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Mental Health

Helping your Teen Cope with Exam Stress

A little bit of stress can be a good motivator. Exams, however, can elevate stress and stop our youth from performing their best.

Below are ways you can help your teen manage exam stress:

- Teens need to recognize when they are stressed. Encourage them to take a break or to talk to you about the pressures they are under, to help put things into perspective.
- Help your teens develop a realistic study timeline. Schedule studying time to avoid last-minute cramming. Remind them that they can always seek extra help from their teachers.
- Encourage your teen to eat right. Healthy snacks like nuts, whole grains, vegetables and fruit keep blood sugar stable. Proteins provide sustainable energy and water will keep teens hydrated. Avoid sugar which causes crashes. Caffeinated and energy drinks can increase agitation.
- Exercise can boost feel-good endorphins and help lower stress. Encourage your teen to incorporate physical activity, like walking, into their study breaks.
- Encourage eight hours of sleep every night.
- Encourage stress relievers like deep breathing. Breathe in and out through the nose, counting to four each time.
- Coach your teen on how to take an exam: scan the exam and preview the questions. Carefully read the exam instructions. Start with the easiest questions. Set a steady pace. If time permits, go back and check answers.
- Encourage a positive mindset. Remind them that they have studied and prepared for the exam, so they know most of the information they need.

Exam season may be stressful, but only lasts for a short time period. By learning how to cope during school exams, students will be better equipped to handle stressful periods later in life.

Infection Control

'Tis the Season...

The winter tends to bring colds, the flu, and tummy bugs into our lives. If your child is unwell, the chart below shows symptoms associated with three common viruses.

How do you know when your sick child should stay home from school and for how long? Check this [handy guide](#) here!

Encourage everyone in your home to use good infection control practices:

- Wash your hands thoroughly and often
- Cover your cough with a tissue or into your upper sleeve
- Stay home if sick
- Keep commonly touched surfaces clean and disinfected
- Ensure your immunizations are up-to-date and get the flu shot each year

Tobacco Prevention

Flavoured Tobacco: How is it targeting your teens?

Watermelon, vanilla, cherry and chocolate - these flavours sound delicious, don't they? What about when they are added to tobacco products? Strawberry and peach little cigars, apple and berry chew tobacco, mint and bubble gum shisha - any of these could be mistaken for candy flavours. These flavours are used to cover up the harsh taste of tobacco on its own, and the results appeal to new and young tobacco users ¹.

To go along with these "fun" flavours the products tend to be packaged in bright and colourful packages (similar to that of common candy packages), making them even more appealing to young people.

The most recent Youth Smoking Survey found that 50% of Canadian students in grades 9-12, who had used tobacco products in the last 30 days, reported using flavoured products ². The same survey found that among students in grade 9-12 who had smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days 29% of them reported smoking menthols ².

Flavours might make the products sound less harmful, but in reality tobacco products are still addictive. These products still contain the thousands of chemicals that make tobacco a leading cause of preventable death in Canada ³. The government of Ontario has recognized the risk flavoured tobacco poses to our youth and has proposed legislation banning the sale of flavoured tobacco as of January 1, 2016.

Until then, however, parents should be vigilant. There is an industry out there trying to target our young people and we need to work together to stop this from happening.

For more information on the proposed legislation or to contact your local MPP to show your support, visit the [Tobacco Control Area Networks'](#) new website.

Injury Prevention

Concussions: Not just a little bump on the head

Concussions can happen anywhere, not just while your child is playing sports.

A concussion is a brain injury that causes changes in the way the brain functions. It can be caused by a direct blow to the head, face or neck. It can also be caused by a blow to the body that causes the brain to move rapidly within the skull.

Some signs and symptoms of a concussion are:

- Vomiting
- Poor coordination or balance
- Loss of consciousness (your child may experience a concussion even if they do not lose consciousness)
- General confusion
- Cannot remember things that happened before and after the injury
- Slowed reaction time
- Increased irritation and frustration

Signs and symptoms can appear immediately after the injury or may take hours or days to emerge. Symptoms can be very different for everyone, so it's important to watch your child closely after an incident happens.

As a parent you have a key role in preventing your child getting a concussion by:

- Encouraging them to wear helmets when skating, skiing, snowboarding, tobogganing and biking. Helmets can absorb the impact of a fall instead of your child's head and brain doing so. Helmets minimize the effects of a potential concussion.
- Promoting sportsmanship and fair play.
- Teaching proper skills and techniques of the game/activity.

Concussions have a significant impact on a person's cognitive and physical abilities especially on your child's developing brain. Talk to your family health care provider about how your child should return to school and physical activities.

For more information on concussion go to YouTube and watch Concussion 101 by Dr. Mike Evans.

Mental Health

THINK About It!

Dear Parent,

Mental health is being increasingly recognized as a significant issue in our society. It's important to be open to this issue, even if your teen doesn't have a mental illness. Focussing on a healthy mental state for your teen is essential!

Here are some ways to help your teen stay mentally healthy:

Let your teen know you are there for them. If your teen is having some trouble, they may not want to tell you about the issues right away, but be sure to let them know you are there to listen. Your teen will talk to you about it when they are ready to, and will feel pressured if they are constantly asked about it. If they do not feel comfortable talking to you about the problem, direct them to another trusted adult.

Try to understand your teen's feelings. Try to learn more about your child's situation, and don't jump to conclusions. Be there to listen and connect with them, without trying to cast judgement. Keep the discussion open and share your own experiences, too.

Find ways to help your teen de-stress. Find a way to help your teen deal with their negative emotions in a healthy way. Do something with your teen that the whole family can enjoy, like going for a walk or a bike ride. Encouraging your teen to do something they enjoy can help them clear their mind, helping them feel refreshed. Finding ways to bond with them can also strengthen the relationship, and let your teen know you are supporting them.

Remember, keeping open communication is key to a healthy relationship, and being aware of your teen's mental health.

From,

The THINK Team

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