



## EXAMINATIONS

# EDITORIAL

### EXAMS: THE SPORTIVE CHALLENGE


Examinations are akin to sportive challenges, where success demands grit and determination. They remind us that examinations are not to be taken lightly; they are do-or-die situations, demanding our utmost dedication. By treating examinations as sporting challenges, we acknowledge the gravity of the task at hand. Excuses become futile; there is no room for self-deception.

In the Indian epic Mahabharata, sage Dronacharya faced accusations of favoritism towards Arjuna. Despite the scrutiny, Dronacharya highlighted Arjuna's diligence and discipline, emphasizing that success is earned through hard work. **Personal effort and discipline are paramount in academic pursuits, akin to Arjuna's commitment.** Like athletes preparing for competition, diligent study, practice, and seeking clarification on challenging concepts are essential for success. Yet, amidst the intensity of preparation, maintaining a healthy perspective is crucial. **While examinations demand our best efforts, they do not define our worth; setbacks are part of the journey.** To transform examination stress into a sportive challenge, we must foster a supportive environment that encourages collaboration and camaraderie. Students should see themselves not as competitors but as teammates, supporting each other through the ups and downs of academic life.

Educators play a vital role in this transformation, providing guidance and encouragement. As Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam said, "**Difficulties in life do not come to destroy you, but to help you realize your hidden potential and power.**" This quote emphasizes perseverance and determination in facing challenges, aligning well with the theme of overcoming obstacles in examinations.

In a nutshell, let us embrace examinations as **opportunities to test our mettle and showcase our capabilities.** With the right mindset and support system in place, we can navigate through examination stress with grace and determination, **emerging stronger and more resilient** than before."



  
-Sripriya Shaji Ph.D  
Reviewer, Mind Matters

## NEWS REPORT

Sripriya Shaji (our writer and reviewer) was invited to speak at IAPEN India ICNC 2024 on 10th and 11th February 2024 in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

She chose to share the story of 'Alice in the Wonder Gut Land' on this scientific stage and her selection of character Alice to explain the concept of Psychobiotics was applauded by the nutrition stalwarts. IAPEN had raised a wall to display the literary work of eminent dieticians. Mind Matters March 2023 issue (Obesity and Mental Health) was displayed there.

Sripriya was the editor of that issue and had penned the conceptual 'Psychobiotics - Alice in the world of microbiomes'.



SCAN THIS QR CODE TO READ THE MARCH 2023 ISSUE

## PARENTAL SUPPORT DURING EXAMS: A SHARED JOURNEY!

In the current scenario, educational success is measured in terms of marks and grades. This is considered normal because good marks assure secured admission in a good professional course which in turn guarantees better career and higher status in the society. This is the reason why **wards and parents experience stress and anxiety to a superlative degree during exams.** Parents knowingly or unknowingly thrust their wards in the *Chakravyuha* (Indian Labyrinth) where entering is easy, returning is not and conquering it is even more difficult.

This not only affects productivity and performance; but also takes a toll on health. **Parents want to help their wards but often are at a loss on how they can offer support.** I too felt the same. Then I tried to remember what my parents did for me.

They did not take days off, but changed their schedules; so that one of them could be at home with me. They ensured that I'm eating proper meals on time and having a fixed sleep routine. I used to have a brief chat with my mother in the morning and *shatpavali* (taking a stroll after a meal) with my father in the evening. We rarely talked about studies during these conversations.

I used to study in the early morning hours. My mother, who was a lecturer, used to sit at the dining table preparing for her lectures. During my study hours both my parents would also read and write or do some work quietly instead of watching TV or listening to Radio. They listened patiently whenever I asked them any query even if they did not know the answers. **Their availability and support relieved the exam pressure and that period went by easier and quicker.**

I followed my parents' footsteps during my daughters' exams. Now as they study in other cities, we arrange a 'study call' - a video call where we all sit, study and read together.

**The support strategies might differ as each child is unique. Do observe what your child needs, adapt your strategy and share this beautiful journey to reach the destination called success.**

-Dr. Aabha Pimprakar  
Co-Editor Mind Matters  
President DAGMHI 3030 India

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## THE PHOENIX OF DHOLAKPUR: CHHOTA BHEEM'S RESILIENT TRIUMPH

Dhooni Baba (a sage), after spending years in the Himalayas, returns to the vibrant kingdom of Dholakpur, with nostalgia, where he finds solace and strength in the company of his beloved children Chhota Bheem, Chutki, Raju, and Jaggu.

In the veil of the night, the city appeared tranquil, its streets empty as it fell into the embrace of sleep. Yet, amidst the darkness, the flicker of lights emanating from Bheem's house caught Baba's attention. He surmised that Bheem must be diligently preparing for his class XII examinations, thus deciding to postpone his visit until the morning.

However, the tranquility was shattered by a sudden commotion from Bheem's house, his father rushing out in search of a doctor. Baba learned that Bheem had collapsed from exhaustion during his study session. Determined to pursue his aspirations of becoming a healer and serving his community, Chhota Bheem had immersed himself in rigorous study sessions, preparing for the national eligibility exams. Bheem's mother reported his persistent exhaustion, insomnia, lack of motivation, irritability, and frustration to the doctor. She observed a loss of meeting deadlines, loss of inspiration, creativity, and confidence in his academic abilities. She also noted overeating and staying up late, difficulty concentrating and loss of interest in activities which may be due to underlying anxiety or depression.

Bheem was diagnosed with academic burnout, a condition resulting from prolonged academic engagement. This burnout is characterized by exhaustion, frustration, and decreased performance (Pines 1980 and Meier 1985). It is a multifaceted issue, involving emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and academic inefficiency due to inadequate stress management (Soffeli 2002). It is also influenced by academic pressure, workload, and personal psychological factors during the learning process.

Baba, listened intently to Bheem and his parents. He greeted them warmly, offering them sweet laddus and guiding them through the process of overcoming burnout. "It's time to make changes before you experience full-blown academic burnout," Baba advised gently. He outlined practical steps to prevent burnout, advised them to prioritize self-care and balance amidst academic pursuits, teaching them yoga practices and breathing exercises. He also provided insights into recovering from burnout, advocating for seeking help when needed, and implementing stress-management techniques. Bheem felt relieved knowing he was not alone in his struggles. Bheem vowed to implement Baba's teachings, striving for a healthier balance between academic and personal well-being. In the embrace of Dholakpur's warmth and camaraderie, Bheem found solace and strength to navigate the challenges ahead, fortified by the bonds of friendship.



PC: Google,  
Caption by Sripriya Shaji

-Sripriya Shaji Ph D  
Counselling Psychologist & Nutritionist, Kozhikode, Kerala

### PIVOTAL ROLE OF TEACHERS

Parents and teachers are in the same league when it comes to education and exams. However today a student spends more time in school or at a coaching class than at home and hence parents rely on the teachers as they play a **pivotal role in the overall growth and development of the child in the school.**

Though the schools and coaching classes try to help their students by conducting mock exams; they tend to overburden the students by overdoing it. Few institutes aim for getting and retaining the titles 'best', 'no.1', 'leading' and desiring 100% result along with highest scorers; inadvertently they become part of a rat race and coax students to score high marks not only for himself, but also for the institute.

This usually leads to fear of failure (in exams as well as from achieving personal goals) and exam anxiety in a student's mind. **This 'scare' works differently for the students who are good, average and poor academically.**

This increases a teachers' **responsibility beyond teaching.** The teachers have to serve as a **friend, mentor and life guide** for a student. They should provide academic as well as emotional support.

**Academic support can be in the form of providing resources and study materials, explaining about exam expectations, teaching the students time management skills and providing personalized feedback.**

**Emotional support can be offered by active listening, positive reinforcement, and providing reassurance. Teachers should motivate the students and boost up their confidence and resilience.**

The institutes (school or coaching) need to provide a positive education culture along with open door policies and by offering resources and support to teachers.

Dear teachers, your efforts and support is definitely going to cause a significant difference in your students' life, be it exams or future endeavors.

-Dr. Aabha Pimprikar  
Co-Editor Mind Matters  
President DAGMHI 3030 India

### EXAMS - COPING MECHANISMS AND RESILIENCE

Being a student is one of the most strenuous yet joyous experiences of life, depending upon how the individual views his/her experiences and copes with the perceived challenges. The ability of students to manage the stress of proving their academic competence or achieving academic excellence is put to test at the time of exams. High expectations from themselves, difficulty in accepting poor grades or failure, lack of ability to manage intense emotions, and having inadequate support from friends or parents, are some common factors adding to stress in student life. The education system in our country is highly competitive, and the role of social media platforms along with dearth of mental health resource personnel, poses an added burden on schools, parents, and teachers in managing this problem.

In this context, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has popularised the role of life skills education and training in view of enhancing psychological competence in students, so that they can manage their stress better and relate meaningfully with themselves, their peers and authority figures. **Life skills are simply the abilities for learning a positive mindset and nurturing adaptive behaviours in ourselves, in order to deal effectively with the challenges of everyday living (WHO, 1999). It involves skills such as flexibility, optimism, and resilience.** It also involves mental skills of critical analysis, problem solving, self-awareness, persistence, communication, and learning adaptive coping mechanisms.

The experience of approaching examinations can make a student feel fearful, sad, frustrated, powerless and sometimes hopeless due to disappointments from previous experiences. **When not aware of better alternatives, students often handle this stress by engaging in maladaptive coping methods** like escaping (refusing to write the exam), impulsive behaviours (multiple relationships, use of psychoactive substances, excessive shopping, rash driving, self-harm), anger outbursts, or in extreme cases attempting suicide.

Learning to timely identify and manage the intense negative emotions experienced before or during exams, is crucial to managing exam stress. When unable to do so on their own, students can seek help from their caregivers, including friends, parents and/or teachers. In cases where more support is needed, mental health services can be sought through the mediation of schools or other communities. **Embedding positive coping styles and mental health education in school curriculum or climate can help prevent most of the crises.** School teachers are valuable assets, serving as reliable gatekeepers between students experiencing stress symptoms and available health resources.

-Dr Bhakti Murkey  
Assistant Professor in Psychiatry,  
Pacific Medical College and Hospital, Udaipur

## EXAM 'KA HAUWA'

Amidst the growing city of steel and concrete, there was a tiny spot of happiness in the form of a school. Here the students were nestled in their own cocoon of joy. Here studied a student named Raj. As he grew older, so did the pressure and the looming shadow of exams grew. Raj was known for being diligent and hardworking, but this time he found himself trapped in the clutches of anxiety.



PC: Mumbai Mirror

The pressure to perform well and the fear of failure began to gnaw at his confidence. Sleepless nights were spent buried in textbooks, racing against time to grasp every concept. **The weight of expectations from family, peers, and oneself added an extra layer of stress.**

One day, Raj broke down. His friend Maya, a good student, stepped in. Maya offered valuable advice on how to **cope with exam anxiety**. She emphasized the importance of maintaining a balanced routine, including regular breaks, healthy meals, and sufficient sleep. Maya also encouraged Raj to practice mindfulness techniques, such as deep breathing and meditation, to calm the racing thoughts. She also suggested breaking down the topics into manageable chunks and tackling them one at a time.

Raj followed Maya's advice. He took short breaks, practiced mindfulness, and approached each exam with a calm and collected mindset. Instead of fixating on the fear of failure, Raj focused on the knowledge he had accumulated throughout the year.

Raj discovered that he had performed exceptionally well in the exams. This experience taught Raj the importance of self-care, and a healthy perspective towards exams.

From that day forward, Raj shared his newfound wisdom with his fellow students, **creating a supportive community** that understood the challenges of academic pressure. Now no student suffered from exam anxiety, rather the tiny spot of happiness became a cloud of ecstasy and bliss, filled with vibrant dreams and aspirations of its students.

(\*The Hindi word Hauwa means 'boogeyman'. Translated, the title means - The Scare of Exams)

-Shivangi Garg

Certified Trainer - Child safety & prevention of Sex abuse  
HR Recruiter, Nagpur

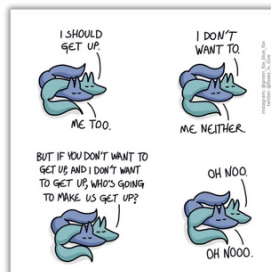
## EXAMS AND PROCRASTINATION

As exam dates approach, it's very common for students to find themselves grappling with increased procrastination. **The stress and pressure to do well can make tasks feel too big, causing the urge to delay them.** This procrastination often stems from a pressure to excel, creating a cycle that intensifies the stress students are already experiencing, making the stress even worse.

Additionally, the anticipation of the effort required for effective studying can trigger avoidance behaviors. Despite knowing the importance of studying, the fear of failure can create a mental barrier, making procrastination a default response. The human brain, when faced with stress, often seeks instant relief, and procrastination provides a temporary escape from the perceived difficulty of studying.

**Procrastination sticks around because as the exam gets nearer, stress goes up, and studying feels scarier.** The anxiety about studying gets connected to the task, making it more tempting to delay. It's a cycle where the closer the deadline, the more anxious we feel about studying, and the more we want to postpone it.

**Time management** can really help you stop procrastinating when preparing for exams. By breaking down the whole process into smaller tasks and allocating specific time slots for each, you create a **structured plan**. This plan helps in making the workload more manageable and reduces the overwhelming feeling associated with studying. Also, **setting deadlines** for each study task creates a sense of urgency, encouraging you to stay on track. **Taking short breaks** is crucial to prevent burnout and will enhance your ability to keep focus during study sessions. Additionally, **establishing a routine** through time management helps build consistency. Apart from this, understanding and managing emotions are crucial components of overcoming procrastination. Anxiety and fear are natural responses to exams, but allowing these emotions to dictate actions can affect productivity.



So, giving yourself enough space and time to experience such emotions and trying easy mindfulness or deep breathing exercises to handle stress and stay focused can be helpful.

In conclusion, **procrastination during exam season is a common challenge, but with strategic and proactive approaches, it can be effectively managed.**

-Aditee Bhargava

Clinical Psychologist, IPH Mindlab Nashik

## DISCIPLINE AND STUDY ROUTINE

A study timetable plays a crucial role in a student's academic journey. By following a well-structured study timetable, students can improve their learning potential and achieve academic success. A disciplined routine encourages better academic performance. Having a routine set for learning and studying leads to better grades. Self-disciplined students know where they are going wrong. Instead of continuing the path, they get back on track and score better. Self-discipline is a cornerstone of personal success and fulfillment. It empowers students to overcome challenges, maintain focus, and achieve their goals. By practicing self-discipline, individuals can experience personal growth, enhance productivity, and develop emotional stability. Developing discipline in your study routine can be challenging, but there are several strategies that can be tried to improve.

- Set a specific achievable goals for the study sessions and avoid procrastination
- Create a specific study time each day and be determined
- Optimize your environment by having suitable space for your study without distractions
- Stay away from distractions like using gadgets and make it a habit
- Take breaks in between as focusing for continuous hours do not help

- Have short term goals instead of long term goals, as short term goals help you to work on the present
- Energizers to keep you focused and refreshed
- Eat and sleep properly during exams as it's very important for you to remember and recollect the syllabus that you prepared.
- Compete with yourself and not compare with peers

**Precision concentration:** Toppers swear by the 'pomodoro' technique for razor-sharp focus.

**Resilient achievement:** Toppers employ relaxation methods to conquer exam stress.

**Fuel for excellence:** Toppers prioritize adequate sleep, regular exercise, and a well-balanced diet for excellence.

-Dr Sahithyaa Raghu  
Psychologist, Chennai

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**'EXAMINATIONS ARE JUST A PART OF YOUR MASTER PLAN'**

## PARENTAL STRESS

The word 'Exam' brings in a lot of memories and emotions of stress and fear of results. During exams, stress affects not only children but also their parents.

All parents want their children to be successful. Unfortunately, the societal norm of success is related to financial success. Parents also face peer pressure and want their kids to do better than the kids of their colleagues. Mothers, especially housewives, want their children to do excellent in their studies, as it gives their own self-worth a boost. Meanwhile, if kids don't do well, the mother may be blamed for being irresponsible, and she may internalise the guilt.

Sometimes parents are stressed because they find their child to be casual and lenient with exams, or they may find their child to be too stressed about it.

All this leads to a very overwhelming environment at home during exams. **Parents' moods and their emotions may go haywire as they begin to react to simple things** at home creating discomfort by nagging, unnecessary comparisons of the child with others, or too much lecturing. They may become critical of the child, disturbing him more as they dump their stress on him. This may demotivate the child as it interferes with his ability to concentrate and perform well.

**This situation sometimes results in anxiety related symptoms in kids during exams, like sweaty palms, diarrhoea, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, distraction, and loss of self-esteem.**

It's essential for parents to understand their own stress symptoms to calm themselves down, and not transfer their stress upon children.

**Always remember that your child is not your trophy to display**, and success comes with a positive mindset and not just high academic scores.

-Dr. Sushma Dwivedi

Educator, Reiki grand master, multimodality healer,  
Tarot card reader. New Delhi

## MOTIVATION IS THE KEY

Motivation is what makes us do things that will result in desirable outcomes. **Motivation is the driving force behind our actions.** Motivation can be provided by something external/materialistic that one might want to chase or something internal/ joy which is for just yourself. **Motivation is what will help us reach our goals.**

One might want to score good in all exams throughout the year, to get a gold medal towards the end of the course, to gain more knowledge and learn new things about new subjects everyday, or to have that sense of fulfillment. The reasons could be different for people but motivation drives all of us.

To increase intrinsic motivation, we can start applying all the concepts that we learn in real life. We can see how the learned subjects are applied in our day-to-day life. This will make it more interesting to learn the subjects. We can set small goals or targets for us to achieve in a week which will motivate us to study more. Once we start setting realistic goals, and achieving them, it makes us feel like we are inching closer to our ultimate goal with every small goal we accomplish. When you find your own pace, you can start adding small extra tasks or challenges that will make it more fun to get through your daily or weekly targets.

-Sara Pimprikar

Mental Health Ally, Member of DAGMHI 3030

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## PSY-BER MATTERS

### ONLINE LEARNING 101

Online learning is a relatively new concept facilitated by the Internet and digital technologies. It offers access to education beyond geographical and socioeconomic barriers. Online learning provides flexibility and customization. It allows students to learn at their own pace and routine.

**The overall benefits of online learning have shown promising effects on mental health.** By providing a comfortable and safe learning environment, free from the pressures of traditional classrooms, online learning reduces anxiety and stress levels among students. Learning from the comfort of one's own home further enhances well-being, promoting a sense of control and relaxation. The personalized approach of online learning boosts confidence and self-esteem, contributing to positive mental health outcomes. **Interactive features and one-on-one support from instructors foster a supportive learning environment, empowering students to succeed academically while prioritizing their mental well-being.**

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) provide online courses curated by the best professors of the most coveted institutions of the world and OpenCourseWare (OCWs) provide free access to high-quality course materials from prestigious institutions like MIT and Harvard etc., available freely under Creative Commons licenses.

The certifications and degrees provided at the completion of MOOCs, enhance one's professional competence and eligibility for better jobs.

The best part is, there is no eligibility criteria or cutoff score for enrolling in MOOCs or accessing OCWs.

Some platforms that offer MOOCs & OCWs-

1. **EdApp** – Delivers microlearning courses for corporate training.
2. **Academic Earth** – Hosts free university courses from institutions like MIT and Berkeley.
3. **Coursera** – Partners with universities and platforms like Google to offer no cost and low cost courses, certifications and degrees.
4. **Udacity** – Focuses on job-specific skills and partnerships with tech companies.
5. **Udemy** – Offers over 150,000 courses in various languages and disciplines.

These and several other platforms cover a range of subjects, interests and skill levels. Earning an international degree from one of the world's most prestigious institutions, without burning a hole in your pocket, from the comfort of your home, is a **win-win-win** situation in my eyes!

-Dr. Geetanjali Jha

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at iMature EdTech, Raipur

