

**PRACTICAL APPROACH TO STRESS FREE EDUCATION**

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Everyone wants a stress-free lifestyle. Stress is the major culprit for dozen aches and pains, and we always work towards its elimination. Stress is our bodies' reaction to emotions, and we all suffer from it from time to time. What trigger's stress? Anything that happens long enough, strong enough or often enough.

Learning tasks are definitely filled with stressful situations – constant homework assignments, looming deadlines, and grades make up only half of that equation. In this case, how do we make things simpler for our studies? Student's loose perspective and sense of humor -- are no longer excited or happy about school, activities, achievements, or friends.

We have to prepare for and get the best qualifications at school, college or university. These put immense pressures on some of us but we still have to do whatever it takes to succeed. We have parents putting pressure on us to do what they want us to do and not what we want to do. They 'know what's best' and want us to follow in the career that they have chosen for us. Peer pressure is where our so called friends may be pushing, pulling or tempting us in directions that we might not want to go. But, some of us relent because we don't want to be left out in the cold.

A person under the influence of stress becomes irritable and moody more often, has a short temper when someone upsets him, can't focus properly because mind is constantly turning over worst scenarios. One doesn't want to socialize because they find it difficult to smile and be positive. Low self-esteem and low confidence kick in as one begin to doubt oneself. Fears are greatly magnified. In short we are not ourselves.

Developing a humane attitude and instilling in the child's mind about education as a need and an interesting means to personal development is the point of true success for a school. Only the best of faculty can really "*train the minds to think*". Children should be treated with respect as growing individuals and not as high-score brewing machines. Their unique talents or inclinations to a healthy and creative aspect of one's personality has to be appreciated and

allowed to be developed. Only a well-experienced teacher can bring out the best of a student and help him or her identify strengths and lacking nodes. *Knowledge = Power*. Books are one of life's greatest resources. We can recommend books to students to increase their motivation. Research shows that young people that can handle their emotions better are much more able to succeed in a world full of problems and challenges. Parents must be available for guidance and

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advice. Students haven't lived long enough to gain wisdom about making decisions, and they need someone to bounce around the pros and cons of anything from which activities to join, to friends and peer pressure, to college admissions. They have the facts and lots of them, but need the accumulated *wisdom and loving guidance of parents* who care. This will help go a long way in reducing their stress.

Causes of Stress

Researchers bring out the fact that there are different types of role stresses present among the students in India. The findings reveal that students are experiencing role overload, role stagnation and self-role distance. Male students experience higher levels of role stagnation than female students.

Parents and the education administrators add unnecessary 'stress' to children aspiring to pursue professional programs. Some degree of stress is helpful for individuals in meeting the new challenges, but persistently high and unrelieved stress can lead to psychological, physical and behavioral ill health. Parents and academicians think that current phenomena allow students to work harder, to set higher challenges.

Stress certainly is no stranger to the gifted and talented (GT) adolescent. Because most GT's have a heightened self-awareness, stress rears its head in a myriad of ways -- constant striving for excellence, self-created high expectations, the fear of being mediocre, and the need to prove one's giftedness are just a few. Gifted students are complex thinkers, able to argue both sides of

the coin, convincingly. Yet, like all teens, they lack the maturity and become impatient with compromise and accommodation.

Qualifying for exams, handling peer pressure lands us in a very stressful situation.

There are drugs and alcohol everywhere these days. The temptation can be just a little too much. The problem is that we become so laid-back or mixed up that our education takes a back seat, but we don't really care anyhow.

Our image is everything or so we think. We don't want to be too fat, too skinny, too ugly, too uncool, too geeky, too anything. The fact is that the real person deep inside us is what really matters.

People being jealous of us or not liking us is a tough one. But hey, that is not our problem. That is their problem. We were all made unique. Don't ever disrespect yourself by believing what others say about us.

Several other causes of stress are as follows:

1. Spouse's death
2. Death of a close relative
3. Problems with our children
4. Threats of physical violence
5. Injury or illness
6. Money problems
7. Family conflicts
8. Bad health

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Symptoms of stress

One becomes more prone to anxiety, depression and panic attacks, has more difficulty in thinking straight as our reptilian brain wants to take away our logic and put us on fear autopilot, can't take criticism easily because we see it as a personal attack. We may begin to make mountains out of molehills and small things normally unimportant, become 'important'. We

might experience short shallow fast breathing when we become emotional. We feel claustrophobic, shut in or maybe we are feeling agoraphobic (scared to go out the house). The times of India (2007) reported that stress overloads our mental and physical resources and interferes the effective use of skills thus badly affecting our performance. The Indian Express (2007) presented the findings made by researchers of Rush University Medical Centre in Chicago, USA. It is revealed that people who are often stressed or depressed are more likely to develop cognitive impairment- a form of memory loss. Akhtar(2006) reported that stress changes brain anatomy, which adversely affects memory. Nan Little (2006) found that chronic and acute stress causes difficulty with concentration, memory and affects the capacity for learning. Today stress has become a threat to human beings. Continued exposure to stress results in a decline in the body's overall functioning because of continued secretion of stress- related hormones. Stress affects our immune system due to which, our task performance suffers badly.

Students who are under the influence of stress show the following symptoms:

May resent parents, teachers, or new assignments.

Is bored, tired, and listless.

Suffers from sleeplessness, or has difficulty waking up.

Develops nervous habits like stuttering, blinking, or head shaking.

Needs constant support and reassurance.

Acts out aggressively, and seeks attention.

Is just plain exhausted -- physically, emotionally, and mentally

Other symptoms of stress are as follows:

1. Constant worrying
2. More prone to crying
3. Feeling edgy
4. Indecisiveness
5. Procrastination
6. Sense of loneliness and isolation
7. Using drugs and alcohol to 'get away' from problems

Methods to reduce stress

Stress has its purpose. It motivates people to act quickly, and it makes us realize the value of free time. That's why, more than anything else, we use the term stress management as a way to cope with our situation for it speaks not of absence but of control.

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Though it's one of the hardest things to really commit to, *having a work schedule* takes away most of the brunt of work. If we set aside some time to *read topics ahead*, then listening to lectures become more interesting, and you get to have more time with other things.

Sub vocalizing is reading words silently in head. It slows down our reading considerably. When learning speed reading our brain processes data rapidly, when reading books we can process batches of words and pictures or input chunks of data. Uniform and coordinated eye motion is vital. We must use the finger tracking method to guide our eye movements when reading. Our brain operates at different speeds. If reading a newspaper we'll be scanning for specific details. If reading our favorite romance novel, we may want to read slower to make the juicy love themes melt our heart. In this way we have the ability to choose our own comfortable speed reading pace.

Note-taking supposedly helps a person re-experience his own initial understanding of the topic. It's all about making mindful reflections of what's being discussed. Since lectures usually can't cover everything about a topic, most professors rely on *homework assignments* to broaden the knowledge of their students. It may be in the form of small projects, research work, or reading assignments. Given an hour and 10 homework assignments, do we use the full hour to finish one assignment, or finish 5 assignments incompletely? It's actually *more feasible* to do the 5 assignments in that short amount of time, and just flesh out the details after. It is very helpful to become more productive. *Doing things by one's self* is certainly a commendable thing, but sometimes there would be tasks that require a helping hand. Stress management becomes easier

when we could share our experiences with others. Join recitation and *participate in class*. Whether it's doing live-chat online or joining a discussion at a traditional classroom, participating in class helps us understand more of any topic.

Teaching is a lifelong journey of discovery and constant learning. *Lateral Thinking* is about reasoning that is not immediately obvious or about ideas that may not be obtainable by using only traditional step-by-step logic. 1. How many sides has a circle?

Two sides. The inside and the outside.

2. If there are two monkeys in each corner of a room, how many monkeys can say they are 3. How far can a dog run into a forest?

Halfway. Once past the halfway mark it is running out.

4. A farmer has 5 haystacks in one field, 10 haystacks in a second field and 8 in the third field. He brought them all together. How many haystacks does he have? One

The best learning systems are simple. Better still, they are fun. They encourage us to use all our "intelligences" and senses to learn much faster: through music, rhythm, rhyme, pictures, feelings, emotions and action.

Teacher-student could communicate at a deeper level and gain another's attention or get on their 'wavelength'. Rapport is where we feel at ease with someone, trust them, like them. Hand, arm, head, eye, body movements.

Pace tone and rhythm of voice Using their language type: Visual, auditory or kinesthetic "I see..." "I hear..." "I feel..."

(4) We can also cross-match by matching one of their behaviours with a different behaviour. For instance, their head nods with our finger tips. Students must use it ethically. A strong teacher student relationship is crucial to success and it will greatly enhance a student teachers expectation of their chosen career.

The teacher assumes the roles of a facilitator and helps learner towards managed learning environment where the learner utilizes the learning resources to its best possible ways to achieve learning outcomes.

Project method, which focuses on the principle of learning by doing through the active involvement of students & assigning teacher with role of guide and leader of activity. Every day, every week, every month, every term REWARD a student or students for doing something good in the classroom. It costs cents but will be a fantastic investment in bonding and will increase students' self-esteem and confidence. Problem solving method, in which a felt difficulty to act in an educational situation is realized and then an attempt is made to solve it. The main focus is to develop the attitude of problem solving.

Observation method, which is based on the principle of learning by seeing or experiencing. Teachers show students how to love and respect themselves especially through those problems, challenges and

downturns in their lives. Teachers' discussion will help students learn important things in their lives. Remember the Red Pill, Blue Pill scene in The Matrix? We use it to look at choices – positive and negative; success or failure. It can be very powerful.

Laboratory methods, which focus on the learning through experimentation.

Socialized recitation method, which emphasizes on the social learning or learning co-operatively and through group or collective efforts. Its major techniques are seminar, debate, discussion, symposium, workshop and brain storming etc.

Programmed instruction is a 'software' approach for instructional technology. It is a method of individualized instructions in which the students receive information relating to his/her own needs in progressive sequences but in small units.

Computer Assisted instructions is a method of instruction in which there is a purposeful interaction between a learner and computer device for helping the individual learner to achieve the desired instructional objectives with his own pace and abilities at his command.

Innovative ways of experimental and reflection learning teaching styles teach students to accept change rather than to fear it. Students must learn all kinds of skills employers seek in college graduates through on-campus involvement in cultural and sports activities. These experiences help in the development of leadership skills, attitude toward the work, ethic, oral communication skills, and well developed work habits.

A dose of perspective, support, humor, and motivation can make a big difference. Encourage the student to- Take a break, work for personal satisfaction, hang out with friends and family, confront the source of stress, exercise and eat well. Different stories inspire us with a special emphasis on the most important role model - the student.

How we learn is as important as what we learn and that is what Accelerated Learning is all about

(5) Students learn: • 10 percent of what we read • 15 percent of what we hear,
• 80 percent of what we experience.

All new thought psychotherapy, motivational therapy tells us that in order to succeed -- we must *believe* in ourselves. Our eyes have phenomenal photographic powers and range of scope. Our brain is a computer operating at very high speeds. Training ourselves to expand our peripheral vision will expand our ability to take in several words simultaneously.

The benefits of online learning are undeniable. Students can take classes at their convenience, allowing them to keep up with their regular jobs or family responsibilities. And advances in technology have made it easy for students to take part in interactive, multimedia lessons and live

chats that simulate the classroom experience. If a student does not understand a concept, he or she can quickly and easily make contact with the professor or with other students, via email or class message boards.

Scientific research on the *Transcendental Meditation* program has shown that the daily experience of this state of restful alertness leads to increased creativity, improved learning ability, higher IQ, better moral reasoning, more efficient brain functioning, stress relief and a wide array of health benefits. Daily practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique unfolds the mind's inner creative potential and awakens the brain's latent resources, directly enriching all aspects of life. Very effective breathing techniques will help students to calm themselves when stressed especially just before exams. It also helps those students who have behavioral problems.

Time

Management

Good time management is essential if we are to handle a heavy workload without excessive stress. By using time management skills effectively, we can reduce work stress by being more in control of our time, and by being more productive.

The central shift of attitude within time management is to concentrate on results, not on activity.

- Assess the value of our time, understand how effectively we are using it, and improve our time use habits;
- Focus on our priorities so that we focus on the most important jobs to do, delegate tasks where possible, and drop low value jobs;
- Manage and avoid distractions; and
- Create more time.

By being efficient in our use of time, we should enjoy our current role more, and should find that we are able to find the time to relax outside work and enjoy life, an exercise that takes students through a process that eventually shows them where they spend their time and energy. It focuses them to the most important things in their lives.

(SWOT)Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats in a situation.

SWOT Analysis is a useful technique for understanding our mental position.

- Strengths: The capabilities, resources and the things we are best at.
- Weaknesses: Things we are not good at, areas of resource, scarcity and areas where we are

vulnerable.

- Opportunities: The good opportunities open to us, which perhaps exploit our strengths or eliminate our weaknesses.
- Threats: Things that can damage us, such as environment changes.

Stress Diaries are useful for understanding the causes of short-term stress in our life. The idea behind Stress Diaries is that on a regular basis we write down how stressed we're feeling, so that we can understand these stresses and then manage them.

Analyzing the Diary

One should also have more of an understanding about how one reacts to stress, and the symptoms that one shows when one is stressed. *The Schedule of Recent Experience* (SRE) is a useful technique for understanding the long term stress that one is experiencing. It looks at the major life events one has experienced giving a total that shows the amount of major stress one has experienced during the year.

List and Prioritize the Sources of Stress In Our Life

One can separate the important stressors that must be dealt first than from the minor, infrequent irritations. The items at the top of the list should be the most important for us to resolve.

Work out How to Target Each Source of Stress

We may have identified people or resources that can help us in managing stress – co-workers, friends, mentors, team members or many other people, or additional resource. Make sure that one makes appropriate use of all of the help, skills and resources that one has access to.

Coping with Work Overload

Workload issues lie behind much of the stress we experience. Not only can a heavy workload be tiring in its own right, it often drives us to work much longer hours than we would really like. *Successful workload management* is therefore vitally important for our satisfaction. As we consider our use of time and our ability to deliver tasks, we must remember to leave contingency time for unexpected activities.

To Do Lists

Keeping a To Do List is one of the most fundamental but important working skills that people can have. To Do Lists help people to deliver work reliably, without letting tasks “slip through the cracks.”

A 'To Do List' is a simple list of the tasks that we need to carry out, consolidating all the jobs that we have to do into one place. To create a To Do List, write down the tasks that we face, and if they are large, break them down into their component elements. Once we have created our list, run through the tasks and allocate priorities. Base assessment of priorities on two criteria: the urgency of the task and the importance of the task. Advantages of to do lists are as follows-

We remember to complete all necessary tasks; We tackle the most important jobs first, and do not waste time on less important tasks; and We do not get stressed by taking on too many unimportant jobs. All the above techniques will help us in reducing the stress which puts immense pressure on us and we can work towards achieving a satisfied, relaxed and enjoyable life.

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