

PARENTEdge

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MANAGING EXAM STRESS WITH AYURVEDA





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Stress and anxiety could hinder the thinking capability of students, especially in the times of the pandemic when there is already so much uncertainty around. For teenagers, appearing for exams is not just about the exam preparation but also about taking all the necessary precaution to safeguard their health. Read on.



Each individual has a unique set of skills, likes and dislikes which in Ayurveda is known as prakriti (body constitution). Parents must be aware of their teen's prakriti.

Exams in the 'new normal'

Students all across India have already begun appearing for their various pre-board and internal school exams. Soon the final exams will be conducted, in settings very different from earlier years. However, both parents and children need to stay calm and deal with the situation in a balanced way. The government has already issued standard operating procedures, prioritising the health of students but immunity is the key to resist and fight infection. With the help of a few simple Ayurvedic practices, teenagers can keep their mind calm, stay healthy and prepare themselves to appear for their exams during the pandemic.

Parents' approach to performance – Ayurveda's inputs

Students tend to concentrate more when they are with people who appreciate and understand the efforts they are putting in. We have to remember that all children do their best. Their hard work may not always

result in proportionately high marks. Marks are not everything. In fact, in India, marks are not an accurate indicator of the child's knowledge or ability.

Each individual has a unique set of skills, likes and dislikes which in Ayurveda is known as prakriti (body constitution). Parents must be aware of their teen's prakriti in order to understand and support well. Comparing one child to another is never right. If one child is good in academics, another will be good at music, dance, sports or being helpful and kind.

Parents should talk to their teenagers about their interests, help them in releasing their fears and therefore regulating their thoughts. Depending on one's prakriti, there is a drive for a particular thing and most probably one tends to develop an interest towards that. A parent's role in a child's life is important. Even if parents are not aware of the child's prakriti, they



should definitely attempt to understand what the teenager is interested in or passionate about. So during exam time, parents should avoid focussing only on marks or performance.

Tips from Ayurveda to manage stress and anxiety

It is very important for the body to feel active in order to concentrate. Junk foods should be excluded from the diet of teenagers and replaced with foods such as dairy products (milk, cottage cheese, buttermilk, curd), dry fruits (raisin, almonds, walnuts, etc.), seasonal green vegetables and fruits as these types of foods help in keeping the digestive fire strong. Also, they will contribute to a healthy gut which will help one stay focussed.

Lentils such as moong dal, masoor dal and tuvar dal can be consumed by teens while preparing or appearing for exams. These lentils are easy to digest.

To unwind the mind, teenagers can do aerobics, walking/jogging or yoga. These kinds of exercises will help the student feel active without tiring the body. Exercises help in better blood circulation which in turn lets the brain get oxygenated blood. Once there is oxygenated blood in each cell, the concentration level of the student would automatically increase which is required while preparing for, as well as during exams.

A positive ambience is helpful in enhancing the thinking pattern of a student. Lighting up incense sticks/oil lamps could help relax the mind. Relaxation is a need for both the body and mind. Without proper rest, a teenager would not be able to give his/her best.

Teenagers can do shavasana. It is a very simple exercise and will help the teen in letting go of all the thoughts in his/her mind. Shavasana could be done twice daily, in the mornings and evenings. Another effective yet simple exercise is abdominal breathing (deep breathing). It is a technique of slow and deep breathing which if done periodically can give immense relaxation to the body and mind. Listening to soft and soothing music or any other activity that makes the teen relaxed could also be done.

Continuously gazing at screens/textbooks can definitely lead to strain in the eyes which may in turn lead to headaches. Blinking eyes at regular intervals, washing/splashing eyes with cool and clear water periodically and palming on eyes are some easy and effective techniques to relax the eyes.

While talking about Ayurveda, how can we forget the quintessential roles of the various herbs? There are herbs that help in reducing anxiety, and one such is ashwagandha, a powerful antioxidant that helps in reducing stress. Another popular herb known for its calming properties is shankhapushpi. This herb has a balancing nature that automatically uplifts and calms the mind. These can help teens remain calm during exams.

Applying oil is a good option - not just on the head but on the whole body. Such a practice balances the level of water in the body and increases concentration and focus. Water is responsible for all neuro-hormonal activities of the brain and when the level of water is balanced, the mind will be calm and relaxed, much needed during exams. Washing of hair should be done every two days as that prevents hair from becoming greasy and there are less chances of dandruff, itchiness and hair fall.

Talking about massages, these help to keep the mind calm. Massages enhance blood circulation, improve skin tone, and relax the joints, nerves, muscles and bones. During summers, coconut oil is the best option as it is not sticky. For fragrance, one could even add drops of rose and jasmine in regular oil. Students could use almond oil for head massage during exam as it has a lot of nutrients in it.

I hope this wisdom of Ayurveda will help parents and teenagers during this exam season.

- Dr Partap Chauhan

