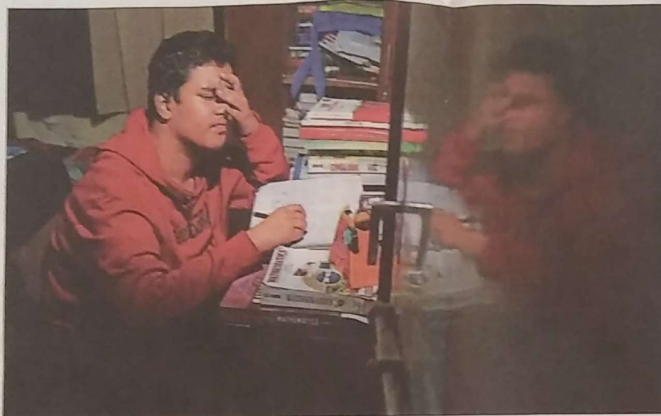
Stress is not only psychological, it manifests as various symptoms such as headache, muscle pain, stomach upset, and sleep problems. It is important to these symptoms are recognised and dealt with, otherwise they may hurt your performance in the exams.

**NEXT:** How can parents de-stress

And, it is not just the students appearing for board exams. Dr Samir Parikh, director of the department of Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences, Fortis Healthcare, received a call from a 13-year-old boy from Kerala on the helpline run by the hospital. The exam anxiety impacted his performance so much so that he would often blank out while writing the exam

**THE RISING NUMBERS**

Every January, just before the exam season, city doctors see a rise in the number



\* Stress is not only psychological, it manifests as various physical symptoms such as headache, muscle pain, stomach upset, and sleep problems. RAJ K RAJ/PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATION PURPOSE ONLY

of children who seek counselling for stress or anxiety. "The numbers go up by one-and-a-half to two folds. And, most of these children come for exam-related stress," said Dr Smita Deshpande, head of the department at Dr Ram Manohar Lohia hospital.

"This is also the time when parents approach us for disability certificates for children with learning disabilities, just before filling out the forms for board examination. The parents must understand that children with special needs must be evaluated in time so that they can be helped with their disability," she said.

Dr Bhagat said the situation was better in late 90s and early 2000s.

"It was because of the call centre boom and different fields like fashion designing, communication coming in. People no longer had to be doctor or engineers only," said Dr Bhagat.

According to him, the numbers went up again when people realised that the newer fields did not necessarily translate into jobs. "Students also wanted to get good marks and study abroad. This

also resulted in stress and depression," said Dr Bhagat.

**WHY ARE KIDS STRESSED OUT?**

Apart from their own need to perform well, children also have the pressure of beating their peers. This kind of negative competition may lead to increasing stress levels, said Dr Parikh.

"Also, they are constantly reminded by the parents and teachers that their marks in the board exams will determine their future," he said.

Dr Deshpande said that parents must not force children to pursue subjects that they like.

"We also need to have more college seats and employment options. It is because of the limited opportunities that children and their parents get stressed about admissions and career afterwards. A degree is like a passport to better life," said Dr Deshpande.

The hype about the board exams is also a major reason for stress.

"Instead of this one-time opportunity, there should be continued evaluation," she said.

**WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?**

Following a healthy lifestyle, eating nutritious food on time and exercise are some ways to keep the stress at bay.

"During board exams, children tend to just stay indoors with their books. However, it is a good idea to step out for a while and do some physical exercise. Children must get at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep," said Dr Parikh.

Parents and teachers must be accessible to children so that they can share their problems, fears and anxieties.

**OPTIMISE YOUR PERFORMANCE**

Some tips which will help you to write your board exams in a stress-free manner. Eat right and don't ignore your daily exercise.

**BEFORE THE EXAMINATION**

**Plan ahead:** You have a year to study the prescribed course. Make a rough plan at the beginning of the year. Do not wait for the exams to start cramming.

**Making a revision schedule:** Strict schedules can rarely be followed, so make a fairly flexible schedule before the examination to revise the course. Plan two or three days ahead.

**Healthy competition:** Competing with your peers might motivate you sometimes. But you must not compare your marks with that of others and berate yourself. Instead, work towards fulfilling your own expectations.

**Solve self-tests:** When you are anxious about your performance, try solving self-tests. This way you will know which topics you are thorough with and which need more revision.

**Improve concentration:** Try these simple exercises to improve your concentration. Listen to instrumental music and focus on the sound of a single instrument or strike out all the 'e's in a paragraph of newspaper article.



**HOW TO STUDY**

**Revision schedule:** For best recollection, revise every section on day 1, 2, 7, 15 and 30. Maintain a schedule.

**Take breaks:** Studying constantly for long period will not help you in retaining information. Instead, study for 40-45 minutes then take a 5-10 minutes break.

**Avoid confusion:** Do not study too many new topics in a day.

**Make connections:** Group points or concepts together and remember them as a single chunk of memory.

**Use mnemonics:** Flow-charts and graphics help in remembering things.

**GENERAL WELL BEING**

**Sleep well:** Do not stay up late. It's a myth that having coffee and studying late will help. If you do not get 7 to 9 hours of sleep, your brain will be too tired to help you write exam better.

**Go out and play:** Step out for a stroll or to play with your friends. This will refresh you and help you to study better.

**De-clutter your table:** Bed is for sleeping and a table for studying. Make sure you are sitting at a table while studying. Keep laptops, mobile phones and other distractions away.

**Be confident:** On the day of your examination, be confident about what you have learnt and don't discuss the subject with your friends. Last minute revision too is not helpful.



**Talk:** If you feel anxious or scared during the exam, do not keep the feelings to yourself. Talk to your parents, teachers or friends. Remember, you will always have people around you who can help you.

**Not the end of the world:** If you do not perform well or get the marks you desired, remember, it is not the end of the world. You will always get opportunities.

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**IS YOUR CHILD STRESSED? PARENTS SHOULD LOOK OUT FOR THESE RED FLAGS**

- Loss of appetite
- Frequent mood swings
- Lack of sleep or disturbed sleep
- Become irritable