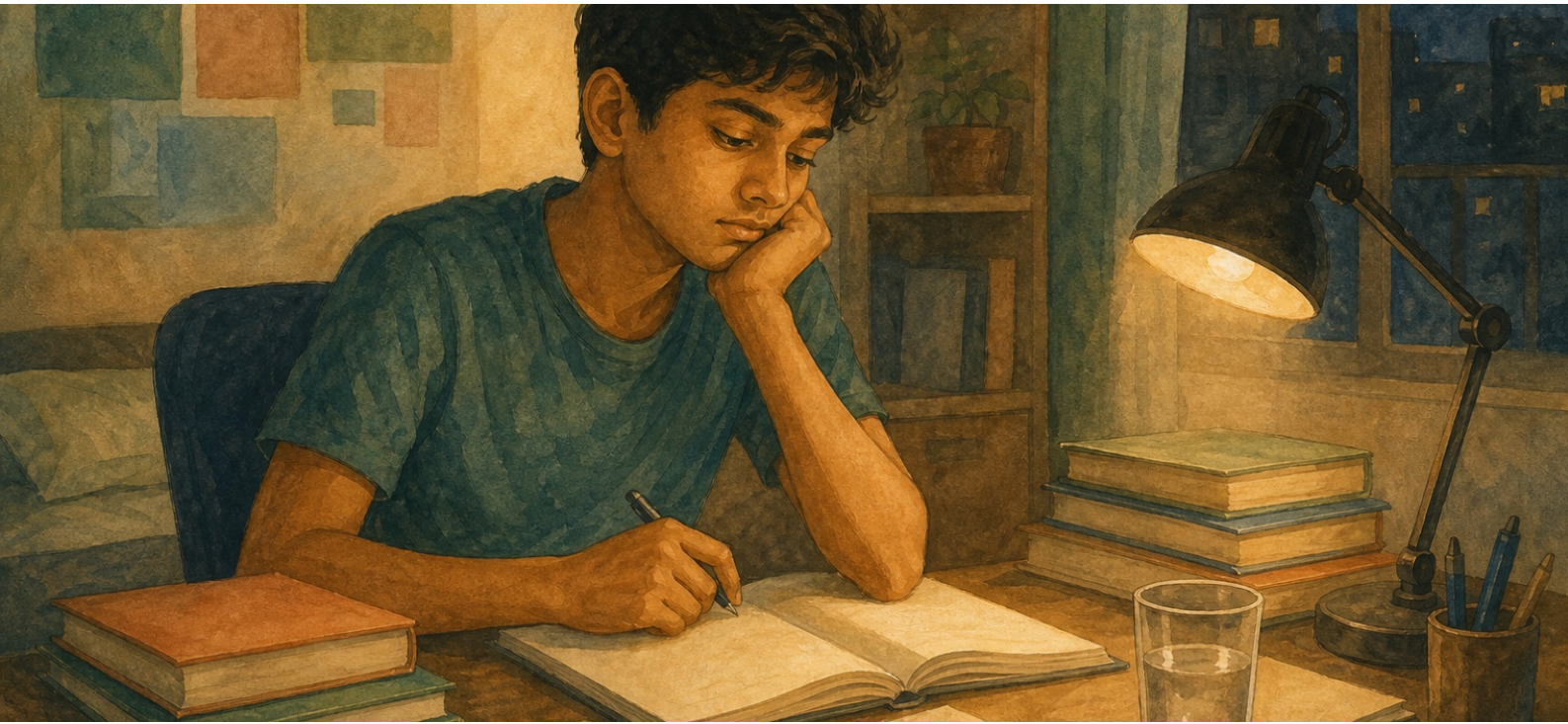




For Everyone

 EVERYDAY WELLBEING

Getting through exam stress

A warm, plain guide for a student carrying too much exam pressure: how to steady your body and mind, study in a way that actually works, and remember you are far more than a mark on a sheet.

Who this is for: any student under heavy exam pressure, and anyone who loves one.

Cited: peer-reviewed research on exam anxiety, sleep and coping.

Languages: English, Hindi, Marathi, and Kannada.

Read it free at weave.clinic/family

1

✿ THE PRESSURE IS REAL

You are not weak for feeling this

✿ IN SHORT

If your chest goes tight and your mind blanks before a big exam, you are not weak and you are not the only one. This kind of fear is real and common, and it does not mean anything is wrong with you.

Some nights the books blur. Your heart races, your stomach turns, and a voice inside says everyone else has it figured out except you. In our exam culture the stakes feel enormous. One entrance test, one board result, and it can feel like your whole future, your family's pride, the whole "log kya kahenge", is riding on a few hours in a hall.

So the fear makes sense. Large research pulling together hundreds of studies shows that exam anxiety is real and common, that it hits hardest when a test feels high-stakes like an entrance exam, and that it can pull your marks below what you were actually capable of. Feeling very anxious before a big exam is not a sign of weakness. It is your body reacting to something it has been told matters more than almost anything else.

This booklet will not tell you exams do not matter. It will help you carry the weight without it crushing you, study in a way that actually works, and remember that you are a whole person, not a mark sheet.

hundreds of studies

say exam fear is normal

You are far from alone in this. Almost every student who has sat a high-stakes exam has felt some version of it.

2

✿ USEFUL NERVES VS HARM

When stress tips from helping to hurting

✿ IN SHORT

A little exam nerves can sharpen you. But there is a point where the worry starts working against you, stealing your sleep, your focus and your calm. Knowing that line helps you catch it early.

Not all stress is bad. A bit of nervous energy keeps you alert, gets you to the desk, makes you revise one more time. That is the useful kind, and you do not need to get rid of it.

The problem is when it climbs too high. The same large review found that as exam anxiety rises, marks tend to fall, and that feeling low about your own worth is one of the strongest things that pushes exam anxiety up. So this is the signal to watch for. When the worry is stealing your sleep, your focus or your calm, it has tipped from useful into harming you.

Useful nerves.

Mild butterflies, a bit of alertness, the push to revise once more. It fades once you start writing.

Harmful stress.

Nights lost to a racing mind, blanking on things you knew, panic that will not settle, dread that sits on you all day.

More, if you want it

Nobody feels only one or the other. Most students slide between them, calm one hour and panicking the next. The point is not to reach zero stress, which is not realistic. It is to notice when you have crossed into the harmful zone so you can slow down, breathe, sleep, and reach for the things in this booklet, instead of pushing harder into the fear.

3

✿ WHAT ACTUALLY HELPS

Studying in a way that works

✿ IN SHORT

The all-nighter feels heroic, but it usually backfires. Steady sleep, real breaks and a realistic plan hold your memory and thinking together far better than one sleepless night of cramming.

When panic rises, the instinct is to study harder and longer, skip sleep, mainline chai and grind till dawn. It feels like devotion. It usually costs you.

Research gathering data from many student studies found that poor sleep is very common among students and that those who sleep badly tend to score lower. Steady, good sleep helps your memory hold together for the exam far better than one sleepless night of cramming. Your brain files away what you learned while you sleep. Skip the sleep, and a lot of the studying leaks away.

So build the day like this instead:

- Sleep first. Treat it as part of studying, not the thing you sacrifice.
- Study in focused blocks with real breaks. A short walk, water, a stretch, then back.
- Make a plan you can actually keep. Small daily targets beat one impossible mountain.

More, if you want it ^

A realistic plan is a kind one. Instead of "finish the whole subject today", try "these two chapters, in three focused sittings, with breaks". You will end the day having actually done what you set out to do, which quietly rebuilds your confidence. An impossible plan does the opposite: you fall short, feel like a failure, and the stress climbs. Aim for done, not perfect.

● TRY THIS

Tonight, write down just tomorrow's three most important study targets, and a fixed time you will stop and sleep. Three, not thirty. Then keep the sleep time like a promise to yourself.

4

✿ CALMING THE BODY

Settling yourself, before and on the day

✿ IN SHORT

When your body is in a panic, your mind cannot think clearly. The fastest way back is through your breath, and it is something you can do quietly at your desk, even in the exam hall.

Exam fear is not only in your head. It is in your fast breath, your racing heart, your churning stomach. And because your body drives your mind here, calming the body calms the thoughts.

The simplest tool is your own breathing. A review of breathing studies showed that breathing slowly, fewer than about ten breaths a minute, shifts the body into a calmer state and lowers anxiety, tension and restlessness while raising a sense of relaxation and alertness. **Slowing your breath down really can calm your body, before you walk in and even at your desk during the exam.**

Try this when the panic rises: breathe in gently through your nose for a count of four, then out slowly for a count of six, and let the out-breath be longer than the in-breath. Do it for a minute or two. Nobody around you even needs to know.

 ONE STEADY MINUTE

If your mind blanks in the hall, do not fight it. Put the pen down, take slow breaths for one minute, longer out than in, and let your heart settle. The words come back more easily to a calm body than a panicking one.

And protect your sleep, not just for marks but for your mind. A large pooling of controlled trials found that when people improved their sleep, their anxiety and stress went down too, and the more their sleep improved, the more their mind settled. So rest is not time stolen from studying. In exam season, protecting your sleep is one of the kindest and most useful things you can do for yourself.

● **TRY THIS**

Pick one calming thing you can lean on this week: the slow breathing above, a fixed bedtime, ten minutes outside, or a short walk between study blocks. Just one. Do it every day and let your body learn it can come down from the panic.

5

✿ YOU ARE MORE THAN A SCORE

When marks feel like everything

✿ IN SHORT

In the middle of exam season a mark can feel like a verdict on your whole worth. It is not. A number on a sheet measures one test on one day. It does not measure you.

There is a particular kind of pain when your marks feel like the sum of who you are. When a low score feels like proof that you are a disappointment, to your family, to yourself. In a culture that ranks and compares so hard, that feeling is understandable. It is also not the truth.

Remember what the research showed. Feeling low about your own worth is one of the strongest things that drives exam anxiety up, and higher anxiety drags marks down. So tying your whole worth to a score does not even help you perform. It quietly makes the fear worse. A number on a sheet measures one test on one day; it does not measure you.

Your kindness, your effort, the way you show up for people, your curiosity, the things you are good at that no exam tests, none of that shrinks because of a result. Exams open some doors and there are always other doors. Plenty of people who love and respect their lives did not top an exam. You are a whole person having a hard season, not a mark waiting to be stamped on your forehead.



*The exam is asking what you know
today. It is not asking what you are
worth. Those are not the same question.*

6

✿ GETTING HELP

Reaching out is strength, not failure

✿ IN SHORT

When it gets too heavy to carry alone, telling one trusted person is a strong first step, not a weakness. And the things that stop students from asking for help are known, and can be worked around.

Sometimes it grows past what breathing and sleep and a good plan can hold. The dread does not lift, the days feel flat and heavy, or a dark thought creeps in that everyone would be better off without you. If any of that is happening, please do not carry it alone. Tell one person you trust today, a parent, a teacher, a doctor, or a helpline. That is not giving up. It is one of the bravest, most useful things you can do.

A review of student studies found that the biggest blocks to asking for help are trying to handle everything alone and worrying what others will think, while a little encouragement from someone you trust and simple, clear information make asking much easier. Telling one trusted person is a strong first step, not a failure.

More, if you want it ^

You do not need the perfect words. "I am really struggling with this exam pressure and I need to talk to someone" is enough. If the first person you tell does not understand, that is about them, not about you, and it does not mean you were wrong to reach out. Try one more person. A teacher, a family doctor, a counsellor, a helpline: someone will listen, and things do get lighter once you are not holding it all by yourself.

 IF IT FEELS TOO MUCH

If you ever feel you cannot go on, or thoughts of harming yourself come, that is a signal to reach out right now, not later. Talk to someone you trust today, or call a helpline. You matter far more than any exam, and this feeling can pass with help.

● TRY THIS

Think of one person you could tell if things get too heavy: a parent, a sibling, a teacher, a doctor, a friend. Write their name down, and save one helpline number in your phone next to it. You may never need it. But if the day comes, you will not have to search while you are struggling.

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

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FURTHER READING

- NHS: Exam stress
- WHO: Doing what matters in times of stress

This guide helps you recognise and understand. It is not a diagnosis. For that, see a professional.

● Feeling like it is all too much? **Read the crisis card.** Help is one page away.