

# YOUR LIFE

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Expert advice on helping kids as exam time looms

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Give your interior a makeover and help beat cabin fever

## *Sophie's game for her new role*

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# IN THE KNOW

What's on, what's new and who's doing what?  
You'll never be stuck for ideas again...

## TANGO IN THE NIGHT - AND DAY

The eighth edition of the Dubai Tango Festival  
takes place at Meydan from May 18-21, so glam up,  
grab your partner and hit the floor.

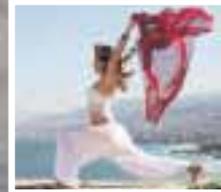
There's free afternoon milongas (tango dances) and  
also glam gala events to enjoy throughout the event,  
and also a range of workshops for all levels, including

beginners.

There's no shortage of  
inspiration either with some  
renowned maestros, such  
as Alejandra Mantinan  
and Aoniken Quiroga  
pairing up to show

how the sensual partner dance should really  
be done. DJ Tugba and friends will also be  
providing the perfect soundtrack. And if  
you want something a little more zen,  
yoga teacher Carla Moukarzel will  
be running free classes to help us  
find that equilibrium between  
body, mind and soul.

INTEL: tanguodubai.org



## NOT TO BE MISSED

Experts say listening to classical music is  
good for mental health, so give your brain a

boost at the  
World  
Classical Music  
Series spring  
edition, titled  
La Vie en Rose,  
on May 13 at  
The One&Only  
Royal Mirage.  
The concert  
will see award-  
ed opera per-  
formers like  
Spanish tenor  
Joel Prieto,  
French soprano  
Sara Gouzy and

piano virtuoso Semjon Singh, perform live. With  
orchestra concerts playing everything from  
Mozart to Liszt. INTEL: mpremiere.com



Be a real angel for others at the second  
Wings for Life World Run. Brave the  
summer heat and challenge yourself to  
a unique race in benefit of the Spinal  
Cord Research Foundation. The event,  
which will simultaneously happen across the  
globe on May 8 at 3pm, will see participants  
try to run as far as they can and keep ahead of  
the catcher car. Last year, Omani Sami Al Saidi

covered a distance of 45km. Will anyone  
beat his record this time?

INTEL: wingsforlifeworldrun.com

The ladies-only boot camp, GetFitChick  
Dubai, kicks off the second cycle of its  
eight-week fitness programme  
on May 29.



Your transformation  
begins with a com-  
plete body analysis,  
six training  
sessions a week,  
CrossFit and  
yoga classes,  
nutrition guideline,  
coach meetings,  
travel workouts,  
different fitness work-  
shops and 24/7 online  
support group. INTEL:

Facebook.com/getfitchickdubai



# A TESTING TIME FOR TEENS

*Spot the signs of stress and help your child find balance as exams approach*



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Specialist Urologist

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**M**um Racheil Medel notices changes in the behaviour of her daughter Sophia whenever exam time comes around. Currently in the 11th grade at a Dubai-based school, Sophia is getting ready for the upcoming board exams in June and Racheil is well aware that the 16-year-old has been feeling the pressure.

"I can tell she's stressed when she gets

irritated easily, sleeps too much or too little and also when she eats junk food," notes Racheil. "She worries about university entrance exams she's going to take, knowing that some of the subjects included were not in her curriculum."

Psychologists confirm that student stress levels are on the rise during exam months, and it's not something to be ignored.

"There are expectations that young people will achieve international qualifications at the ages of 16 and 18 that will lead to university places," explains Dr Madeleine Portwood, psychologist and the British Psychological Society's spokesperson on child development and neurodevelopmental disorders and teenage risks.

"There is evidence from studies in the UK that at certain times of the year there is escalation of attempted

self-harm or suicide. Universities are particularly vigilant in June," she adds.

Dr Thoraiya Kanafani, a clinical psychologist at Human Relations Institute and Clinics in Dubai, says it is the same the world over. Though there are no precise statistics for the UAE yet, there were reported cases in recent years of students falling into a downward spiral because of failing marks or poor performance at school.

"In 2010, a school health survey by the World Health Organisation and the UAE Ministry of Health found that 12.6 per cent of UAE

students had considered attempting suicide one or more times. The survey covered 2,581 students between the ages of 13 and 15," Dr Thoraiya explains.

Teenagers generally get more stressed out than adults, as Dr Kanafani explains: "This does not mean they're facing more difficult problems than adults; they're just unaware of how to cope with problems in a healthy way."

Both experts agree that high level of competition puts pressure on students today, and most don't know where to turn for help. And it's not just at exam time.

According to Dr Kanafani, UAE teens also struggle with eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia due to social pressures to look 'perfect'.

School bullying, a lack of job opportunities after graduating, peer pressure and even family problems can also have a big impact.

Today, there's also a

huge pressure on the youth brought about by social media and tech trends. Dr Portwood observes: "The effect is greater on females, who are constantly checking for messages that require immediate response. They're worried that the social group will start making comments about them if they don't respond immediately."

Meanwhile video games can also cause high levels of stress - particularly in young males.

"It is generally an isolated pursuit and the competitive nature of males requires them to continue to strive to achieve the next level, gain more points or do more damage. This has a significant effect on the young person's ability to 'shut down' and have the required periods of relaxation essential for 'brain health'," Dr Portwood adds

Experts addressed these issues at the recent Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing conference hosted

by Ebdaah in Dubai. The full-day seminar titled "Ensuring Teenagers Live Life To The Full" talked about spotting the signs of teen stress and advised how adults can help. Dr Portwood says it's important for parents to spend time engaging with their children.

"Often parents are occupied with laptops and phones, while the child is in the same room and using a handheld device. They're together physically, but not socially or emotionally. It's essential parents can verbally communi-

cate with them. It is important that teenagers have an adult (this may be a family member, a family friend or an education professional in school) with whom they can discuss anxieties.

"There should be a culture both at home and in school where young people are encouraged to talk about their emotions." [glaiza@7days.ae](mailto:glaiza@7days.ae)



## HERE ARE THE STRESS SYMPTOMS TO LOOK OUT FOR, SAYS DR THORAIYA KANAFANI

1. Irritability
2. Anger
3. Excessive worrying
4. Sleeping difficulties
5. Disordered eating (either overeating or eating too little)



## BUILDING A STRESS-FREE ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR KIDS

- Whatever a teen's concern, they must be taken seriously and acknowledged as causing distress.
- It is important they are able to communicate the details of this stress. It does not have to be face-to-face, as some may find it easier to write things down. This communication does not have to be directly with a parent, it could be a sibling or someone external to the family.
- Reduce conflict. Work on difficult relationships so your child is not exposed to fighting and tension between parents or among the family.
- Try not to overload activities. Teens and kids should not be involved in too many things at once. They need a good amount of rest too.
- Try to focus on healthy habits: prepare healthy meals (veggies, proteins, etc), establish good sleeping routine and encourage regular exercise.
- If personal difficulties are intense or longstanding, consider seeking professional help in the form of a therapist or counsellor to work on conflict.