



Reducing the negative effects of exam stress – is it at all possible?

Whether we like it or not, whether we agree with it or not, examinations are an integral part of the educational system. This is how we measure progress, this is how decisions regarding students' qualifications are made. A great deal depends on the exam results, hence the tremendous pressure on students to perform.

How do **you** feel when thinking about your exams, the past and maybe the forthcoming ones?

There are students who truly love exams; despite experiencing a certain level of anxiety they feel exams give them an opportunity to show what they have learnt, to experience a sense of completion; they see examinations as steps towards their final academic goal.

However, the majority of students don't share those sentiments. Many suffer an almost paralysing fear often at the very thought of finding themselves in an examination room.

The exam stress may be caused by a lack of effective revision techniques, a lack of confidence that success is possible, a lack of skills that can help melt some of the stress away and finally by seeing exams as the ultimate symbols of life success or failure.

Students who can identify with the above 'deficiencies' urgently need help. Unless they get it, they are likely to either develop health problems, suffer nervous breakdowns (and in extreme cases attempt to hurt themselves!) or go into 'can't be bothered' mode, give up trying altogether and withdraw from the race.

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Doing the activities in 'Stress-Free Exam' book is a good way to start.

For those who don't respond positively to the well-established revision recommendations, the book explores some 'alternative' ways of revising.

Those who seriously lack confidence will find here suggestions how they can begin to remedy the situation.

Those whose brain 'go on strike' when under stress will not only become aware of their individual response to stress but will also find here some practical tools helping them to melt their stress away both before and during exams.

Those who believe firmly that lack of exam success is the ultimate failure will learn that there always is light at the end of the tunnel and will be encouraged to prepare 'plan B', something to fall on 'in case' and something that will help them relax.

In a nutshell:

- start using the most effective (for you!) revision techniques;
- believe you can succeed;
- be aware of your response to stress and learn some powerful techniques that will melt your stress away;
- make your 'plan B'
- revise as well as you can and let go of thinking about the results!

Why Words Matter...?

Communicating with our children is one of the key elements of parenting; good communication can create trust, respect, strong bond and mutual understanding in all kinds of relationships, including the one with our children. Yet again and again it tends to elude us, proving to be much more problematic, much more complex than many of us may suspect...

What makes communicating with people, young and older, such a challenge?
Among the potential obstacles are:

- poor listening skills, frequent inability to really hear what the other is trying to say
- a tendency to interpret and mis-interpret messages we hear
- strong emotions that so often block the ability to reason
- lack of awareness of the power of words and skills to use the right words in the right situations.

In 'Why Words Matter' parents (as well as anyone else living or working with children and young people) will find practical advice how to improve relationships by modifying the language of interactions.

The topics include ways of expressing praise and appreciation (not always as obvious and helpful as one may think...) as well as criticism and disappointment; effective ways of getting attention and telling children what to do and what not to do. In short, we learn what to say and how to use words as well as what to avoid at all cost.

We are told that we need to pause and reflect more often about the power words have; about the fact that they can empower or weaken, uplift or depress, heal or damage. The activities in the book make it clear that a great deal depends on what you say and how you express your thoughts and emotions.

Putting the acquired knowledge into everyday life is likely to require awakened awareness, time, effort and a great deal of practice as for most of us it will mean changing life-long firmly established habits and developing new, more effective ones.

A habit to STOP and think about the power words have and choose the ones that help achieve our objectives.

We need to develop a habit of taking responsibility for words coming out of our mouth, rather than allowing them to just 'slip out'.

It will undoubtedly be worth the effort...

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