Stress Management and Coping Strategies for Students and Teachers

Dr. Ranjana Ruhela
Principal
District Institute of Education & Training (D.I.E.T.), Rajinder Nager, Delhi

Abstract

This paper delves into the topic of managing stress for students, teachers, and parents. Stress is a ubiquitous and often inescapable aspect of life that can have detrimental effects on mental and physical health, personal relationships, and academic or professional performance. Thus, it is crucial to develop effective strategies for coping with stress. It explores various techniques for managing stress, such as physical exercise, mindfulness, time management, and seeking social support. Additionally, the paper highlights the significance of prioritizing mental health and well-being and integrating stress management practices into one's daily routine. By comprehending and employing these techniques, students, teachers, and parents can better handle stress and enhance their overall quality of life.

Keywords: *Stress Management, Coping Strategies, Students, Teachers.*

Introduction :-

Life in general is full of strain and pressure for everyone around the globe, especially for underprivileged groups and people that are involved in small businesses, medical health services and the education system. The ongoing state of the education system has very little motive for introducing stress management in its curriculum in developing countries that's why they rely on spiritual organisations when there is a crisis (for example the COVID-19 pandemic).

The most significantly affected group is the youth which is still in schools, colleges and or in the early phases of their career. Not only are they vulnerable, but also the most adaptable and ready to receive the knowledge that can significantly turn their lives around for good. Also, it should be the least bit surprising when thinking of even adults who seem successful but are incapable of managing the high amounts of stress at the workplace or at the home. This paper is focussing on the kids, the adolescents and their mentors at school/colleges so that they are prepared for any adverse situations when they face hardships of life later in their lives or even point and bring out the challenges that they currently face. This paper's purpose is to bring out and hand over a "toolkit" for youngsters.

The tech-savvy generation who lives on and learns through social media has found the transition from chalk and slates to screens really immersive to a level that real experiences seem to them as discouraging, and disinteresting which further leads to experiencing anxiety, stress as well as depression. The main cause of these psychological problems is the absence of connection between parents-kids; teachers-students; and the social conditioning that humans as social beings receive and reciprocate to youngsters right from their childhood when they are the most absorbing and pure at heart. The results of this disconnect can be seen as the child enters an older teenage with no methods to actually cut through the difficulties and slowly becomes more mechanical at school, and around people and end up making wrong choices and is left empty-handed by society in guilt and shame.

Stress and Chronic Stress :-

Stress can be defined as a body's response to pressures from a situation or life event. It is the body's reaction to a demanding task. Everybody experiences stress, which can be brought on by a variety of things, from minor everyday inconveniences to significant life upheavals like domestic relationship issues, exam failure, being cut from the school basketball team, etc.

The stress response includes physical components such as an elevated heart rate and increase in blood pressure, an uncontrollable chain of thoughts and personal beliefs about the stressful event, neuroticism, feelings of fear, and anger and the kids are not even in a position to release all that negativity in a beneficial way, let alone managing it.

Stress is not negative in its pure nature, but it is the response of a being to stress which makes the condition of being under stress negative or positive. Although stress is often thought of stress as being negative, it can also come from positive changes in life, like being chosen as the head girl at school. In this situation the head girl has 2 choices:

a) To upskill by more knowledge of soft and hard skills, to be able to act as a stronger bridge between the teachers and her peer students.
b) To surrender to the pressure and indulge in practices that instead of elevating her personality, act as cheap and short-term releases like unnecessary complaints or the ego massage, so she may start thinking of herself as far better than her peers and badmouthing them or gossiping, which may ultimately lead to an inefficient system of management.

The 2-faced coin of stress :-

There are two facets of stress which bring about different symptoms.

A. **'Eustress'**, also known as 'beneficial stress', can serve as a **short-term motivation**. By short term motivation means, a topper not being appreciated at school for a project may start underperforming on upcoming projects, or on the other hand, he can also start putting in more work and extra time at home devoting himself to studies solely, slowly being ignorant of his health. So it is apt to say that short-term motivation can lead to ignorance also.
B. The other is **'distress'** and this is the negative response to stress. It can start showing up as increased absence of a student in class, badmouthing parents and teachers, and choosing to get involved in bad peer groups.

A human being should be aware and attentive to both kinds of stress to take the best decisions for his personal benefit, then for the people close to him, and then for society in general.

What contributes to stress can vary hugely from person to person and differs according to one's social and economic circumstances, and the environment. A normal level of stress may motivate an individual to pursue and achieve their prior set goals but the situation gets serious if the stress becomes chronic. **Chronic stress** is a prolonged and constant feeling of stress that can negatively affect a being's health if it goes untreated. It can be caused by prolonged pressures of family and work or by traumatic events.

Let's Handle Stress :-

I. Strategies for Students -

The following strategies can help students in relieving stress:

1. ***Being observant, and in touch with friends and relatives:*** The first thing people do when they do not have the right tools to cope with a sudden increase in stress is isolate themselves from all daily routine activities and break contact with family and friends. So do the students. A change in behaviour, radical thoughts and indulging in patterns of overthinking is the primary sign of sadness taking over oneself. And most elders see that as misbehaviour from the student's side, but it's the most natural thing any conscious being does when he is not ready for a challenge. Staying socially connected with the most important people in a student's life at home and at school, who nurture the student and also help him/her to understand his/her situation is very important. A student should never be discouraged from asking for help, be it with studies or personal challenges. One should never be allowed to go to bed and stay awake for hours lonely thinking about what's wrong with oneself.
2. ***Proper sleep:*** How to manage stress begins with something simple: getting enough sleep. A good night's sleep is critical for the learning process of a student, and also for keeping stress levels manageable. The National Sleep Foundation recommends at least 7 hours of sleep.
3. ***Regular play/workout:*** Exercise is a time-tested way to manage stress for a reason: it works. Even a brisk 10-minute walk can boost endorphins (the body's feel-good neurotransmitters), improve mood, and more. It's a stress management technique that is good for education, as well as for the body and the mind.
4. ***Eating healthy on time:*** Another simple stress management tip is to have a balanced diet in proper proportions. While it's tempting to have junk and sugary foods but these foods actually decrease physical energy—eventually affecting daily academic performance. Feeding on fibre-rich foods, including fruits, vegetables, a good amount of protein (one's weight in grams should be the minimum amount of protein intake per day), and whole grains with pre and probiotics.
5. ***Get organized:*** An important stress management technique for busy students is to deal with the chaos and put things in order. Getting organized—and staying organized. Keeping the work environment and the room neat. Mapping out semester-wise goals & reminders for important tasks. Once one gets organized, one can feel stress levels go down for good.
6. ***Wise time management:*** Bad time management has its roots in absence of good habits. When one has good habits in place one is always aware when there is a leakage of time, in other words, one has to know that one has some important tasks at hand and can't afford petty time wastage. One gets up on time and prioritizes tasks to avoid distractions and set goals. Managing time wisely will give one the structure one needs to tackle both academic and personal life.
7. ***Seek Help:*** When feeling stressed, one should not hesitate in talking to a professional to help feel better, mentally and physically. Seeking help from a teacher, mentor, coach, counsellor or therapist can help in times of need.
8. ***Take breaks:*** Sitting in one spot for hours in front of books or screens is bad for the mind and the body. Stand up and stretch. Go for a walk. Call a friend and meet for coffee. Taking a break

doesn't have to be a complicated endeavour. It's an easy, effective way to manage the stress that, like exercise, will give one's mood a boost.

9. ***Avoid nicotine products:*** People who use nicotine often refer to it as a stress reliever. Nicotine, on the other hand, causes the body to feel more stressed since it raises physical arousal while decreasing blood flow and respiration.
10. ***Building values:*** The more one's actions reflect one's beliefs, the better one will feel, no matter how busy life is. Use values and principles when choosing activities.
11. **Assertion:** It's okay to say "No" to demands on time and energy that place too much stress and result in bad health.
12. ***Being realistic in setting goals:*** It's okay and healthy to realize that one cannot be 100% successful at everything all at once. Being mindful of the things that can and cannot be controlled and accepting situations as they are can take a lot of stress away.
13. ***Avoid Procrastination:*** Too much procrastination will create more pressure and cause mental stress and even extreme tiredness. Postponing a task that can be completed today can increase the amount of pressure the next day. College-going students do this all the time and make it a bad habit. They find it easier to study the night before, but it all goes to waste if they didn't use the time well as it leads to bad future decisions and sometimes being unemployed is what they settle for. One of the best ways to overcome procrastination is to start early. One may decide not to rely on the original deadline for that task; create one deadline which is a day or two before the actual deadline.
14. ***Go easy when things are uneasy:*** Being too hard on oneself even when the pressure is increasing. Doing so will only increase the stress hormone in the body. Blaming oneself for lost time will not restore it. Instead, concentrate on the time at present. Being attentive and trying my best to accomplish as much as one possibly can. One way to shake off stress when the pressure is mounting is to remain positive and calm. Positive thinking, according to research, can help in keeping a better outlook towards stressful scenarios. Conversely, negativity seems to make stress worse.
15. ***Staying joyful:*** A poor night's rest or stressful day can be detrimental to health. But the good thing is taking a nap during the day can help reduce stress, boost the immune system, and balance out hormones. Besides taking a nap, there are several other ways one can stay calm. For instance, listening to classical music with violins and flutes or meditating for a couple of minutes. Meditation is misunderstood as being in an act where one stops all thoughts consciously, instead trying to let those thoughts flow freely and keeping the mind calmly attentive to the nature of these thoughts. Not trying to control them but just being observant of the mental activity can bring a great amount of satisfaction and instant change.
16. ***Wear a smile:*** According to science, smiling can improve one's thought patterns and mood.
17. ***Symptoms check:*** Symptoms like trouble sleeping, a rapid heartbeat, depression, poor concentration, and many symptoms of stress can all increase during stressful situations when an exam is coming up or not having a completed project before the deadline. Taking a moment to regularly check in, on how one is feeling, physically as well as mentally, then incorporating the stress management techniques that work best for the individual.

II. Guidelines for teachers for managing stress among students:

1. Prioritizing the content of the syllabus for the learners.
2. The teaching of life skills by real-life case studies. Just putting value education in the curriculum means motivating the student to get a decent overall aggregate from a secondary subject to balance out the subjects where they don't perform well as per the education system.
3. Creating an environment where the student is not going through negative emotions alone, like anger, discontent, underachievement, jealousy, and fear. Rather, the environment should be nurturing and the essence of school should be discussed and involved.
4. Provision of diverse e-contents for making the learning experience easy, and stress-free and keeping the interest of the learners, especially in the absence of teachers in digital education.
5. Online guidance and counselling services for the learners.
6. Regular organization of students' engagement activities to strengthen the student-teacher relationship.

III. Strategies for Parents and Teachers with mutual consultations

Parents are the first source of knowledge for young learners**.** Thus the role of teachers increases manifold in managing stress among their wards. But, this task is humongous and can only be achieved with proper coordination between teachers and parents through regular mutual communication. The following ways can make the task of parents easier for creating a balanced and positive environment for their wards:

1. Delimiting the content for pre-primary and primary classes as parents completely plays the role of the teachers.
2. Teachers must provide essential direction to the parents regarding the methodologies and strategies to comprehend the concept (especially for the lower levels).
3. Teachers must provide and refer relevant e-contents which can help the parents and their children to grasp the concepts of academic as well as real-life scenarios.
4. Regular organization of online teachers and parents meeting to discuss the concerns and problems faced by the latter.

IV. Strategies For Teachers

Teachers' mental health is an essential concern since it has a positive correlation with pupils' mental well-being. The conduction of the teaching-learning process, creation of e-content, regular assessment and evaluation and dealing with the imminent challenges and problems have created a lot of stress and anxiety for teachers around the nation. This task of managing the state of balanced mental well-being can be attained through the consistent support of the teachers by the administration and management.

1. Proper planning of every aspect of the teaching-learning Process (online classes, assessment, practical, assignments, etc.)
2. Proper provision of digital infrastructures for the teachers to conduct online classes.
3. Should organize training and workshops for the teachers to enable them to use the latest technology and create e-contents.
4. We-Connect Sessions for providing a platform to put their issues and concerns for appropriate solutions. The teacher is also a human being and should be aware of him/herself.

Conclusion :-

In conclusion, stress management is crucial for students, teachers, and parents to maintain their physical and mental well-being. The paper has discussed various stress management techniques, including exercise, mindfulness, time management, and social support. It is important to acknowledge that stress is a normal part of life, but excessive stress can have negative impacts on academic performance, relationships, and health. By implementing stress management strategies, individuals can better cope with stress and improve their overall quality of life. Therefore, it is recommended that students, teachers, and parents prioritize their mental health by incorporating stress management techniques into their daily routines.

Unpreparedness during the Coronavirus outbreak may be counted as one of the reasons which led to stressful circumstances in the educational system. However, this phase has taught everyone to maximize the utilization of the most basic resources and the treasure hidden in the digital world.

The stakeholders of the education sector are responding actively despite having an uncertain and psychological impact. Use of different coping strategies to cope with the current pandemic issues.

To help the students, teachers and parents alike the focus should be on reassuring that one can deal with and handle the transactions effectively. It can be recommended further to explore the dynamics of psychological impact and coping strategies, which can help mental health practitioners to focus and address the issues appropriately and effectively.

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How to cite reference of this paper-

Ruhela, R. (2023). Stress management and coping strategies for students and teachers. *Educational Metamorphosis, 2*(1), 59-65.