

HOW TO TACKLE SELF-DOUBT AND ANXIETY IN THE JOURNEY OF UPSC PREPARATION?

The journey of preparing for the UPSC exam can be challenging, time consuming but also exhausting. And this leads to candidates experiencing self-doubt and anxiety. Though it is totally common for a candidate to experience these hurdles, here are certain strategies to tackle them all:

1. **Set Realistic Goals:**

- Break down your study plan into manageable and realistic goals. Set daily, weekly, and monthly targets. Intelligent planning and execution of the targets will accomplish the goals made.
- Celebrate small victories, and recognize your progress along the way.
- This will not only make you secure from self-doubt, but it will also boost your self-confidence, energizing you to work smart and not just hard.

2. **Positive Self-Talk:**

- Replace negative thoughts with positive affirmations. Remind yourself of your strengths and achievements.
- Focus on the progress you've made rather than dwelling on perceived shortcomings.

3. **Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques:**

- Practice mindfulness and relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, or yoga to manage stress and anxiety.
- Take breaks when needed and engage in activities that bring you joy and relaxation.
- Reading religious books and having faith in God may be a good technique as there will always be things beyond our control.

4. **Healthy Lifestyle:**

- Ensure you are getting enough sleep, maintaining a balanced diet, and engaging in regular physical activity.
- A healthy lifestyle contributes to improved mental well-being and cognitive function.
- Spending some good time in outdoor physical activities like sports and gym may be a good option.

5. **Seek Support:**

- Connect with friends, family, or fellow aspirants who understand the challenges of UPSC preparation. Share your concerns and seek encouragement.
- Connect with the people who motivate you for your goal and understand your state of mind. Similarly important is to maintain distance with people who put you in the situation of self-doubt by constantly questioning your capabilities.
- Making a study group of fellow aspirants will make you both competitive and mindful of your preparation.

6. **Learn from Setbacks:**

- Treat setbacks and failures as learning opportunities rather than as reasons for self-doubt. Analyse what went wrong and use it as a guide for improvement.
- Remember that setbacks are a normal part of any competitive exam preparation.
- SWOT analysis of preparation will play an important role in making you truly aware of the current situation and which would ultimately help you clearing the examination with flying colours.

7. **Variety in Study Routine:**

- Introduce variety into your study routine to keep things interesting. Monotony can contribute to anxiety and self-doubt.
- Explore different study methods and materials to find what works best for you.
- Monotony can best be broken by preparing two general studies papers and one optional paper daily based on your strengths and preferences.

8. **Time Management:**

- Efficient time management is crucial for UPSC preparation. Plan your study schedule, prioritize tasks, and avoid last-minute cramming.

- Set aside time for regular revisions to reinforce your learning.

9. **Focus on the Process, Not Just the Outcome:**

- Instead of solely focusing on the end goal, appreciate the learning and growth that occurs during the preparation journey.
- Develop a love for learning and curiosity about the subjects, rather than being solely result-oriented. This will not only engage you in studying but help in in the long run as well.

10. **Professional Help:**

- If anxiety and self-doubt become overwhelming, consider seeking professional help. A counsellor or therapist can provide valuable support and coping strategies.
- Reaching out to already selected candidates is also important to take a second opinion of how they handled similar challenges during their phase of preparation.
- For those who may have no access to selected candidates, coaching institutions are good place to find both selected candidates along with the experienced teachers who are available for solving doubts not just related to subject matter but also regarding mental health issues and how one can tackle those challenges effectively and efficiently.
- For this, one can access the Government of India's National Tele Mental Health Program.

Remember that it's okay to feel stressed or doubtful at times. The key is to develop a resilient mind set and adopt strategies that help you navigate challenges effectively. Take care of your mental and physical well-being, and approach the UPSC preparation as a holistic journey of growth and learning. Remembering that UPSC is a roller coaster ride will help one to face the challenge with utmost care and intelligence instead of expecting unusual outcomes.