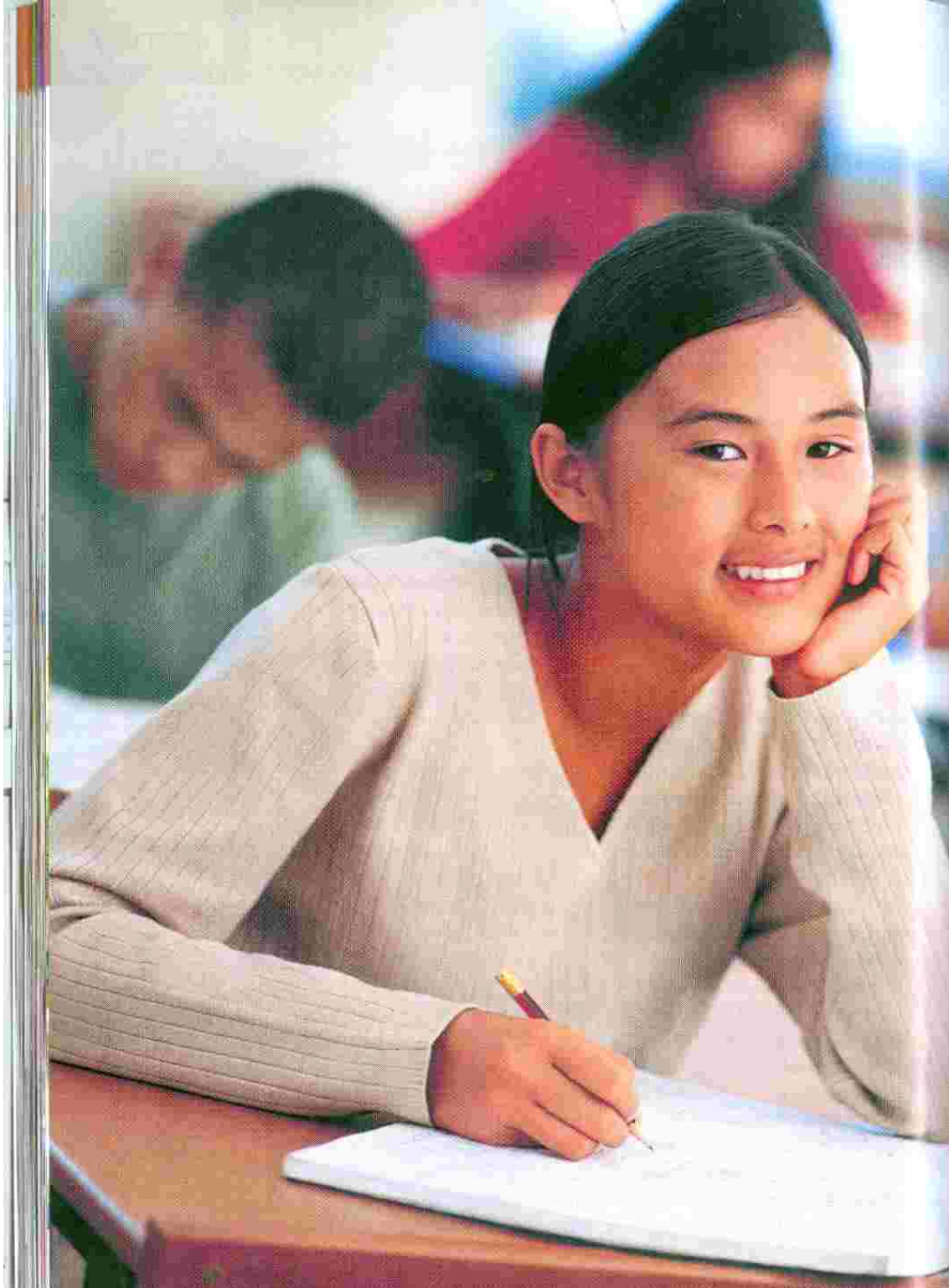


Prevention

EXAMS MADE EASY

Date: 16-02-2011 | Edition: National | Page: 80 | Source: Bureau | Clip size (cm): W: 12 H: 19

Clip: 1 of 4

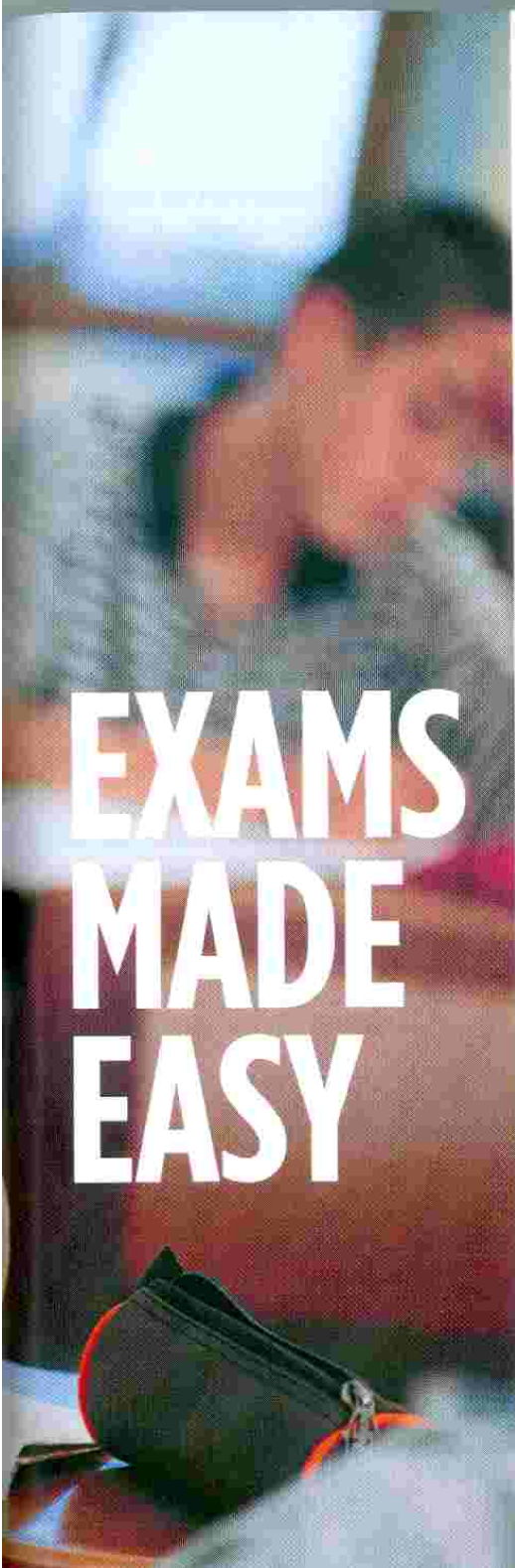


Prevention

EXAMS MADE EASY

Date: 16-02-2011 | Edition: National | Page: 80 | Source: Bureau | Clip size (cm): W: 12 H: 19

Clip: 2 of 4



family

If you could subtract examinations from student life, those years would add up to magic. Unfortunately, studies and evaluations go hand in hand and often lead to undue stress in your child. Fix it fast!

■ BY BENITA SEN

STRESS IS A VICIOUS CYCLE: once you start worrying, it can block the mind and make you forget faster than you learn. It manifests itself in inexplicable stomach pains, menstrual cramps, headaches, nausea, diarrhoea. It could express itself with sweating, irritability, insomnia, asthma and blackouts. "High levels of stress lead to the secretion of the stress hormone cortisol which weakens your immune system," explains Dr PV Vaidyanathan, Mumbai-based paediatrician and author of two parenting books, *Make Your Child Stress-Free* and *Managing the Unmanageable Child*.

However, experts say some amount of stress is necessary for a student taking exams. This is called eustress or good stress which boosts performance. If your child is absolutely cool about the exams, her performance may not be up to the mark. So balance it out.

To help your child retain everything, perform well and keep upbeat in the run up to the exams and during those days you need to start ahead. Make sure her immunity is built with good food, exercises, enough rest and sleep and a happy environment.

PREVENTION ■ 87

Prevention

EXAMS MADE EASY

Date: 16-02-2011 | Edition: National | Page: 80 | Source: Bureau | Clip size (cm): W: 12 H: 19

Clip: 3 of 4

family

Serve her the Right Food

She will not only be stronger and more energetic, but her memory will also be strengthened with the right foods. "Turn her plate into a colourful palette with a rainbow of fruits and veggies that includes a variety of colours—red, green, yellow and orange. Strawberries, tomatoes and carrots are all great immunity boosters," says Mumbai-based nutritionist Naini Setalvad.

"Serve up food rich in memory-boosting Omega-3 fatty acids such as flaxseeds, walnuts, almonds, etc," she says. Grapes, cherries, apples, spinach, broccoli and beet root are also great for memory. "Vitamin B-complex is excellent for better memory too. So reach out for oats, bananas and avocados," adds Setalvad. Make sure she drinks enough water. Dehydration can play havoc with memory.

Allow her Enough Rest

Sleep rests the brain, sharpens concentration, boosts memory and retrieval

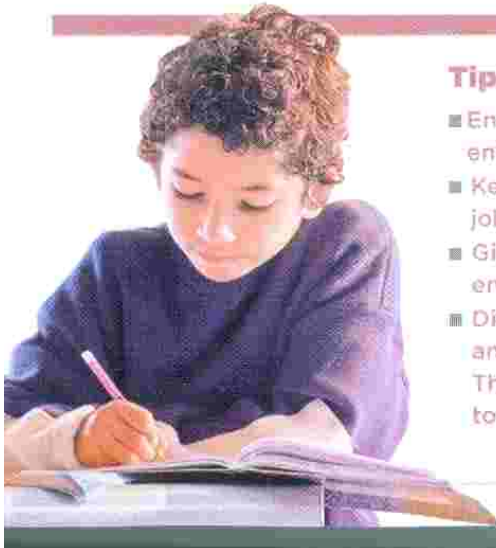
of facts. So make sure that your child follows a healthy sleep pattern. "While eight to nine hours should do, some children may need 10 to 12 hours' sleep a day," says Vaidyanathan.

Leave her with Free Time

Stress and physical inactivity are directly linked. "Dance or a sport like cycling, skipping, swimming or a short sprint will not only give him a rush of happy hormones but also improve his concentration," says Dr Gaurav Sharma, sports medicine specialist, Holy Angel Hospital, New Delhi. Make sure that he gets enough free time and breaks. Sometimes indulging in a comparatively sedentary hobby like music can also lift his spirits.

Fight the Fear Factors

Identifying the exam fear factors that are stressing out your child and addressing them immediately are essential to steer through these days. We have identified some for you along with expert solutions. Don't hesitate to seek professional help if you think you can't cope alone.



Tips to give exams the chin-up

- Encourage your child to meditate. It enhances concentration.
- Keep cheering her up intermittently with jokes and laughter during study breaks.
- Give your child a quiet and peaceful environment to study.
- Discourage stimulant beverages like coffee and avoid medication with amphetamines. They hamper comprehension and ability to retain information.

FEBRUARY 2011

Prevention

EXAMS MADE EASY

Date: 16-02-2011 | Edition: National | Page: 80 | Source: Bureau | Clip size (cm): W: 12 H: 19

Clip: 4 of 4

■ I have sudden panic stations.

Where it comes from: Inadequate preparation, poor time management, frequent comparison with others.

How to handle it: Comfort your child and try to cheer him up by chatting about lighter matters. Help her strategise well and seek tips from teachers. "Let her not waste time by discussing with friends or class mates over the telephone," says Jeromey Jaypaul, guidance counsellor, Bishop Cotton Boys School, Bengaluru. Friends can mislead and want to distract and unnerve you. "Ask your child to avoid people who make him feel low," says Dr Jayanti Dutta, consultant clinical psychologist and associate professor, Clinical Psychology, Lady Irwin College, New Delhi.

■ I won't retain a thing!

Where it comes from: Poor sleep, bad eating habits, stress-induced panic.

How to handle it: Says Dr Jitendra Nagpal, senior consultant psychiatrist, Vidyasagar Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences, New Delhi, "Whenever memory blanks out, one should sit back, relax for a while, put one's head down and concentrate. It may take few minutes to recollect the information but it is possible to get hold of it." The trick is to be calm and concentrate. Study hours should be punctuated with short breaks to retain and remember! To build memory for your kid, keep quizzing her with brain games and puzzles through the year.

■ There is an awful lot to cover.

Where it comes from: Disorganised, last-ditch study, lack of concentration.

How to handle it: Studying can be like eating a meal. Suggest that your child



breaks it into different courses and goes systematically with bite-sized portions. Encourage studying in short bursts of 40 to 60 minutes. Improve her concentration by de-cluttering the room she studies in. "It doesn't matter if you haven't covered all the topics. Select a few but be thorough. Think positive," suggests Dutta.

■ My parents will be embarrassed.

Where it comes from: Unduly high expectations from parents or lack of communication, or both.

How to handle it: Keep the talk lines open. "Tone down your expectations from your child and praise her for her achievements in other areas," says Dr Arvind Taneja, advisor and senior consultant, Paediatrics, Max Healthcare, New Delhi. Rather, help her explore other career options if academics is not her strongest point. Ensure that she doesn't take poor academic performance as personal failure and loss of face socially. Also, don't compare your child with other children—this exacerbates fear. ■