

## **Why & How You Can Change the Concept of Exam Fear**

Since parents go through exam-time anxieties, they too need to de-stress. Yoga and breathing exercises and going for walks with your child will help. Believe that your child is unique and be unconditionally supportive. It is important to have faith in both your child and in your own parenting skills.

### **Did you know?**

Research establishes a correlation between hormones and stress response. Results have revealed that the production of cortisol is the primary hormone responsible for the stress response. Elevated cortisol levels lead to memory loss, increased alertness feelings of anxiety. Essential learning skills like reasoning and analytical abilities are impaired, as does the ability for self-control.

Sensitize the child to the importance of knowledge and learning in life. And most certainly, exam time can bring out the best of one's abilities not just in the child but also in the parents.

### **Some practical advice:**

1. Chalk out a plan of action and a timetable: Let the timetable include a routine that will cover the exam syllabus comfortably giving enough time for revision and all other activities. This will bring clarity, focus and a sense of direction that will increase the self-confidence in children and bring out the best in them. It works best when timetables are prepared with full participation and involvement from the child. It is important to keep the timetable realistic and based entirely on the child's abilities.
2. A supportive family environment: Since the pressure from school, peer group, and the society at large, is unavoidable, the understanding and support from the family becomes even more crucial for the child. Parental expectations tend to put enormous pressure on children on top of the pressures that comes from society. A supportive family ambience is created when parents do not measure the success of their children by their academic achievements.
- 3.

### **Is your child stressed?**

Some tell-tale signs:

- ✓ Inability to grasp even when reading the same thing a couple of times
- ✓ Hungrier or sleepier than usual
- ✓ Not hungry or sleepy as usual
- ✓ Irritation without cause
- ✓ Absent-minded, misplacing things

Employ a parenting style that combines warmth, realistic demands, and democracy.

Avoid needless comparisons and allow the child to have the space to know himself and develop his own identity.

Parents will have to control the urge to nag and just simply set an example by following the rules they set for their children.

**Exercise:**

1. Alternate periods of studying with extra-curricular activities like running, jogging, a favourite sport, a gym workout.
2. Practice Pranayama (simple breathing exercises), yoga, especially the Sun Salutation, and meditation.

**Fun time:**

Travel over the weekend, spend time with friends or pets, indulge in creative activities like drawing, painting or some preferred performing arts, which will activate the right brain, relax, and balance the mind.

**Healthy Diet:**

Reinforce these with a balanced diet, healthy juices, and vegetarian food. It is important for parents to explain to children the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, which includes the importance of drinking sufficient water, keeping away from junk food, sweets and chocolates, and the effect that different foods have on the body and mind. Study is best when the stomach is light, and there is complete wakefulness and alertness.

**To improve exam-readiness**, teach children important learning skills like reading the text, writing down important points, giving written answers to questions, and then re-reading the text. This will strengthen their knowledge and help them be flexible when face with exam questions. It is a good idea to get them used to voice-notes.

**Written by Shreya Chugh, a youth empowerment facilitator from The Art of Living.**

How do you respond if your child says, "I can't!"?

It is certainly a tough one for parents. And many of us have already tried saying, "You can't YET!" and for some children, it just does not work...

All we want is for them NOT to get overly upset or frustrated so they can persevere and keep going...right?

But let's think about it...

Perseverance is actually about not giving up DESPITE the frustration.

So when our child says, "I can't!", we don't need to prevent the frustration from happening -or pull them out of it.

So first and foremost, instead of pulling them out of the frustration, **get into it with them by showing your empathy,**

*"It's really tough when something doesn't work! I totally get it!"*

Once your child hears that they're being understood, you can try these strategies as your next step:

**1. Offer to take a break.** When you see your child's emotions begin to overwhelm them, you can say:

*"Sometimes when I feel frustrated, it helps me to take a break and do something else. Would you like to take a break?"*



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**2. Offer to help them started.** If you're going to help your child, it's better to do just enough to get them started. You can say:

*"Would you like me to help you get started with this math problem? We can find what you already know together."*

**3. Be present.** Sometimes we just need to be near our child but not necessarily DO anything. Your child might be able to keep going on their own. You can say:

*"I see you're working really hard and I know you can do hard things. I'm here if you need me."*

I hope this was helpful. Try these strategies and let us know how it goes!