



SURVIVING EXAMS

With exams on the near horizon across all year levels of Domremy College, there are some simple and effective things you can do that will help your daughter move through this period smoothly. You don't need to be an expert on education to help them through, you just need to be involved and support them.

Set Goals together "Goals are dreams with deadlines" Diana Scharf Hunt
A goal without a plan is nothing but a wish! Setting goals and sharing them with someone else increases accountability. Sit down with your daughter and set realistic goals about what can be achieved in each subject area. Use previous school reports as a gauge for goal setting and identifying areas of improvement.

Establish the advantages of achieving academic goals and focussing throughout the exam period. Work out what steps need to be taken to reach these goals and expand upon these by establishing long term (end of term), medium term (week by week) and short term (daily) goals. Identify obstacles that might stand in the way and strategies that may help to overcome these. Writing goals down means your daughter is not only accountable to herself but to others as well. Set SMARTER goals by being:

SPECIFIC	"I want a B for history" is far more specific than "I'll do my best this year"
MEASUREABLE	Describe your goal in terms that can be clearly evaluated. How will you know you are on the way to achieving a B for history?
ACTION-BASED	Select goals with identified, clear actions. Don't just wish!
REALISTIC	Has your daughter ever achieved a B for history before? Set goals you know your daughter is actually capable of with a little stretch!
TIME-DEFINED	Have a plan for when each smaller goal will be achieved. For example, "I will have written summary notes for maths by 9 pm tonight"
ENTHUSIASTIC	You have a greater chance of achieving if you think like a winner. Draw on positive thinking. Nothing important is ever achieved without hard work but hard work can be enjoyable.
REWARDED	Don't forget to reward yourself if you achieve your goal for that first day/week. Make it a reward you don't have <u>unless</u> you do! Many students make the mistake of watching television BEFORE completing an hour of study. Use the television program as the incentive and enjoy the reward!

Teach Time Management Skills

Set up a study timetable on a sheet that can be copied to your daughter's bedroom wall and homework diary, and help them stick to it! Allow for family, job, sport, recreational and personal time. Analyse how time is spent now and see when study can really fit in. Work out how to avoid distractions. For example, take a message for your daughter if a friend phones during allocated study time and provide the opportunity for them to call back during the scheduled recreation time. Try sticking to the plan but make changes as they are necessary – one hour out during the week to attend a special event may need to be replaced by an hour on the weekend.

Reflect

Following exams, when results are back, don't forget to review the goals made, reflect on the marks your daughter achieved and help her to set new goals. Identify and revise the strategies needed to attain these goals and begin the process again. If your daughter didn't manage to achieve the set goals, work out why. Utilise it as an opportunity to learn from mistakes. Failure is an indispensable prerequisite for success. Adapt the plan accordingly.



HEALTH AND WELLBEING DURING EXAMS

Self-care is of paramount importance during periods of increased stress. The following information sheet has provides parents with an overview of strategies that promote well-being and, ultimately, enhance your daughter's ability to cope. Committing to even one or two of the following on a regular basis provides for prevention and teaches your daughter long-term management of life's stressors.

1. Set SMARTER goals

See sheet over for tips

2. Convey clear expectations

When setting goals with your daughter, it is important that you convey your own realistic expectations regarding her performance. A helpful way to frame this is in terms of rights and corresponding responsibilities. Parents have a responsibility to provide for their child's education, but they also have a right to establish certain expectations regarding effort and performance. Students have a right to an education, but they also have a responsibility to utilise the opportunity to their full capacity.

3. Establish a timetable - together

Sit down with your daughter and list all the activities she is involved in. Work out how much study time is needed – both during exam periods and on a regular basis. Break the day into appropriate time spans ie each hour. Include time for sleep, meals, household tasks and travel plans. Schedule in time for watching TV and socialising and also allow for breaks and exercise. Expect differences on weekdays and weekends. Adjust the timetable to ensure it is flexible and workable within your home.

4. Establish a balanced approach

A student who maintains a balanced life is in the best position to succeed. It isn't necessary to give up everything to devote time to study. Going to the movies and playing sport provides opportunities for time out. At the other end of the scale, committing only to social activities is just as unhelpful. It is important to discuss realistic limits on non-study activities.

5. Stick to a routine

Once you have established a routine that is workable in your house, do your best to stick with it. Using a family timetable and keeping this on the fridge ensures everyone is aware of meal times, family times and harmonious times for quiet study. A routine also reduces arguments about the use of phones and msn as it becomes easier to distinguish study time from relaxation time. Routines are always difficult to establish initially but sticking with them means they eventually become habit.

6. Ask for help

Education is a team approach so encourage your daughter to ask for help when she needs it. Teachers are invariably only too willing to lend a hand but teachers also expect students to begin to take responsibility for their own learning in high school. If you yourself notice things are not going well, contact someone at the school as early as possible as issues can usually be worked out quickly and positively if tackled early. Organising extra academic support in the form of a tutor may also assist.

7. Mind your mind

During times of stress, we are at our most vulnerable. As such, it can be easy to fall into the trap of developing negative thinking patterns. Emotional health is just as important as physical health. Model positive thinking and assist your daughter to monitor her self-talk by challenging negative thinking patterns. If you hear her using put-downs or "beating herself up", replace these with an alternative set of positive affirmations. It may be helpful to write these down and display them in a prominent place as a cue for retraining her brain's internal record player. Maintain open communication channels.

8. Sleep

Sleep is our body's natural way of coping with stress. It provides our brain with the opportunity to re-order and process events, effectively filing them into appropriate, retrievable storage systems. Long-term sleep deprivation is unhealthy and harmful and ultimately reduces a student's capacity to learn. Model and engage them in helpful evening routines such as:- limiting caffeine intake (even if only temporarily), taking a warm bath or shower, reading a book in lieu of television, ensuring the mind and muscles are relaxed prior to rest and dimming the lights. Students should aim to get up and go to bed about the same time during the week.

9. Lifestyle

Providing fresh, nutritious meals along opportunities for exercise and fresh air are equally as important as the time your daughter devotes to study time. Avoid junk food wherever possible during the week.

10. Relax

Stress leads to tension and shallow breathing. Techniques such as diaphragmatic breathing, visualisation and progressive muscular relaxation provide the body and mind with the ultimate tune-up and the opportunity to 're-charge batteries'. Prayer, yoga and tai chi provide similar benefits and the opportunity to "quiet the mind". A wide range of relaxation CDs are readily available.