



Common Psychosocial Challenges Children May Face During Exams

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Exams can be a stressful time for children, and they often face psychosocial challenges that can affect their well-being. As parents, it is essential to understand these challenges and provide support. Here are some common challenges, along with what parents and children can do:

1. Fear of Failure:

- *Description:* Intense anxiety and self-doubt related to the possibility of not performing well in exams
- *What Parents Should Do:*
 - Encourage open conversations about their fears and concerns.
 - Normalise failure as a part of learning and growth.
 - Set realistic expectations and emphasise personal growth over perfection.
 - Help reframe negative thoughts and replace them with positive affirmations.
 - Teach stress-management techniques like deep breathing and mindfulness.
- *What Children Should Do:*
 - express their fears and concerns to their parents.
 - Practice positive self-talk.
 - Use stress-management techniques like deep breathing and mindfulness.

2. Performance Anxiety:

- *Description:* Overwhelming nervousness and physical symptoms before and during exams.
- *What Parents Should Do:*
 - Practice relaxation techniques with them, like deep breathing and visualisation.
 - Encourage regular exercise and a balanced diet for overall well-being.
 - Help them create a calming pre-exam routine.
- *What Children Should Do:*
 - Practice relaxation techniques independently.
 - Engage in regular exercise and maintain a balanced diet.
 - Establish their calming pre-exam routine.

3. Academic pressure:

- *Description:* Feeling overwhelmed and stressed due to the weight of academic expectations.
- *What Parents Should Do:*
 - Establish a realistic study schedule with designated breaks.
 - Offer assistance with organising study materials and planning.
 - Remind them of the importance of a balance between studies and self-care.
- *What Children Should Do:*
 - Communicate their study preferences and needs.
 - Seek help when required.
 - Actively participate in creating a realistic study schedule.

4. Perfectionism:

- *Description:* Setting excessively high standards and being overly self-critical.
- *What Parents Should Do:*
 - Encourage a growth mindset and focus on continuous improvement.
 - Praise efforts and progress, not just final results.
 - Emphasise that mistakes are learning opportunities.
- *What Children Should Do:*
 - Embrace a growth mindset.
 - Acknowledge their efforts.
 - View mistakes as opportunities for learning and growth.

5. Comparison with peers:

- *Description:* feeling inadequate or envious when comparing their performance to that of their peers.
- *What Parents Should Do:*
 - Discuss the dangers of unhealthy comparison and the uniqueness of each individual's journey.
 - Emphasise personal progress and growth rather than competition with others.
- *What Children Should Do:*
 - Focus on their personal growth.
 - Limit comparisons with peers.

6. Time Management Issues:

- *Description:* Struggling with organising and prioritising study time effectively.
- *What Parents Should Do:*
 - Provide guidance in creating a study schedule that allows for breaks and rest.
 - Help them develop time management skills through practical strategies.
- *What Children Should Do:*
 - Create an effective study schedule.
 - Learn time-management skills.

7. Parental Expectations:

- *Description:* feeling pressured to meet parental standards and fearing disappointment.
- *What Parents Should Do:*
 - communicate that their love and support are unconditional, regardless of exam outcomes.
 - Set realistic expectations and assure them that their worth is not solely tied to academic performance.
- *What Children Should Do:*
 - Communicate with parents about their concerns.
 - Understand that their worth is not defined by exam results.

8. Social Isolation:

- *Description:* Withdrawing from social activities and isolating themselves due to exam-related stress.
- *What Parents Should Do:*

- Encourage social interactions and provide opportunities for relaxation and recreation.
- *What Children Should Do:*
 - Take short breaks for social interaction and relaxation.

9. Test Anxiety:

- *Description:* experiencing physical symptoms like rapid heartbeat, nausea, and difficulty concentrating during exams.
- *What Parents Should Do:*
 - Teach and practice relaxation techniques to manage anxiety.
 - Encourage regular exercise, which can help alleviate physical tension.
- *What Children Should Do:*
 - Learn and apply relaxation techniques.
 - Stay physically active.

10. Lack of motivation:

- *Description:* experiencing apathy and disinterest in studies
- *What Parents Should Do:*
 - Help them identify their passions and interests and connect them to their studies.
- *What Children Should Do:*
 - Find ways to connect their studies with their interests.

In summary, providing a supportive, understanding, and nurturing environment is crucial during the exam period. Tailoring your approach to your child's specific needs and preferences and always encouraging open communication will help them navigate these challenges. If their difficulties persist or escalate, consider seeking advice from educators or mental health professionals. Your support can make a significant difference in helping your child cope with psychosocial challenges during exams.

Spiritual Foundation

1. **Fear of failure:**
 - *Verse:* "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7)
 - *Reflection:* Remind your child that they have the strength and capability to overcome their fears with God's help.
2. **Performance anxiety:**
 - *Verse:* "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)
 - *Reflection:* Encourage your child to turn to prayer for peace and calmness in moments of anxiety.
3. **Academic pressure:**
 - *Verse:* "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)
 - *Reflection:* Remind your child to lean on God's strength and find rest in Him amidst their studies.
4. **Perfectionism:**

- *Verse:* "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." (2 Corinthians 12:9)
 - *Reflection:* Help your child understand that they don't have to be perfect, as God's grace is more than sufficient for them.
5. **Comparison with peers:**
- *Verse:* "For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." (2 Corinthians 10:12)
 - *Reflection:* Remind your child that their worth is not determined by how they measure up to others but by their unique gifts and journey ordained by God. Their value is derived from their being created in the image and likeness of God.
6. **Time Management Issues:**
- *Verse:* "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12)
 - *Reflection:* Encourage your child to seek God's wisdom in managing their time effectively.
7. **Parental Expectations:**
- *Verse:* "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love." (Psalm 103:8)
 - *Reflection:* Assure your child of God's unconditional love and that your expectations are rooted in love and support.
8. **Social Isolation:**
- *Verse:* "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10:24-25)
 - *Reflection:* Encourage your child to lean on their faith community and seek support from friends and family.
9. **Test Anxiety:**
- *Verse:* "When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy." (Psalm 94:19)
 - *Reflection:* Remind your child to turn to God for comfort and peace during moments of anxiety.
10. **Lack of motivation:**
- *Verse:* "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans." (Proverbs 16:3)
 - *Reflection:* Encourage your child to commit their studies to the Lord, trusting that He will guide and motivate them.

These verses can provide spiritual strength and comfort for both parents and children during this challenging period. Remember to offer your love, support, and prayers as you navigate through these difficulties together.

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