

Helping Your Child Manage Test Anxiety

What Is Test Anxiety?

Test anxiety is the uneasiness and tension that a young person feels before, during or after a test.

A little nervousness before an exam is normal and can motivate a young person to prepare and perform well in their exam.

However, at times a young person’s anxiety can start to interfere with test taking and cause their minds to “go blank”, impact their ability to sustain their attention and retain or recall information. It is important not to ignore this and instead offer support.

Signs of Test Anxiety may include (but are not limited to):

<p>Physical Signs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butterflies in the stomach • Headaches • Nausea • Sleepless nights 	<p>Emotional Signs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent tears or excessive crying • Feelings of anger and/or helplessness • Irritability 	<p>Behavioural and Cognitive Signs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative thinking • Difficulties concentrating • Comparing themselves to others
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What can I do to help?

- The priority is to improve your child’s academic buoyancy. In other words, enable your child to withstand and respond to challenges and setbacks.
- This can be accomplished through the 5C’s: Confidence, Co-ordination, Control, Composure and Commitment.

In the Lead up to the Exams:

- **Set goals.** Sit down with your child and work on some goals of what they would like to realistically achieve in their examinations and a plan of how they will achieve this.
- **Create a revision timetable.** Develop a revision timetable to help your child prepare in advance of the exams and avoid cramming at the last minute. Encourage and positively reward them for good study habits.
- **Help your child prepare.** Supporting your child with effective study techniques and test-taking skills can help them feel prepared and boost their confidence. Ensure they are engaging in active revision techniques such as practicing tests on materials to be learnt.
- **View failures as opportunities.** If during the lead up to the exams, your child performs poorly on a mock exam or homework, use this as an opportunity to talk about how mistakes are learning opportunities and use as a tool to assess current exam preparations.
- **Maintain a healthy lifestyle.** Help your children get enough sleep, eat well, exercise, have some personal “down time” and a reasonable amount of social interaction. This is just as important as revision.
- **Do your best.** Talk with your children and encourage them to do their best.
- **Relaxation exercises.** Build mental habits that help your child reduce anxiety by teaching them to take deep breaths to calm themselves when anxiety levels are high.
- *Purge anxieties on paper.* All that anxiety packed in your anxious child’s brain can “over crowd” their thoughts and decrease their memory retrieval abilities. Instead of keeping the anxieties harbored inside, encourage your child “purge” them by writing them out on paper shortly before the exam.

The Night Before the Exam:

- **Prepare for the next day.** Help your child to prepare everything that they will need for the exam the night before— pen, pencil, ruler, eraser, and calculator, etc.
- **Have fun.** Do something fun on the night before the exam to distract them like playing a board game, watching a movie, or participating in a sporting activity.
- **Take some of the pressure off.** Set the alarm so your child can relax and get a good night sleep before the exam.

What Parents Can Do On Exam Day To Help Reduce Anxiety:

- **Healthy Breakfast.** As the brain needs lots of energy to maintain focus. Foods such as eggs, cereal, fresh fruits and whole wheat toast help to energize the brain. Avoid foods that contain lots of sugar and caffeine like soda pop, cookies, as well as fatty junk foods.
- **Pep Talk!!!** Stay Positive. Remind your child that, no matter what happens with any test, he or she is a wonderful, beautiful, worthwhile individual who is deeply cherished and loved.