

READER'S CHIT

Do math after SUPPER

"Baba, do you know the meaning of DMAS?"

The question was simple enough, but just like almost everything that comes out of this generation, it was beyond my perception!

I replied in the negative, while helping my daughter finish her mathematics homework one fine evening.

Savouring the joy of having an upper hand over her father, she chuckled and said, "Do Math After supper!"

I found it curious, especially when Farah has a penchant for procrastination, and mathematics is neither her forte, nor in the list of her 'favourites'.

Farah is a fourth grader; soft spoken and hardly participates in class activities like raising hands to answer questions. She just sits there, but attentively. Yet, Farah for one will never volunteer to go to the board and write.

Her good friend Satyam is the one who goes to the board and tackles all the math on behalf of Farah, and almost every other student in the class.

Farah is perhaps like every other girl of her age, compassionate, willing to learn and developing a conscience based on what she sees around her. She is from a generation that is bombarded from all quarters with distractions and it is up on the parents to guide them as much as they can.

My Farah, even at this tender age, has already made a career decision — lawyer or physician! I believe that is because of the stereotypes that she sees around her. And I hope she sincerely considers other vocations when the time comes. But before that day comes, I cannot help but reiterate to her, "Two plus two makes four and it is true in London, Dhaka and elsewhere. If one math is true anywhere it is also true everywhere. So, learning math is akin to learning the truth."

With another chuckle she said, "You are trying to dupe me into doing math. EVEN AFTER SUPPER!"

And to her astonishment, I replied — "You told me about DMAS, I did not!"

And then we went on being busy solving problems, or should I say wandering into the world of math magic with delight.

By Feroz Khan

Does the idea of high school math still fill you with dread? Do you tend to lose sleep over budgeting your groceries, or calculating your bills? Or, do you tend to avoid activities that require a bit of calculation on your part?

If you fit the descriptions above, then you may be suffering from math anxiety.

If you happen to be a math-lover, the idea of math anxiety might seem absurd — why would simple calculations throw people off? You could argue that without math, the world would not have the complex technologies that make life easier, or see the massive structural wonders around cities.

The world of numbers, series and linear algebra may be a fascinating one to you, but for an alarming number of people, math anxiety is very real. This is basically having an intense dread towards anything related to mathematics.

Those with math anxiety tend to struggle with understanding basic mathematics, and go out of their ways to avoid anything involving numbers. They may be able to analyse every nitty-gritty details of a Shakespearean play, or recite the exact clause from fat law books, and yet, when it comes splitting the bill evenly at a group lunch, they sit quietly

hoping someone else would come to their rescue.

WHY DOES MATH ANXIETY EXIST?

The fear of mathematics is more psychological than intellectual. Math anxiety often develops at an early age, as a consequence of struggling with fundamental maths. As one is continually expected to learn additional math, that gets harder and harder, the subject starts to feel more like an alien language than an integral part of everyday life.

Imagine trying to build a 20-storey building upon shaky foundation. Just like the building is destined to collapse, those with a shaky math foundation is destined to end up dreading maths.

In fact, that is exactly what happens when children try to solve elementary mathematical problems without exactly understanding why they are doing it in the first place.

Without real life examples, the subject seems rather tedious. Moreover, when they see their peers excelling at the same course they dread, children simply give up. They assume, math is not for them and stop trying improving their own math skills.

HOW TO HANDLE MATH ANXIETY

To start off, try developing a positive

attitude towards maths. Instead of voicing your dislike (if you have one) regarding maths in front of your kids, talk about the fun and important aspects of math. There is a misconception that some people are not good at math, especially girls. Even at an early age, girls are often discouraged to pursue subjects such as maths and science. As a result, their weakness is mislabelled as 'natural'!

Do not fall into this trap! Make sure both the girls and the boys get the necessary help to learn the materials. To make math more fun, why not opt for math games online? Alternatively, you can also show your children everyday math applications. Squeeze in more practice of math problems in your daily lives. Teach them addition or subtraction using candies, or challenge them with a timer, rewarding them with a treat when they finish.

Finally, do not be too hard on them. Help them shake off mistakes by teaching them that mistakes are just a part of learning. Do not scold them too hard for missing a 0.25 in their class test. That way, they will lose interest in learning and their fear of math will only increase!

By Adiba Mahbub Proma

TIPS

Exam eve fever — the Google solution

Whether you are a last minute crammer or a perfectionist with carefully detailed notes taken throughout the entire course, sitting for an exam is stressful. While no amount of coffee or sleepless nights can quite take the stress away, thanks to the Internet, there are now plenty of ways to make this journey a little easier.

SEARCH RIGHT

Instead of just typing whatever comes to your mind on the search engine, make a list of all keywords you need to search for. You can even use quotation marks to search for the exact words. If you are looking for academic information, go to Google Scholar and then search for your desired topic. Google Scholar provides information from authentic sources that you can use in your arguments while writing papers.

USE YouTube

When it comes to learning materials, YouTube video tutorials are a lifesaver. From animated art history crash courses to tech-savvy computer algorithm tutorials, YouTube has it all!

You could perfect your cooking skills or even learn a new makeup technique from the YouTube lifestyle gurus. Of course, finding the right video takes a bit of searching and the night before the exam is definitely not the right time to start that search.

However, if you look for materials throughout the course, then you could build up a revision playlist by the end.

Moreover, YouTube also has plenty of

chill mixes or relaxing study music that can help you. Check out Koala Kontrol or Just Instrumental Music for these playlists.

FIND FORMULA SHEETS AND/OR FLASHCARDS

With the vast syllabus exams require you to cover, remembering names, dates and so on can become quite the hassle. Why



not compile all of this into flashcards to make studying easier? Websites such as brainscape have built-in vocabulary flashcards for all sorts of exams including entrance exams, GRE, law exam, engineering exams and so on.

Some sites even let you build your own

flashcard decks. For those sitting for math-related exams, just type "topic" formula sheet, and you will have plenty of formula sheets to pick from, mostly in the form of pdfs.

FOR THE NITTY GRITTY

Anyone who had to submit papers as part of their coursework knows exactly how cumbersome it is to cite papers. To make this job easier, you have Mendeley that will let you keep track of all your reading materials and cite them automatically. If you want a 'quick fix', then try out

bibme.com. You can also get free spelling and grammar checkers online for an impeccable writeup.

ORGANISE BETTER

An essential part of every exam preparation is organising your materials, managing time all the while still keeping enough space for relaxation, sleep and other inevitable responsibilities of adulting.

Iheartorganizing is a site that will let you download free printables of calendars and planners to ease up organising.

In fact, a simple google search will provide you with plenty of such gorgeous planners that can make your dreary course material feel a little more interesting. If you are more of a digital person, then make effective use of Google Calendar and you are good to go!

By Adiba Mahbub Proma

Photo: Collected

Complex numbers

SPECIAL FEATURE