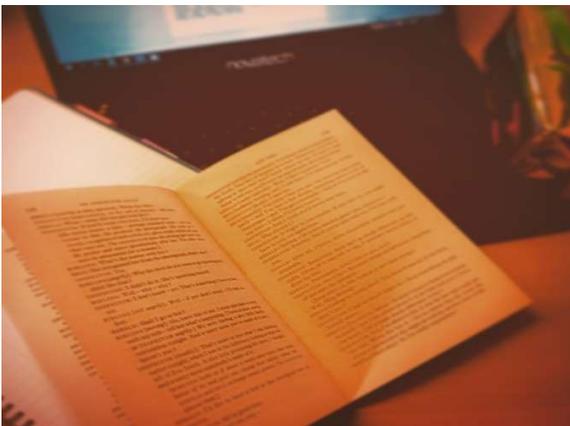


How homework affects teens mentally

- By Wilbur, Lewis, Finn, Sophie, Katie and Libby

“The effects that too much homework can have on teenagers are too high”

For most teens, homework is an everyday essential to school life. Almost every teen spends up to about 4 hours a night doing homework, after doing around 6 hours a day at regular school. All this adds up to equal about a 47-hour week.



A reasonable amount of homework is a good thing, since it tends to have a positive effect on a student's academic success, according to Harris Cooper, a professor of psychology and director of the Program in Education at Duke University. More than two hours of homework a night, though, did not improve a student's future academic achievements, though, according to Cooper's 2006 study

published in the "Review of Educational Research." Too much could prove counter-productive to academic success, especially if the homework isn't appropriate for a teen, because it's too challenging or not challenging enough.

Teens who have more homework than they can handle may become disappointed with school and may lose the motivation to work hard, according to Gerald LeTendre, head of Penn State's Education Policy Studies department. Students who find homework too challenging may be tempted to cheat on test, rather than ask for extra help, suggests the No Child Left Behind research done by the U.S. Department of Education.

Teens today engage in physical activity nearly two hours less a week than they did 20 years ago, according to researchers at the University of Michigan. Heavy homework loads -- in addition to increased computer and television time -- can make kids less physically active, which may contribute to obesity and related health problems. Too

much homework may also contribute to increased sleep deprivation in teens.

Homework cuts into family time, which LeTendre said was one of the complaints frequently heard during his research. Homework can also cause unwanted friction between parents and children, especially for teens who are struggling learners, found Curt Dudley-Marling, a researcher at Boston College, who published his findings on homework and struggling learners in “Current Issues in Education” in 2003. Dudley-Marling found that when teens struggled with their homework assignments, it had a negative and disruptive effect on the whole family.

Homework vs Sleep: a huge battle for a teen

Another factor which can cause sleep deprivation is homework. Some studies suggest that the amount of homework which teenagers receive has stayed constant over time. A recent study showed that some elementary school children had three times the recommended homework load. In spite of this, homework has started appearing even in reception and the first year in spite of recommendations to the contrary. This has become a source of great stress to families.

Sleep deprivation in teenagers is an epidemic here in the UK, with up to 90% of teenagers not getting enough sleep on school nights. The most important factor causing this is school start times that are too early for teenagers, who are hardwired to go to bed later and get up later compared with younger children (or grown-ups).

The recommendation of the National Education Association is that children received no more than ten minutes of homework from each subject per night. So, a Year 11 student would max out at two hours of homework per night. An analysis published by the Brookings Institute concluded that there has been little change in the amount of homework assigned between 1984 and 2012. About 15% of Year 6's and Year 11's did have greater than two hours of homework per night. Interestingly, the author also referenced a study which showed that about 15% of parents were concerned about excessive homework as well. This would suggest that the problem of excessive homework is occurring only in about one in six teenagers.

There is a perception that homework loads are excessive. This certainly may be the case in some communities or in high pressure schools. Teenagers certainly think that they have too much homework.

