

Final exams don't have to be high stress for your teen

December 19 2022, by Cara Murez HealthDay Reporter



Final exams are stressful for students, but it is possible to ratchet down

the pressure with some planning and self-compassion.

A psychologist from Baylor College of Medicine in Houston offers a few suggestions for helping teens manage the pressure.

Start with the basics, including making sure the teen is getting sufficient sleep, eating nutritiously without skipping meals and maintaining a reasonable level of physical activity.

"A lot of people end up thinking they need to spend more time studying or don't have time for exercise or meals, but it ends up turning into a [vicious cycle](#) of not taking care of yourself, which contributes to worse future performance," said Dr. Eric Storch. He is vice chair of psychology in the Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Baylor.

Every study schedule should include taking breaks to relax and unwind, he said.

Also, Storch advised, it's important to keep things in perspective. Success and failure aren't black and white. Talking to a friend or parent can be very helpful for those who are under stress.

"Reflect on if the world will end if you don't get a perfect score. Maybe you didn't do as well as you wanted on that test, but you didn't fail," Storch said in a Baylor news release.

He suggests that students make a study plan instead of procrastinating, then take the right steps to get there.

"When you procrastinate, you take all the time you could have been working and ruin it by having this gray cloud hanging above you," Storch said.

He added that parents and teachers should familiarize themselves with the signs of anxiety and stress in students. Younger adolescents might complain about stomach aches or be clingy. Older adolescents might have some of those same symptoms, as well as sleep problems, irritability and increased emotions.

Storch warned that social media can interfere with [school work](#) and cause more stress.

A teen having trouble putting the phone or tablet down or feeling distress if not engaged in social media should visit a mental health specialist, he said. Storch recommends [exposure therapy](#) for patients to understand the fears of parting with social media, as well as putting the phone down to engage in fun activities and seeing how that works out.

"Engage in tests to see what happens if you put the phone down and don't engage in social media for an hour. Does the world end? Does your [social standing](#) plummet? Let's start challenging the degree in which you're engaging in [social media](#)," Storch said.

More information: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has more on [managing stress](#).

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Citation: Final exams don't have to be high stress for your teen (2022, December 19) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-12-exams-dont-high-stress-teen.html>

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