



EXAM STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

The word "stress" is quite familiar to all of us, whether it is hearing it constantly all over news channels, in our daily conversations with friends or family, or reading about it in self-help books. The terminology of stress has penetrated in our daily lives and for most of us, the awareness is very much there.

The words "stress", "stressed out", and "stressful" is casually heard in most of our conversations. With the onset of the dreaded exam season around the corner, the word stress gets thrown around in every conversation around us. Stress is defined as any interference that disturbs a person's healthy mental and physical well-being. It occurs when the body is required to perform beyond its normal range of capabilities.

Exam stress in particular can affect the students. This stress can affect children either in a positive or negative way. Not all types of stress are bad or harmful, stress can also be a positive factor that mobilizes us to take initiative in the right direction. Eustress is the opposite of distress and can refer to any type of stress that is beneficial for us, both physically or psychologically.



Similarities between Eustress and Distress

- You can feel nervous
- Your heart might pound
- Your thoughts might race

Eustress and Distress are different because

- Eustress is manageable and short-term
- Eustress is motivating and often feel exciting with a sense of anticipation
- Distress may feel uncomfortable, overwhelming and often unmanageable.



REMEMBER!

Children, just like adults respond to various stressors in different ways, what can for one child be distressful for the other can be motivating and challenging. Exams for the most of the part can be distressful to all whether it be the children taking it or the parents of the child.

PHYSICAL SIGNS OF EXAM STRESS

- Sleep disturbances
- Changes in appetite
- Cold and other respiratory infections
- Backache, cervical ache
- Headache and migraines
- Lethargy
- Fast, Shallow breathing
- Allergies
- Muscle tension
- Frequent urge to pass urine
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Indigestion



PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS OF EXAM STRESS

- Fearfulness
- Withdrawn, restlessness
- Low self esteem
- Persistent sadness
- Irritability
- Frustration/agresion
- Inability to concentrate
- Unable to relax
- Feeling constantly drained out
- Having trouble making decisions



BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS OF EXAM STRESS

- Not attending classes
- Procrastination
- Short spans of concentration
- Easily distracted
- Withdrawal form social interactions.
- Fidgeting, nail biting, teeth grinding.



- Need to get a certain result
- Want to do really well in exams

- Don't have much time to study.
- Don't understand what you're studying.

- Worry we might fail.
- Don't feel prepared enough .

WHY DO WE FEEL STRESSED DURING EXAMS?

- Don't think we will do well in the exams.
- Feel pressure from family to get good marks

- Have other things going on in our lives that keep us distracted from studying and exams

- Feel the need to compete with our friends and peers.
- Parents compare us to our friends or relatives .



Practicing self-care becomes highly essential to manage exam stress. You can dedicate some time in between your study breaks for any activity that destresses you and relaxes you which is unrelated to academics. For. eg. Going for a 20-25 minute walk, Reading a non-academic book, Exercising regularly for half an hour, playing with your pet, etc.

5-4-3-2-1 GROUNDING

TAKING SLOW, FOCUSED BREATHS, NOTICE,

-  5 things you **SEE**
-  4 things you **FEEL**
-  3 things you **HEAR**
-  2 things you **SMELL**
-  1 thing you **TASTE**



You can try the grounding exercise on the days you feel overwhelmed and need to focus on the present

Deep belly breathing helps us relieve stress and tension in our body. It relaxes our nervous system. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. Inhale deeply through your nose for a count of four, making sure your belly is expanding and not your chest. Exhale through your mouth for a count of four. Continue this breathing cycle for a few minutes. Feel the stress leave your body while your mind becomes calm.





Child's pose or Balasana helps in stretching your hips, thighs, and ankles. It gently relaxes the muscles on the front of the body while softly lengthening the muscles of the back which reduces the stress and fatigue in the body. It's a resting pose mixed with deep breathing which can be super relaxing

"I am connected"

Expert's Dialogue

Saniya is a 15-year-old girl who has exams in the coming week. She is panicking, has left all her hobbies, and is not eating or sleeping properly. The reason, Exam stress. So what exactly is exam stress? It is the worry and anxiety we feel before or during our exams. It affects our ability to perform, study or even function!

Symptoms of exam stress include:

- Becoming forgetful about little things.
- Feeling exhausted and tired most of the time.
- Being irritable, short-tempered or panicky every now and then.
- Losing sleep - or sleeping too much and feeling bad about it.

How to solve this? Few tips for you, dear students:

- It is crucial you express your feelings of stress, verbally through communicating with parents, siblings or peers or physically via continuing to do at least one hobby that keeps you fresh, happy and energetic.
- Meditate for 5 minutes every day
- Practice deep breathing exercises whenever you feel worried since it helps your senses to calm down
- Ensure you don't put pressure on yourself and plan your study and revision sessions rather than studying a day or night before the exam
- Create a daily timetable and goal or check list
- Get a proper night's sleep
- Eat healthy and drink lots of fluids, junk/overeating/starving will only heighten stress levels
- Exercise for some time every day maybe a run or cycling or playing a sport
- Engage in positive self talk



Riddhi Doshi Patel
Child Psychologist / Parenting
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As for a parent, encourage and appreciate your child for studying and passing the exams. Don't shout, nag or compare your child. Doesn't mean that we allow everything that is asked by the child, especially something which isn't appreciated, but certainly we explain and handle it tactfully as after all, mental health matters. Its important that during exams, the child's mental and emotional health is taken care of as much as we take care of their physical needs. The mental health of the child gets affected during exams when the exams starts with anxiety due to proving oneself, coping up with parental pressure and one's self trust.

Talking it out and reaching out to our parents, teachers, cousins or friends always helps in feeling better and easing our worries. When we reach out to a trusted person and share our worries it always makes us feel seen and heard. Sometimes that is all that makes a world of a difference, a listening ear and a shoulder to lean on. You can use this sheet to decide who is the best person to reach out to right now

Protecting my Mental Health

Name

Write your worries in the rain droplets

Write what helps with your worries on the umbrella

Our Time

Draw a line between your worry and the person you want to talk to about it



Help is just a call away!

- **ICALL HELPLINE (GENERAL COUNSELLING)- 02225521111 (MON-SAT, 8AM-10 PM)**
- **HUMSAFAR TRUST (LGBTQIA+)- 0226673800 (MON-FRI, 10 AM-8PM)**
- **ARPAN (CSA)- +91-9819086444 (MON-FRI, 9 AM-6PM)**
- **AASRA (SUICIDE PREVENTION)- +91-9820466726 (7 DAYS A WEEK, 24 HOURS)**

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU!

If you or someone you know is experiencing any mental or emotional distress, kindly call on our toll-free mental health helpline number:

SAMVAAD
1800-102-4040

This helpline is active from 8 am to 8 pm, seven days a week and is handled by counsellors with varied expertise.

In case of any mental health related concerns, please feel free to reach us on mentalhealth@projectmumbai.org



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