



What's New For Schools

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY, INC.

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Coping with the Stress of Final Exams

By Dena Charbonneau, MSW, LSW, CPS

We're coming upon the time of year that most students dread...FINAL EXAMS!

Final exams week is typically the most stressful time of year for students. While some amount of stress is healthy and can actually be motivating, too much stress can be immobilizing or make a student physically sick. This is why the ability to cope with stress is an important skill to have.

Stress is caused by unpredictability and loss of control. Final exams cause stress, because of the unexpected nature of the exam questions and the lack of control over what questions will appear on the exam. There are many simple ways to cope with stress that students may find helpful during their final exams. These tips will help reduce stress by creating a routine that helps a person's body or mind prepare and by putting them in control of what will happen during their day.

Cramming – Don't do it! – Cramming at the last minute is a sure way to become stressed. A better choice is to break assigned materials into small blocks. If you were to eat a meal in one gulp, you would choke. Similarly, if you try to study too much all at once, you won't be able to "digest" the material.

Surroundings – It's best to study in a comfortable and well-lit area. Make sure the area is free of distractions (such as the television) and that the temperature is not too uncomfortably high or low. As comfortable as your study setting is, take time away to refresh. A change of scenery will give your mind time to process information studied and to prepare for more.

Continued on Page 2

Continued from Page 1

Have fun and LAUGH! – A good way to “burn out” during exams is to “buckle down.” Instead, find opportunities for fun. Go to a movie or play board games with friends. Laughing will keep anger, depression, and anxiety from setting in. (Just don’t have so much fun that you forget to study!)



Exercise – It does a body (and mind) good! – Exercise is a great stress reliever, since it causes your body to produce endorphins. Don’t exercise to the point of exhaustion, but light exercise can be a welcome and refreshing break during studying.

Stick to your schedule – Developing a schedule will help you keep track of how much time you have and how to best use it. On the schedule, note the dates and times of each exam and schedule times to study for each exam. Don’t forget to schedule in some breaks and fun time too! Keep your schedule in a visible place and stick to it!

The Buddy System – Stress is easier to deal with when you know others are going

through it too. Another helpful tip is to get together with friends or classmates to study. Just make sure the group stays on task or everyone will just be wasting time.

A good night’s sleep – It’s tempting to stay up late to study the night before a big test, but you’ll do better on a good night’s sleep as opposed to fighting to stay awake. A well rested body will be more alert. A lack of sleep will reduce comprehension and retention of even the most basic information.

You are what you eat! – You’ll have more energy and feel better if you avoid junk food and choose healthier alternatives. For example, if you are tense or nervous, eating carbohydrates (such as bread, crackers, pasta, and cereal) will relax you. If you are not alert, eat protein (such as chicken, fish, tofu, beans, yogurt, or milk).

Avoid caffeine – Caffeine may give a quick boost of energy, but the crash that comes along with it can often cause you to lose more time than the boost gave you. Drinking coffee or soda can increase stress levels and diminish the amount and quality of sleep you need. Your ability to concentrate will also be diminished.

Power of positive thinking! - Finally, keeping a positive outlook is a powerful stress reducer. Exams should be viewed as a challenge that can be overcome in order to reach achievement. A student in a healthy frame of mind is likely to have a more successful week of exams.



NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc. is a private, non-profit community-based health organization serving Middlesex County. Our mission is to promote the health and well-being of individuals and communities of Middlesex County through the reduction or elimination of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use problems.

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About Strengthening Families

By Christina Rak-Samson, BA

If you could spend more time with your children learning about their likes and dislikes, while bonding and communicating better, you would be interested...right?



What parent doesn't want to bridge that gap between the sweet innocence of childhood and the ever changing environment known as adolescence? Adolescence is a very stressful time in a child's life. It is a time when they are trying to fit in with others and identify who they are. They have to deal with pressure from their peers, school, extra curricular activities, and yes, parents. This is a confusing time for them. This can also be a very stressful time for the parents/caregivers of these ever changing pre-teens and teens.

There is a unique program that exists to help families during this stressful time, it's called *Strengthening Families*. This program is designed to focus on family-related risk factors for adolescent problem behaviors, while building protective factors in young adolescent children ages 10-14 and their parent/caregivers.

Strengthening Families helps parents/caregivers learn nurturing skills to support their children, teaches them how to effectively discipline and guide their youth and interacts with other adults as well. The youth learn skills for dealing with stress and peer pressure, learn about healthy relationships with friends, and have an increased perception and appreciation of their parents/caregivers.

The *Strengthening Families* program meets once a week for a total of seven fun-filled and informative sessions. At the beginning of each evening, the family comes together and shares a meal which is provided for them. Then, for the next hour, the parents and youth split up for their own breakout session. After the hour, families meet back up for the second hour to bond and do family activities, which tie together the information learned in their separate sessions. There are many incentives offered in order to keep everyone's energy up.



At the conclusion of this program each family is awarded a certificate

acknowledging their completion of the program. There is a celebration recognizing the time and effort each family has put into making their family stronger. The benefits that come from a program like this are priceless. With the ever changing times, there is one thing that should not change. That is

Continued on Page 4

Meet The Educator - Christina Rak-Samson

By Jennifer Smith, MPH, CPS

Christina Rak-Samson is a Prevention Educator at the NCADD. She has earned a BA in psychology from Rutgers University and is continuing her education to attain her CPS.

Christina is also the program coordinator for NCADD's *Strengthening Families* program where families unite together and learn new communication skills — all while connecting and strengthening the bond they share.



In addition to being employed at NCADD, Christina also teaches dance and movement at The Center School in Highland Park, as well as Center Stage Dance and Theatre School in East Brunswick. In the future, she plans to use those skills as we develop new programs geared towards the arts and prevention.

Christina also had the distinct honor of representing the state of New Jersey at the Mrs. America Pageant in Tuscan, Arizona as Mrs. New Jersey America 2006/2007. With her year of service to many organizations and charities, Christina's main platform was Substance Abuse Awareness and Prevention where she spoke to many on the dangers of drugs and alcohol and the impact it has on the home front. She is honored to continue her career in the prevention field where she is committed to enriching the lives around her through education and prevention with our youth.

Continued from Page 3

making our families the strongest they can be to stand up together as one and defeat the many challenges they have to handle.

To learn more about the *Strengthening Families* program or to request more information please contact the NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc. at 732-254-3344 or you can send an email to:

Christina@ncadd-middlesex.org

Pedaling for Prevention Family Fun Day

The Coalition for Healthy Communities will host its third annual Pedaling for Prevention Family Fun Day on Sunday, September 7, 2008. Individual of all ages and abilities, along with volunteers and crew members, can participate in one of four events:

- 50 Mile Bicycle Tour
- 20 Mile Bicycle Tour
- 5K Fun Ride in the Park

Other activities are also planned.

To register for the event, go to <http://ncadd-middlesex.org/biketour> or call Linda Surks at 732-254-3344.

