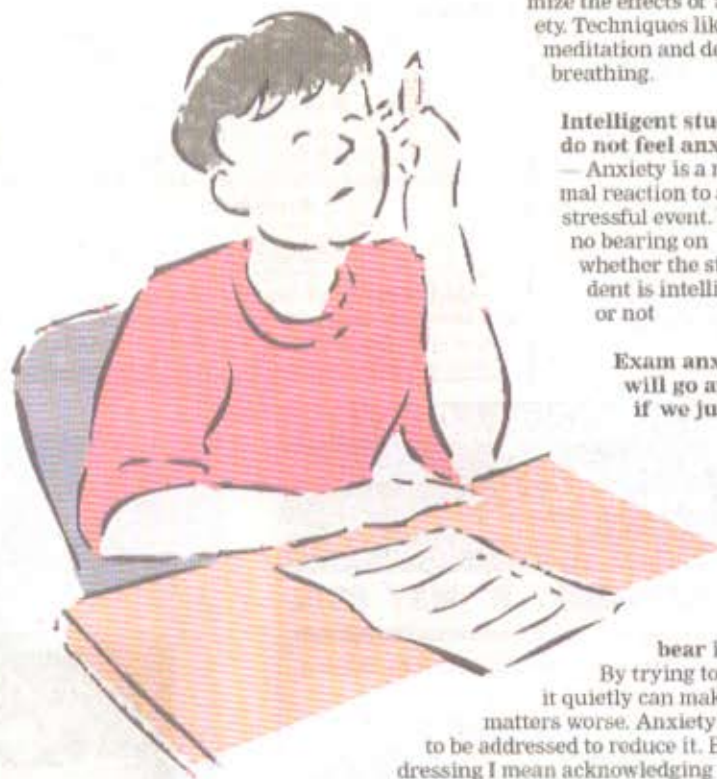


Bust exam anxiety myths

COUNSELLOR **MEERA RAVI** CHECKS THE REALITY OF MYTHS ABOUT ANXIETY AROUND EXAM TIME AND OFFERS ADVICE ON HOW TO COPE



help you and thus minimize the effects of anxiety. Techniques like meditation and deep breathing.

Intelligent students do not feel anxious — Anxiety is a normal reaction to any stressful event. It has no bearing on whether the student is intelligent or not

Exam anxiety will go away if we just

bear it — By trying to bear it quietly can make matters worse. Anxiety has to be addressed to reduce it. By addressing I mean acknowledging it and expressing it.

Students who are not prepared will have exam anxiety — The fact is, students who are well prepared, too, go through anxiety as they it is a very common phenomena.

Exam anxiety affects only students — No, even adults when faced with situation where their performance is going to be judged, go through anxiety. They also need to address it.

Exercises to help you reduce anxiety

FOCUSING

Select a small personal object that you like a great deal. It might be a favourite pen or book. Focus all your attention on this object as you inhale and exhale slowly and deeply for one to two minutes. While you are doing this exercise, try not to let any other thoughts or feelings

enter your mind. If they do, just return your attention to the object. At the end of this exercise you will probably feel more peaceful and calmer.

MEDITATION

- Sit or lie in a comfortable position.
- Close your eyes and breathe deeply.

Let your breathing be slow and relaxed.

■ Focus all your attention on your breathing. Notice the movement of your chest and abdomen in and out.

■ Block out all other thoughts, feelings, and sensations. If you feel your attention wandering, bring it back to your breathing.

■ As you inhale, say the word "peace" to yourself, and as you exhale, say the word "calm." Draw out the pronunciation of the word so that it lasts for the entire breath. The word "peace" sounds like p-e-e-a-a-a-c-c-c-e-e-e. The word "calm" sounds like: c-a-a-a-l-l-l-m-m-m. Repeating these words as you breathe will help you to concentrate.

■ Continue this exercise until you feel very relaxed.

GETTING PSYCHED...

After every study session, tell yourself you are going to do well in the exam. Likewise, offer yourself rewards for studying. Give yourself something to look forward to after studying and after the exam, so you can feel as if you have accomplished something. Often the time you spend doing this is just as important as the studying itself. Here are a few tips to help keep your energy level high during exam preparation:

■ Schedule your study sessions before pleasant times of the day, like meal-times or a favourite activity or television program.

■ Plan well in advance. Don't leave all studying to the last moment.

■ Have a set time schedule for studying so that you can tell yourself, "just one more hour," and there seems to be an end to the studying sessions.

■ Relax a little every now and then. Take regular breaks, so you don't burn out. If anxiety starts building, take a few deep breaths and try to calm yourself.

■ Avoid interaction with other anxious friends.

■ Plan something special after your exam. Whether you do well or not, the ordeal of the preparation and experience of the exam is worth a break. Make it a special occasion with friends. Make sure you give yourself a higher reward for actually finishing the exam than you did for studying.

■ Don't worry about the outcome of the exam after you take it; there's nothing you can do about it now. If you did the best you could, you have nothing to worry about!

Heard these statements before? "I am so nervous I am not able to concentrate while I am studying," or, "I go blank when I see the question paper" — these are some common statements from students who go through exam anxiety. There are certain myths around the term exam anxiety, let us explore the reality of some of them:

Exam anxiety is bad — NO! In fact, it is general stress that helps motivate us to succeed. When the focus of our



energy turns to anxiety rather than the task at hand, then it can become detrimental to your efforts. If you can channelize the anxiety in an appropriate way it can actually act as a motivation.

We cannot help exam anxiety — Of course there are techniques that can