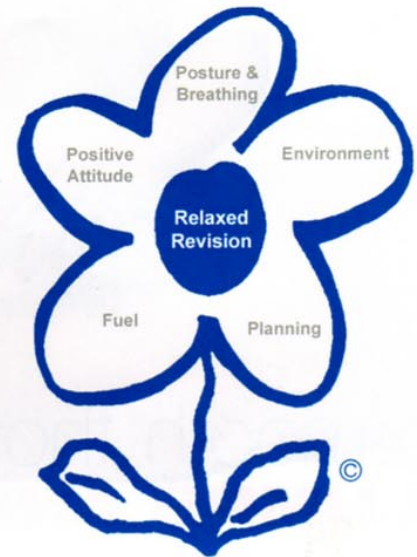


School Days are the best days of your life...except for exams! Well Parents can ease the burden for students and the whole family by following some simple advice. Clinician and relaxation advisor Penny Anne O'Donnell shares some top tips from her "Relaxed Revision Seminars".



Flower of Relaxed Revision

Just as a flower needs water, light, food and warmth to survive, you need the following petals to achieve relaxed revision



Relaxed Revision & EXAM GUIDE

Children in Britain can expect to sit 105 tests and exams during their school lives. Increased testing can increase anxiety and affect exam performance. But viewing revision holistically can make all the difference. Just as a flower needs food water warmth and light to survive you need the following petals to be balanced for Relaxed Revision:

POSTURE AND BREATHING

A clear mind and relaxed body are essential for relaxed revision and exams. The key to these is "Calm Centred Breathing" (see below exercise). It provides enough oxygen =enough energy=clear thinking=balanced performance. Tension breathing (tight tummy and shoulders) provides too little oxygen=poor energy=poor sleep and poor concentration.

CALMNESS BREATHING EXERCISE

Lie down and let body 'splat'. Place one hand over relaxed tummy button. Inhale : Navel moves up towards the ceiling and returns to the starting position as you exhale. Now place both hands in-between your ribs at the front, exhale as you say SH! Feel your 'chuckle muscle'/ diaphragm moving. This is a dome shaped muscle attached to the base of the rib cage lowering as you inhale, encouraging oxygen into the base of the lungs where the richest supply of blood is, and rising as you exhale. Your navel and diaphragm, become your breathing centre. Inhale these areas rise, exhale they fall. Repeat sitting/standing. Inhale breathing centre moves forward. Exhale it moves back to the starting position..

PHYSICAL RELAXATION

Excessive physical tension increases tiredness, headaches and irritability. Hot spots include lower jaw, forehead and shoulders. How much physical effort is being used when:

Concentrating: check for jaw clenching. Aim for a relaxed lower jaw.

Writing: is the pen being held or gripped and upper arm and shoulders unnecessarily involved. Posture: aim for upright sitting on both sitting bones with an open chest. Avoid slumping as this de-energises.

ENVIRONMENT

Ensure the revision space is calm, de-cluttered well lit and well ventilated.

PLANNING

Discuss the working pattern for the child. Morning or afternoon person? Frequency of breaks? What is fun and stressful about revising and exams? How realistic are expectations? Are they a visual or auditory learner?

Visual: highly coloured notes, topic maps or diagrams are useful.

Auditory: recording notes on tape and listening to them or remembering facts to the tune of a favourite song or funny rhyme

Breaks: Use breaks efficiently to re-energise.

FUEL

Good balanced nutrition is vital during exams and aim for consistent energy levels. Increase water intake to combat effects of stress. Include plenty of immune system boosting fresh fruit and vegetables;

Finally, Parents do not let your anxiety become their anxiety. Reassure Relax and Reward. Lead by example and Breathe Calmly. Balance those petals and Good Luck! ■

TIPS FOR DURING THE EXAMS

- Lay your clothes out the night before and check your pencil case and include back up pens.
- If allowed pack a bottle of still water and packet of chewing gum (to help you concentrate)
- Start your breathing practise as you brush your teeth.
- Have a wholesome breakfast to keep you going.
- On the way say your positive phrase and clear your mind so that you can access the information you have revised.
- Check your posture as you sit at your desk and get centred & comfortable.
- Only focus on you not what your friends are saying, tense people can make you tense!
- Breathe calmly as you turn over the paper.
- Read the paper through slowly and choose your questions, reading each one three times. Jot words /diagrams to trigger your memory.
- Plan your time.
- If you feel nervous place your thumb and first finger together with your palms upturned and breathe in and out calmly.
- If your mind momentarily goes blank push your palms together count silently to 5 breathe calmly and try again.
- Remember to focus all your energy on the present moment, not post-exams. The present is all you can control.

For more information on "Relaxed Revision Seminars" and Daily Revision & Relaxation tips log onto www.relaxationdirect.com. There will be new revision tips on the site each day. There is a special offer on the site for readers this month. Quote relaxed revision offer to receive the DVD usually £17 at the special price of £14 or video usually £14 at £7.00 and CD £12 special price of £10.00.

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