I am studying in class 12. This is a crucial year for me. I cannot concentrate on my studies. Please tell me what to do.

C Mohan

Dear Mohan,

I understand your anxiety. Let me assure you that you are not alone. Many students face a similar situation.

Concentration is your ability to work without letting people, feelings or activities get in the way. *Try following some of these tips:*

• Divide tasks into manageable parts. You will feel a sense of accomplishment more often, which will help you stay motivated for longer.

• Take a break of five minutes every 40 minutes.

• If you find yourself losing focus, stand up. The physical act of standing up cautions you that you are losing focus.

• Vary your activities. Read notes for a while, formulate questions and answers for some time, recite and review to break the monotony.

• Select a place which is away from distractions.

• Attend to internal distractions like hunger and tiredness well before you start studying. If there are disturbing thoughts, set aside a specific time each day to think about the things that keep entering your mind and interfering with your concentration.

HELP DESK

I am a student of class 10. I find it difficult to manage my time when I study. I am not so good at Maths, so I spend a lot of time on it, but I neglect other subjects. How can I allocate enough time for every subject?

Sunita

Dear Sunita,

Time management boils down to awareness, organization and commitment. Congratulations! You have two of the three. You are aware of the problem and the fact that you are seeking advice shows you have commitment. For better organization, here are a few tips:

• Make a weekly schedule by allocating required amount of time for each subject (providing little extra for math). Be realistic. Use time to create success, not failure. Review after a week and modify if needed.

• An untidy and chaotic study area causes not only distraction but also waste of time. Make sure you have everything that you need before you begin and ensure no distracting items are lying around in that area.

• Television, telephone and computer. Do you know how much time you spend on these? Watch out, for they are silent time stealers.

• Write down all disturbing thoughts before you study. Keep adding to the same anything that distracts you as you are studying. Address the list later.

• Don't waste time feeling guilty about what you didn't do. Instead focus on what you can do differently.

I am doing my engineering. I feel nervous at the time of exams, and think negatively about my performance. How can I avoid this?

Neetu

Hi Neetu,

At the outset I would like to say that most students experience anxiety during exam. Fear breeds anxiety. Ask yourself two questions a) what is the fear? b) What is the basis of the negative thoughts about your performance? Nonetheless here are a few suggestions.

• Being well prepared for the test is the best way to reduce exam anxiety. This will help you to approach the exam with confidence rather than having excessive anxiety.

• Space out your studying over a few days or weeks. Don't try to learn everything the night before.

• Maintain a positive attitude as you study. Think about doing well, not failing. Take slow, deep breaths as the tension builds up.

• Use thought stopping technique to challenge negative thoughts: As soon as you become aware of a negative thought, silently shout to yourself "Stop". Then either relax yourself or repeat a positive self-talk statement (e.g. I am prepared well, I know this time I'll do well). Thought stopping works because it interrupts the worry response before it can cause high anxiety or negative emotions.