


OVERCOMING EXAM ANXIETY AND STRESS MANAGEMENT


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INTRODUCTION

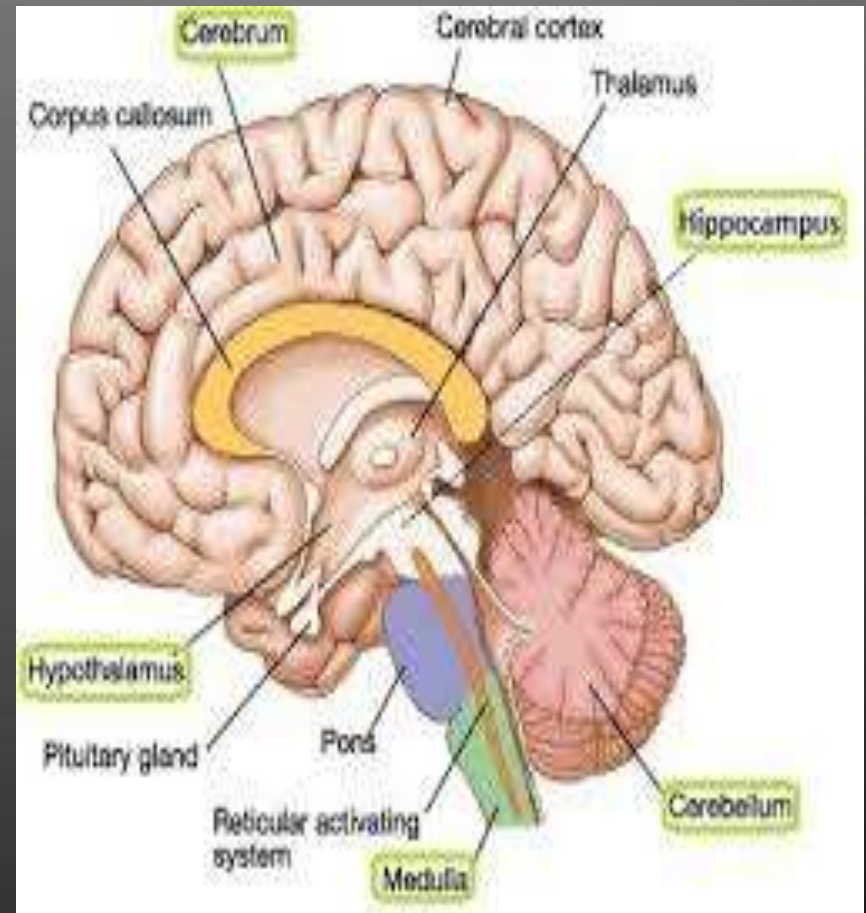
- The experience of feeling an intense moment of fear or panic before and/or during examinations.
 - Students with low anxiety may feel nervous but are still able to focus their attention on their studies or questions ask
 - Students with high anxiety show anxiety/panic reaction when exposed to the feared exam situation.
 - They either avoid the situation and not turn up for exams or endure it with extreme fear.
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Few Predisposing factor for exam stress

- ▶ Negative thoughts about exams
 - ▶ Family and teachers pressure for best result.
 - ▶ Deciding exam results for future success
 - ▶ Emotional immaturity
 - ▶ Personality– neuroticism (moody, irritable, excitable) extraversion(activity, gregarious, warmth, excitement) traits
 - ▶ Peer factor
 - ▶ Poor self image
 - ▶ Bad experiences in the past
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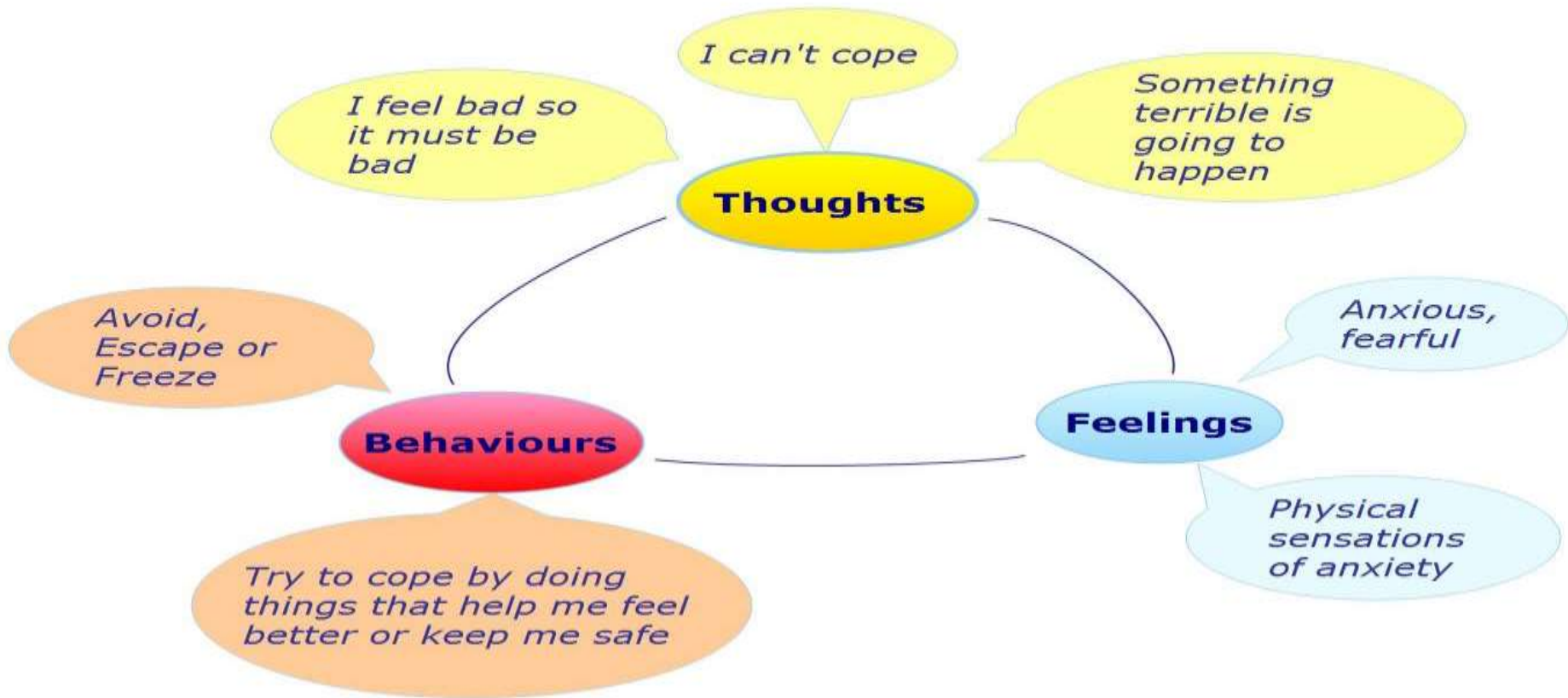
STRESS AND COGNITION

- ▶ Hypothalamus – bridge between emotions and physical sensation.
- ▶ Hippocampus – memory door. Learning and retrieval of facts
- ▶ PFC – Cognitive, working memory



- ▶ Negative threatening thought – “*if I fail this examination.....*”
- ▶ Hypothalamus detects threat – stimulates stress hormones, adrenalin/noradrenalin, cortisol
- ▶ NA enters PFC – dampens neuronal firing and impairs effective communication (clears out working memory)
- ▶ Large amount of cortisol enters hippocampus and disrupts activation pattern, impedes ability to access old memories

Trigger - real or imagined danger



OVERCOMING EXAM STRSS


- ▶ Examination stress is better prevented than treated
- ▶ A little stress or anxiety is beneficial, but excess stress can be harmful




For the students




During the whole academic session

- ▶ A systematic, persistent, organized, planned and regular effort from the beginning of the session is the best method to prevent exam stress.
 - ▶ Time management technique
 - ▶ Healthy lifestyle, adequate sleep, regular outdoor exercise and well balanced diet
 - ▶ Friendship with academically good students also help
 - ▶ Avoid substance abuse
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Near the time of examination

- ▶ Avoid late night reading
 - ▶ Avoid unhealthy foods
 - ▶ Avoid discussion about previous paper
 - ▶ Avoid attempting to study a new topic at the last moment.
 - ▶ Avoid anxiety provoking discussions with friends
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On the day of the examination

- ▶ Avoid being late on the day of examination
 - ▶ Enter the hall with positive attitude
 - ▶ Read and understand the question paper before beginning to answer.
 - ▶ Planning to answer as per his/her ability and within the stipulated time
 - ▶ Post mortem discussion are not encouraged
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Anxiety/stress management


- ▶ Breathing technique
 - ▶ Relaxation exercise
 - ▶ Physical activity, healthy diet, adequate sleep
 - ▶ Meditation
 - ▶ Support group
 - ▶ Psychological therapies like cognitive behavior therapy
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Cognitive therapy

- ▶ Identify cognitive distortion (negative thoughts) – “if I fail this exam it will be the end of the world, people will ridicule me” etc. “I will definitely fail this exam...”
 - ▶ Test/ Analyze the thoughts – Is it really true?
 - ▶ Replace illogical thoughts with logical thoughts.
 - ▶ Use positive self statement
 - ▶ Prepare for the feared circumstances
 - ▶ Compete with yourself
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For the parents





- ▶ Parents should not stress on rank, marks etc
 - ▶ They should be positive and reassuring with regular emphasis on success.
 - ▶ They should appreciate the efforts and encourage the child.
 - ▶ Negative talks should be few and comparison avoided.
 - ▶ Avoid imbibing own anxiety into the child.
 - ▶ Spent time with them during difficult time, offer feelings of security and warmth
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- ▶ Try to create study atmosphere in the house, avoid family conflicts during exams.
 - ▶ Discuss career options
 - ▶ Vicious cycle that can lead to suicide should be prevented. It should be imprinted in the minds of the child that suicide is never the solution for exam stress or failure
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For the Teachers




- ▶ Good communication between teacher and student. As Huelsman(1991) recommends that “ something as simple as an encouraging smile (or words) before the test might diminish the ominous atmosphere”
 - ▶ ‘Test what is taught..’
 - ▶ Use of objective scoring method or objective testing. Alcala(2002) advises the use of 2 or 3 examiners to relieve test anxiety
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- ▶ Teachers should give clear information about the exams – aims, format, rating system etc.
 - ▶ Should not be the only form of assessment
 - ▶ If exams are in a different environment, familiarize the student to the environment
 - ▶ Create a positive classroom environment – avoiding sarcasm and ridicule, inappropriately comparing students, reward efforts. Posting a list of class marks may not be helpful
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- ▶ Help create study schedule and effective test taking strategies
 - ▶ Discuss about exam anxiety in classrooms and ways to manage them.
 - ▶ Refer to professionals if needed
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For the education system



- ▶ Admission for nursery students – Can there be an alternative to personal interview/test.
 - ▶ What more can be done to bring out more creativity in our students
 - ▶ Any change needed in the examination system?
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THANK YOU

