

Help Your Child Deal With Exam Stress - LIFE TALK.[®] NEWS 26



Empowering youth to make life-enriching choices; equipping parents for proactive parenting; inspiring families to thrive...

HOT TIPS TO BEAT EXAM STRESS and Parenting Workshops for Businesses

Hot Tips to Beat Exam Stress

Teens and young adults are experiencing more stress than ever before – subject workload, sport commitments, performance pressure, and the resulting feeling of being overwhelmed are all contributing factors. Exam stress anxiety, the need to perform, nervousness and pressure result in further stress. Whilst this is a natural part of school and university life and a measure of stress is important for levels of motivation, elevated stress for extended periods of time can have many negative consequences including underperformance and depression.

The American Psychological Association released a stress report in February 2014, conducted with more than 1000 teens and 2000 adults. Some key points are:

- Teens are "mirroring" adults' high-stress lives, and are "potentially setting themselves up for a future of chronic stress and chronic illness".
- Teens risk developing a variety of physical and emotional ills, and potentially shorter lifespans than their elders if they don't act to "reverse their current trajectory of chronic illness and poor health."
- Teens average stress levels were 5.8 out of 10 vs those of adults at 5.1
- 59% reported that balancing their time was the most significant stressor
- 21% said they neglected school work because of stress
- 32% experience stress headaches and 26% a change in their sleeping habits
- 37% exercise once a week or not at all
- 27% eat to manage stress
- 62% manage stress with screen time – 42% going online, 42% watch two or more hours of TV and 31% play video games.

Counteracting stress

It is possible to manage the process to minimise stress and maximise performance. If you haven't prepared sufficiently you will place yourself under undue stress - and it is avoidable.

A good work ethic is one of the greatest habits you can develop, and will prevail once you are part of the workplace. A recent study indicated that 23% of business decision-makers identified a good work ethic as a crucial skill whereas only 7% of high school students did so. A good work ethic entails self-motivation and discipline – knowing what you need to do, not procrastinating, and getting on with the job at hand. Using your time wisely is the essence of a good work ethic. Dedication to your studies will lead to increased productivity and therefore results.

Tips to manage exam stress

- **Manage stress by planning ahead:** A study timetable, planned and implemented well in advance will help you break your workload into manageable blocks. Include breaks and relaxation slots. Generally study blocks of 2-4 hours with 40-50 minutes sessions are ideal with a 10-15 minute break in-between sessions. Don't procrastinate, and try to stick to your timetable as much as possible. There are many apps available online to help create a timetable. A timetable will help to keep control of the time available to study whilst also creating an awareness of what needs doing.
- **Be realistic and focus accordingly:** Know your subject strengths and weaknesses and focus your efforts accordingly. Allow more time for the subjects you battle with. Also consider the workload per subject, and allow more time for the subjects that have more work that needs to be revised. Consider colour coding the subjects on your timetable based on the amount of effort required for the subject. It will create a visual reminder.
- **Eat well:** You can't abuse your body physically and expect to do well in exams. Eat regular nutritious meals, avoiding caffeine, and any substances such as drugs (including Ritalin – unless prescribed) or any other stimulants to help you study. Avoid alcohol and sleeping tablets which can make you feel groggy the next day, and may affect your ability to concentrate and focus. Keep yourself well hydrated by drinking plenty of water – add lemon slices or mint if water is not your favourite drink!
- **Sleep:** Get enough sleep so that your brain has time to process what you have learnt. Sleep is the time that memory of recently encoded information is consolidated. A lack of sleep will inhibit your ability to concentrate and focus and is detrimental to your ability to learn and retain information. Sleep improves your judgement and mental clarity, and a lack of it can lead to illness and anxiety. Research has proven that sleep is an "intensive activity to consolidate learning, so the brain may benefit from sleep because more energy is available or distractions and new inputs are fewer." There is some evidence that taking a short nap after an intensive study session will help to consolidate the information learnt to a greater degree than if you stay awake.
- **Exercise:** Try to exercise every day – 30 minutes will do the trick. This could take the form of a brisk walk, a jog, or some stretching exercises to relieve the tension in your back and shoulders.
- **Minimize all-nighters:** Whilst this may occasionally be necessary, try to avoid them. They are not sustainable and will end up exhausting you.

Your attitude makes you a winner

"Your attitude makes the difference between success and mediocrity. Your attitude is often more important than your intellectual ability. Some of us are naturally more positive than others, but the good news is that we can choose the attitude we want" writes author Izabella. Gates in her Life Talk books. "You'll find that if you adopt a positive attitude then everything around you suddenly starts to look brighter" This can be applied to exams. You may have had a tough year or are battling with some subjects but, it is never too late to improve your marks and understanding of the subject by planning well in advance and working hard. Strive to do your best under the circumstances - the results will be yours to reap.

Other sources:

www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/02/11/stress-teen

Parenting Talks and Workshops for Businesses

Parents who are well informed and equipped with modern day parenting skills are not only more effective parents but they are less stressed in terms of home life issues and therefore more productive employees.

Benefits of parenting education in the workplace include:

- Greater employee productivity
- Reduces parental stress
- Stronger and more stable families
- Reduced child health, mental health and learning problems

If your company is looking for interesting staff development workshops or talks then consider Life Talk's wide range to choose from, to help equip parents for proactive parenting. For more information contact Nicoleen@lifetalk.co.za.

Pay less tax and donate!

As a registered non-profit, any donations to Life Talk are tax deductible, and can be used to reduce your tax liability. If you are interested please email Nicoleen@lifetalk.co.za. We would love to hear from you! (Reg.No: PBO # 930 03 6317)

Positive Parenting Event: The Challenges of Education, Parenting and Teenagers

Marc Falconer (author of 'Notes from a Headmaster's Desk' and headmaster of King David's Linksfield) is presenting a Positive Parenting talk on **Wednesday, 29 October 2014 at 18:30 at St Peter's College in Sunninghill, Sandton.**

As a headmaster and parent, he will share behind-the-scenes anecdotes and insights into the true state of the nation's schools and educators as well as the mysterious workings of teenage minds, interpreting situations he encounters daily. You will learn more about your child's innate characteristics and how you can help to manage and cultivate them for success. Cost R100.

Contact monoyoudist@stpeterscollege.co.za to book your seat.

Special on Life Talk Books!

Life Talk for a Daughter, *Life Talk for a Son* and *Life Talk for Parents* include 70 chapters covering many of the latest issues being faced by teens and young adults.

The Tug-of-Life underpins the Tug-of-Life initiative. It provides a unique approach to tackling life's challenges, and identifies the very choices and challenges that we all face (children and adults alike). It empowers young people to avoid the very challenges mentioned above, and helps them to take control of (and enrich) their life.

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