

ROEDEAN

How to survive Exams

The examinations are nearly upon you (help!) and it's time to consider how you are going to get through the exams. Of course you plan to revise like crazy/finally get to grips with the case endings in German/learn the capital city of every country on the globe, etc.... However, there is also the important question of how you are physically going to survive this very taxing time.

Here are my suggestions:

- It is very important that you get enough sleep. Staying up till 1 am the night before an exam will in fact NOT help you, no matter how virtuous it makes you feel at the time. You will be confused and tired in the morning and will not be able to work efficiently. Equally you should not 'mess up' your sleep patterns. Try to go to sleep at your normal time, or perhaps even a little earlier. By the second week of the exams you will be feeling the strain and you'll need your rest.
- Do not even consider taking anything to keep yourself awake. (See my comments about sleep patterns.) A constant stream of black coffee is also a very bad idea as caffeine leaches vitamins from your body.
- Some people experience difficulty going to sleep during times of stress. Develop a bedtime routine and stick to it. If you normally read before you go to sleep continue to do so, but don't make it a school book! The idea is that you should be relaxing and unwinding. You might consider buying a relaxing sleep CD. (I have a number you could borrow.) Soothing music really can help you drift off to sleep. The emphasis is on 'soothing' though - 'Kings of Leon' might not be such a good idea. A few drops of lavender oil on your pillow can also help you relax. You should not, however, use lavender oil if you have epilepsy.
- Correct nutrition during exams is essential. This is not the time to go on that diet and there is no truth in the rumour that you can work better on an empty stomach. Make sure that your meals are balanced. You need protein to sustain you and fruit and vegetables for the vitamins and minerals. Remember that nuts and pulses are a valuable source of protein. Protein does not have to be meat.
- You should also make sure that you keep your water intake up. If your brain is even slightly dehydrated you work less efficiently. Obviously you need to use some common sense here. If you drink too much before an exam you could waste valuable time going to the loo!
- Although many people do reach for chocolate at times of stress you should think carefully before doing that. Eating chocolate before an exam will give you a sugar rush/energy boost, but then you will feel drained afterwards. Nuts, dried fruit and cereals are better snack items, but make sure the cereals aren't coated in sugar. Some muesli bars are good too, but again watch out for hidden sugars. Fresh fruit is also excellent.

Mrs Heron, Head of Middle School
May 2011