

Braving the boards: armed yet eased!

With exam time knocking at the door, samir parikh, chief psychiatrist, department of mental health and behavioural sciences, Max Healthcare, outlines tips on how to combat the last moment nervous attack just prior to an exam

COME March and one gets to see the lingering silence at home, dust laden TV sets and desolated play stations. Houses, which once echoed with chattering all day long, are engulfed in an absolute quiet, for it's the time of the year when being a student becomes treacherous, and braving the boards is more like winning a battle—there is no place for a defeat. Moreover, what comes along is bountiful stress, making this phase nothing less than a torture. Over 80 per cent students report significant exam anxiety before exams. The number of students coming for psychiatrist consultation goes up substantially indicating that exam days are crucial both for the students and their families, as one bad exam can tremendously drop the confidence of the child, worsening his coming exams. In order to cope with the stress and nervousness, here are some tips to be followed prior to the exam day:

Before entering the exam hall

- * No reading

- * Talk to friends, but do not talk studies
- * Minimize waiting time outside hall
- * Speak positively to yourself—I am well prepared, I will do well

In the hall

- * Settle and compose yourself
- * Set your table
- * Do a short relaxation routine
- * If you are having anxiety symptoms, remind yourself that this is natural and ignore these sensations and focus on your task
- * Do not hurry into reading the question paper
- * Time yourself—be cost effective with time
- * Feel comfortable and start your answers
- * If you do not know a question, don't waste time, move on to the next after leaving some space—you can try it later
- * Leave space after each answer so that at the end if you want to add something you could do so
- * Do not be in a hurry—this is not a race
- * Do not bother as to how many supplementary sheets others are taking
- * Try and revise at the end

Out of the hall

- * No post mortem
- * Leave for home, avoid study discussions
- * Relax at home
- * Give yourself a break
- * Start studies when comfortable

The in-between days

- * Focus on basic study skills
- * Short spurts of reading with breaks
- * Attention, concentration exercises
- * No over work
- * Reading through notes
- * Getting into the focus of the subject
- * Take care of your lifestyle
- * Don't under sleep
- * Maintain regular sleep awake pattern
- * Maintain outdoor activity at least one hour per day
- * Continue talking to friends
- * Share time with family
- * Don't stop enjoying
- * No coffee, smoking, self-medications

Problem solving

- * Talk to your subject teacher if in academic doubt
- * Talk to your school counselor if there is anxiety
- * Share thoughts with parents and friends

Your previous paper did not go well

- * Marks are an aggregate; one paper alone does not matter
- * Focus on the next paper, forget the previous one
- * No discussions about the last exam
- * If feeling low, anxious, upset, talk about it

Exam is a part of life, and tests come throughout life; each exam is a learning stage of life. Dr Parikh further stresses, "No exam is the last or THE exam". At the end of the day your attitude and approach to the exam matters, focus on performance; you would get your result, he adds.