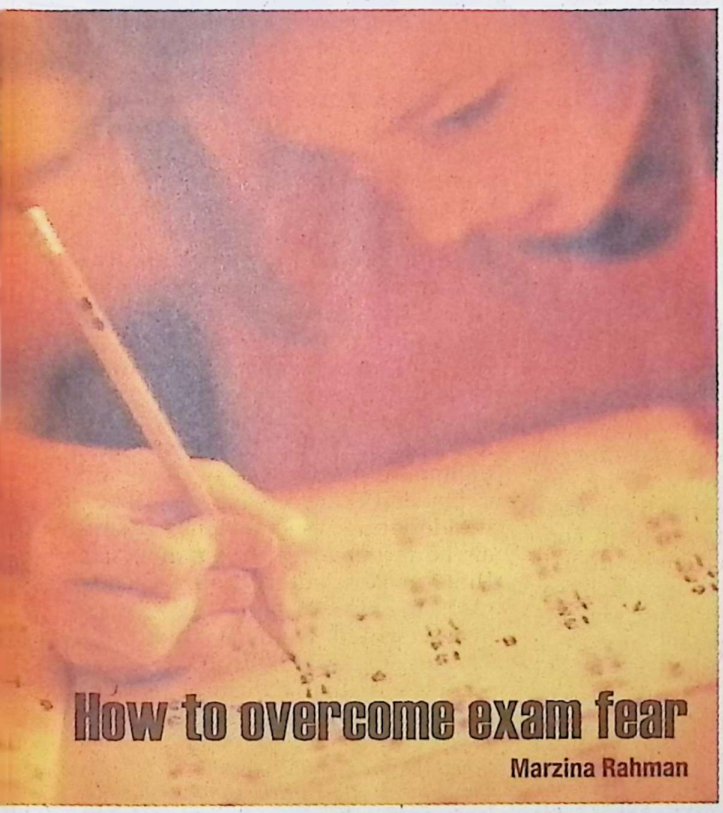


How to overcome exam fear

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ALL through my life, I dreaded exams. The last minute revision before the exam, the exam room, even the invigilator's look used to give me panic. This unreasonable fear tormented me all through my school life. Even when I successfully passed two board exams, this tension and fear did not leave me. It followed me to university. Then I also passed university and finally got over the exam phobia. Most interestingly, I no longer face exams in real life, but I occasionally have nightmares about exams. In most of those dreams, I fail to finish my studies before the exam or sometimes fail to reach the exam hall. But the most terrible dream is when I find the question paper completely unknown.

There are hundreds and thousands of students who have such exam phobias. Some nervous students are even reported to have nervous-breakdown due to extreme tension of the exam. It is believed that students can do much better in exams if they go to tests as relaxed as possible. Being myself a victim of exam-phobia, I would like to share some strategies which I have recently read in an international magazine which I believe will help students to overcome their exam fear.

The following ways can help a student hit the exam room with a cool head and a light heart.

STAY HEALTHY: A lot of students have the tendency to stay awake the whole night or half of the night to finish their studies before the exam. All night study sessions fuelled by caffeine might seem a great way of achieving lots in a short time, but they wreck sleep cycle, disrupt eating patterns and trash immune system. If you are one of them, my advice is, complete the syllabus beforehand and go to bed at a decent hour to get good sleep which will help you to perform better.

LISTEN TO MUSIC: Current studies show that listening to music can improve academic performance. In one study, university students scored higher marks after listening to a Mozart piano sonata than they did when they were tested after sitting in silence. So you can take a little break from your studies and indulge yourself in one of your favorite music.

STUDY SMART: Do not just keep ploughing through the same mountain of notes. It's demoralizing. Dr. Dawn Hamilton, the author of Passing Exams, recommends that you "chunk down" your work by reducing pages of reading to a few sentences. Another suggestion is, if you study for 45 minutes, then take 15 minutes off. Two to three hours is the maximum time that most people can study before they stop absorbing things. So the best way to study is break up periods of work with periods of relaxation, and reward yourself for your hard work with treats.

BE CALM: If you are a high-scoring student who relies on working things out rather than just memorizing stuff, you have got more reason than anyone else to work on being calm in the exam room. Studies show that exam pressure is more likely to impair the performance of good students than average ones. Researchers at Miami University say that when the heat is on, good students can lose the strong short-term or working memory that enables them to process numbers and thoughts while focusing on a problem. Students with less powerful working memories may rely on other methods, such as looking for patterns (or guessing), and are less likely to fold under pressure.

STAY COOL: The night before the exam is the hardest one. You should not start revising completely new areas-it will just make you panic. Instead, you should stick to key points and summaries. Keep nerves and insomnia at bay by reminding yourself that you know the material. Say "stop" to yourself at the onset of any negative thoughts. Stay cool and calm before the exam night which will lead you to a cool result.

BE RELAXED: Exam hall give some students the highest panic. Use relaxation techniques. Before beginning the test, close your eyes and reflect. Breathe in slowly and exhale to relax the body and refocus any negative energy.

These are the methods that students can follow during the exams which can keep them fit and healthy, calm and cool and can improve their performance level. So all the students out there follow these rules and do not let examination stress stop you from making your mark. In short, study smartly, revise methodically, take short breaks during long hour studies, listen to your favorite music and have a great result.

-(A former teacher)