

My name is Nikhil. I am a student of class 12. I have a problem regarding time management when I study. Because when I sit down to study, I cannot concentrate at all. Can you help me?

Dear Nikhil,

Time management, basically, is habit management. One way of developing more efficient habits is to have a clear goal and follow it with a time schedule (how much time should you allot for studying and how should it be distributed?). Study at the same time every day; it will make it easier to habitually follow the schedule and to maintain an active approach to study. Ensure you have everything you need before you sit for studying. Leave some unscheduled time for flexibility. The lack of flexibility is the major reason why schedules fail. Inability to say no is a major obstacle to good time management. Time management (or self management) is not hard but without commitment, you'll only achieve partial results.

For better concentration, first identify what the distractions are.

Then as you notice your thoughts wandering astray, say to yourself, "Be here, now," and gently bring your attention back to where you want it. Get a dedicated space, chair, table, lighting and environment. Sit away from the TV or phone.

I have a problem, I am an introvert. I mean I hesitate to talk where there are many people, specially guys. If there are many students in a group and I have to give a speech, I tremble with fear. I want to participate but however much ever I try, it's in vain. Because of this I did not take part in any dance competition till now. I am 18 and stepping into my first year of engineering. I am told that in engineering, it's really important during placements to take part in group discussion and so on, because communication skills are important. I am good at studies, but because of my fear, I may face problems during my placements. So please help me.

Dear S,

I understand your anxiety. The underlying cause of all the symptoms you have described seems to be fear. The three aspects of fear are a) It's an emotional response to threat b) it's learnt c) it's a misuse of the imagination.

Ask yourself — what is the threat? How did I learn it? Am I choosing to imagine a nega-

ive future? You have written your inner mind says go, participate, then what is it that stops you? You want a cure from me; but I see you have the remedy in your hands. You possess qualities like determination and hard work which is evident from the fact that you are good in studies. Invest the same to overcome fear. Instead of getting worked up about placement now itself, challenge yourself. Determine to take part in every event that comes along. Relax just before you speak, practise in front of the mirror and have a back up in case you forget. Fear creates fear. Speak despite fear. That is the only way to beat fear, even if you are afraid, nervous, hesitant.

I am doing my II PU. I know this is an important year for me, but I cannot study because I do not want to miss my favourite TV programmes as well as sports programmes. How can I make time for study, without missing TV programmes? Amit B



Dear Amit,

I wish I knew specifically how many hours of TV you want to watch. Nonetheless, two words that come to my mind are temptation and will power. Which one would you like to choose? What will be the outcome of choosing either? Your desire to make time for study without missing TV programmes sounds like eating the cake and having it too. First, sincerely, make up your mind that this year your priority should be studies. Next, find ways of fighting the battle against your temptation. Some suggestions 1) Set an alarm for a chosen time limit to watch TV; and switch it off as the alarm rings. 2) Make a deal with yourself — if you're able to give up a few programs for six days then you treat yourself to a favourite programme on the seventh day. 3) Prioritize the TV programmes — choose to watch the best ones and forgo the others (reward yourself every time you achieve the goal you set for yourself). Eventually, it is your will power which will liberate you from this monster known as temptation.

(Meera Ravi is a psychologist with many years of experience in dealing with students' queries about handling studies. If you have problems managing your studies, write in to her at bngeeds@indiatimes.com Do not forget to mention HELP DESK in the subject line.

Or send your questions to Help Desk, Education Times, The Times of India, 40/1, S&B Towers, MG Road, Bangalore 560001).

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