

# What Every Teacher should Know to Reduce Examination Stress

## Some Intervention Strategies

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### Abstract

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*This paper is intended to explore the intervention strategies which can be carried out at school for reducing the examination stress among school students. The gravity of this issue of examination stress reduction has been addressed in the National Curriculum Framework – 2005 which has suggested various reforms in the examination system like enhancement of time for answering the question paper, examination of shorter duration, making class X public examination optional, reporting of students' performance in terms of grades, flexibility in opting the subjects of choice for study and examinations, on-demand examination, introduction of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) etc. Consequently, Boards of School Education have initiated various reforms to address this issue. But the role of school and teachers' can not be ignored as the child spends about six to eight hours every day in school. It is the highest duration next to the time spent at home by the child. Therefore, the interventional strategies like creating congenial physical environment at school, cognitive and academic assistance, social-emotional support and stress busting mechanisms at school are suggested. Each strategy is discussed in the light of teachers' and students' roles in a number of situations which may arise in a child's school life.*

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### INTRODUCTION

It is an accepted fact that the success of an individual can be predicted on the basis of his/her performance. The performance is valued through examinations. Therefore,

examination becomes a powerful instrument of certifying the quality or potential of an individual, which is why, at school stage the worth of a student is considered on the basis of getting admission in desirable

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courses having employment potential. But due to limited employment opportunities and less number of lucrative jobs, competition has enhanced up to undesirable extent resulting into stressful situation globally. India is no exception rather has its insurmountable problems.

In Indian context, the examination system has been considered as a bane since independence due to its numerous shortcomings. Recently, a new dimension has been added to it, which is related to stress. Stress has compounded the problems stirring whole socio-political system of the country. In fact it has become such a menace for the students that some of them appearing in the Board examination have been resorting to extreme steps like suicides. This is happening through a vicious cycle of anxiety-stress-depression. Further, it has been observed that students appearing in public and competitive examinations feel more stressed as compared to internal school examinations. Besides, the expectations of school, teachers, parents, family members and the self, are having a multiplying effect on it. Addressing this issue, National Curriculum Framework-2005 has categorically mentioned that there is a need to reduce stress, make examination non-threatening and enhance the success rate in the examination especially in public examinations. Hence, it has been considered as one of the major focal points of examination reform.

Further, suicides are taking place during or after the examination or during or after the declaration of Board/school results which have attracted the attention of the society as a whole. Not only this, it has gone to the extent that the government is forced to address this issue and plans to take necessary measures to wipe it out recently. MHRD convened a meeting of educational experts from NCERT, CBSE, IITs, IIMs and NGOs. They unanimously agreed that the present functioning of School Education Boards and their role in conducting examinations is untenable and need to be replaced with a system considered friendly for students. They further emphasised that something needs to be done to lessen the huge load of examination stress on students but without lowering the quality of education. Hence, role of examination Boards, educational institutions, principals, teachers, parents and social workers becomes important not only in explaining the stress but also in finding out certain intervention strategies to reduce it. In this paper, various interventional strategies are discussed which can be undertaken at school by the teacher or the school principal.

### **STRESS: ITS MEANING**

In general, stress is perceived as 'the body's response to anything we perceive as dangerous, demanding or demoralising'. According to Selye (1977) stress may be considered 'as

a generalised response of body to demands placed on it, whether they are pleasant or unpleasant'. However, there are different viewpoints with respect to stress. Some defines it in terms of external demands or stimuli i.e. the thing present in environment causing stress while others take stress as a person's reaction or response to such external things or stimuli. On the other hand, a third definition brings both aspects of stimuli and response together. Thus, three types of definitions are prevalent in the academic field.

The stimulus definition clarifies that the stress is inherent in stimuli. Those who accept this definition, stimuli are the stressors. It is just like defining stress in Physics. Stress is defined in Physics as subjecting an object by exerting pressure from external forces. Psychologically, it is also thought that if a lot of pressure is put on an individual, it will strain him/her immensely and cause stress.

The second definition is response definition, which emphasises psychological and physiological responses to the environmental situations. Selye was of the opinion that a body's reaction to stressors is a complex one and that it involves a cluster of responses (Landy 1987). The third definition of stress is considered as an interactional definition. This explains that stress is neither stimuli-specific nor response to stimuli-specific. It is rather an outcome of an interaction of the

two factors such as the perception of events and internal changes in body and psyche. This definition lays emphasis on both external and internal variables.

### **EXAMINATION STRESS: ITS GENESIS**

In the school system, the examination emerges as one of the major stressors for students, particularly for those students appearing for the Board exams. Examination, by and large, is perceived by students as dangerous and demanding. It appears as a challenging stimulus to create stress. Generally, the examination stress occurs at three stages viz. school-examination/pre-board examination, public examination conducted by the education Boards and entrance examinations for admission to professional courses conducted by IITs, Engineering and Medical Colleges etc. These examinations cause anxiety which leads to stress. Further, it is coupled with the pressure from the parents, peers and the society which creates stress and exam-fever.

Moreover, nowadays high profile performance of the student is an indicator of status for the family and instrument of enhancing reputation of the school as well. This is revealed through the fact that the public schools have intense competition; therefore, they subject even the academically weak students for test after test so that they will do well in pre-board and Board exams and do not spoil the name of the school. Not

only this, even some of the schools decide about the admissions for class XI on the basis of the result of pre-board examinations. In these circumstances, parents also try to put more pressure on students to achieve the highest percentage in pre-board examinations for taking admission in the same school. Moreover, parents also make them feel that lot of money has been spent on their studies by way of school expenses combined with expenditure on coaching. Therefore the student is under constant pressure to the extent that she develops a sense of guilt in her and tries to cope up with the situation. Consequently, a feeling is developed that if he/she fails in exams it is the end of life for him/her. In addition to this, pupils coming from affluent families have never heard 'no' for anything they demanded, therefore, they are not prepared at all to accept any kind of failure in any field of life. It shows that how demanding the examination becomes for them.

Further, there are other situations as well. For example, sometimes parents do not try to estimate the child's capabilities before setting their goals. The education system also does not prepare the students well to face the situations in which they are placed. The relating situation—either how to write in examinations and score good marks or how to cope up with stress of work load, time management etc.—are also not taken care of properly in schools.

Undue emphasis is laid, only on achievement in scholastic areas rather than co-scholastic aspects of their growth and development which are almost neglected. As a result they do not learn the values like tolerance, discipline, cooperation, emotional stability, diligence etc., which are helpful in performing well in the examination as well as coping with stress.

Another important dimension of the whole problem is the crucial age of the students. These students are undergoing the age of adolescence. The characteristic of this age is reflected in their energetic, semi-mature and ambitious behaviour. However, as far as their self-esteem is concerned, they get easily hurt even with a slight or trivial matter because they feel that they have matured. Therefore thinking of failure in their pursuit makes them more anxious as compared to the small children studying at primary stage or adults studying in universities. As far as these adolescents are concerned, they perceive examination as a challenge which adds to their miseries.

#### **EXAMINATION STRESS: ITS NATURE**

Due to the interchangeable use of the terms 'stress' and 'anxiety' in researches on stress, a confusion is there. In order to remove the confusion, Spielberger's (1979), Lazarus's (1966) analysis made it clear that stress is a complex psychological process. The word 'stressor' explains situations or stimuli

that are objectively characterised by some degree of physical or psychological danger while 'threat' refers to the individual's perception or appraisal of that situation or stimulus as potentially dangerous or harmful. An individual who sees a stressful situation as threatening, will experience an anxiety-reaction. In case of subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry, and heightened activity of the autonomic nervous system, an individual will show emotional reaction which is known as 'state anxiety'. The overall process is indicative of the stress.

The theoretical distinction between stress, threat and anxiety is now increasingly recognised in research on anxiety. Keeping in view this convention, 'examination stress' may be defined 'in terms of objective stimulus properties of the test situations' and the concept of test anxiety in terms of 'individual differences in anxiety proneness in examination situations' (Spielberger, (Spielberger *et.al.* 1978) Gonzalez, Taylor, Algase, and Anton, 1978). After a review and evaluation of the major theories of test anxiety, Spielberger et al. (1978) concluded that most test anxiety theorists seem to agree that test-anxious people are more likely: (a) to perceive examination situation as more dangerous or threatening than do people who are low in test anxiety, and (b) to experience worry cognitions and intense elevations in state anxiety in situations in which

they are evaluated. Test anxiety, thus can be seen as a reaction-bound stress phenomenon on one hand, and a situation-bound stress reaction on the other. This reaction is evoked when a student's intellectual, motivational and social capabilities are taxed or exceeded by demands stemming from the individual himself, or from the school environment (Rost and Schermer, 1989). As such, examination stress and test anxiety are two related but non-identical variables.

Further, exam stress refers to the emotional reactions that some students have towards exams (Mc Donald, 2001). The fear of exam is not an irrational fear—after all, how you perform in exams will shape the course of your academic career. However, excessive fear of exams may interfere with the student's ability to be successful in the examination (Musch and Broder 1999). In view of Lay and Schouwenburg (1993), exam stress has three components, viz., physical, cognitional and emotional. The cognitive component is the mental activity that revolves around the testing situation and its potential implications on the individual and constituent elements, such as, thinking about consequences of failure, worrying a great deal about examinations, and lack of confidence in one's ability. The emotionality component is the physiological component of test anxiety leading to tension, apprehension, and nervousness towards examinations

while the physical component involves typical bodily reactions to anxiety such as a knot in the stomach, palpitation, nausea, and perspiration. Demographic variables, such as, age, gender, ethnicity, and study habits also affect test anxiety levels. Perceived course load could be one of the factors leading to test anxiety. Moreover, students' perceptions of the teaching and the learning environment, such as, assessment methods, relevance of the course, and their course load also influence students' approaches to learning (Weerakon 2005).

Finally, it may be concluded that examination stress denotes the conditions that arouse anxiety or fear. Anxiety can be defined as an emotion characterised by feelings of anticipated danger, tension and distress and by tendencies to avoid or escape. As per Morris, Davis and Hutchings (1981) anxiety is no more a unitary concept. It has two components Worry (W) and Emotionality (E). Worry is described primarily as a cognitive concern about one's performance, about consequences of failure, or about poor evaluation in comparison to others. Emotionality refers to self-perceived arousal or autonomic reactions (e.g. muscular tension, sweaty palms) evoked by stress. Here, examination stress is considered as the mental state of worry, concern and uncertainty due to encountering of testing situations (oral or written) which act as a constant source of uneasiness for the individual.

### **RESEARCHES: AN OVERVIEW**

Researches reveal that most of the work is done on test anxiety or examination anxiety or academic stress rather than examination stress. Beck (1976) states that appraisal of an event effects the performance of a person. If a student is highly anxious about result or his annual exam, he/she may appraise his future performance negatively and the negative appraisal induces anxiety which in turn creates other problems. Physiologically, body's immune system functions less well under stress (Stone et al. 1987) and level of Secretary Immunoglobulin A (IgA) drops during final examinations and returns to normal when exams are over (Jemmot and Maglorie: 1988). Monroe and Simons (1991) made an observation that people experience stress in wider ways. Some individuals experience modest increases in physiological arousal while others may exhibit significant physical symptoms. In extreme cases, people become so aroused, anxious and disorganised, that their behaviour becomes maladaptive or maladjusted. Maes, Van der Plankin, Van Gastel. et al. (1998) in their physiological studies found that stress (from any source) can influence on the endocrine, hernopoietic and immune systems while Fayaz Qureshi et.al (2002) observed that stress can alter the blood cells parameters in healthy individuals. They tried to determine whether exams in medical schools

are stressful enough to produce such changes. A randomised selection of female students from Women Medical School, Abbottabad, Pakistan was carried out. It was concluded that examinations in medical schools are stressful enough to produce changes in blood cells (neutrophils and platelets increased while eosinophils, monocytes, basophils and lymphocytes decreased).

Test frequency wise, Koul and Bhadwal (1989) found that if the learner is subjected to frequent testing situations, as in the case of unit testing, it may help in decreasing the level of test anxiety in him. Sharma and Sud (1990) drew samples from four Asian cultures and found that the female students experience higher levels of test anxiety than do males, irrespective of their cultural background. The generalisation made from these findings was that—a major causal factor involved in the gender-related differences in test anxiety among students was—a 'greater role expectation conflict' among females than among males.

Campbell and Severson (1992) observed that there are different factors which contribute to the development of high level of stress among school, college and university students. These stressors include—self-concept, unrealistic expectation, inappropriate time management skills, financial pressures, social pressures and academic pressures at predictable times in each academic year. When stress is perceived

negatively or becomes excessive, it can affect both health and academic performance. Extensive course-load and comprehensive information in academic curricula, necessitates use of proper time management and effective study-strategies. Time management can be defined as a cluster of behavioural skills that are important in the organisation of study and course load (Lay and Schouwenburg 1993). Hence, one of the aspects of time management is to develop effective study habits that essentially help in managing the study-load. Time management skills typically include—planning in advance, prioritising the work, and adhering to the pre-set schedules. Students' perceptions of their learning environment are important determinants of the quality of their learning outcomes. The course load may also affect the manner in which students learn and can be useful in the design and evaluation of curricula (Walker and Siebert 1990).

Singh (2005) in his article 'Managing Examination Stress to attain success' dealt with the concept of stress, stressors, and remedies to reduce stress; and stressed the need to carry out empirical studies to address this issue in a more intensive way. While Ahmad and Bano (2008) in their study on 'Academic Stress among Post-Graduate Students Before and After Announcement of Result' concluded that examination result causes stress among students. In another

study, Singh et al. (2008) identified nine factors of examination stress on the basis of factorial analysis. These were: (1) Psychological factors which include—nervousness, tension, feelings of minds' unfunctioning, poor concentration, fear psychosis for marks/division, pass/fail and wrong responses, poor expression of ideas, worry about consequences of failing, pre-occupation of mind with examination, experience of shortage of time, occurrence of silly mistakes etc.; (2) Unrealistic expectations related to self and comparison for marks and exam preparation with friends/classmates, parental expectations for marks/performance and comparison with others, pressure for getting admission in a good school or course, occurrence of expected questions in the question paper, ridiculed by the friends/classmates for poor performance etc.; (3) Socio-economic conditions of the family, including financial constraints for getting the required guidance, poor economic conditions of the family, inadequate family income for getting desired facilities etc.; (4) Inappropriate time management skills; (5) Unsupportive school and home conditions including improper distribution of time for different chapters or units by the teachers, lack of guidance for examination—preparation by the teacher, irregularity in studies due to organisation of co-curricular activities in the school close to the examination, and disturbance in and around the home leading to disruption

of preparation for examinations; (6) Physiological factors like sweating, dryness of throat, shortness of breath and experiencing of headache while taking examination; (7) Behavioural factors like feeling of discomfort just before getting the question paper, trembling of hands and/or legs, frequent urge to urinate and upsetting of stomach; (8) Physical conditions in and around examination hall like inadequate ventilation and lighting in the examination hall, noise in an around the examination hall and least physical space between the invigilator and examinees; and (9) Diverse concentration on the tasks like answering the questions, performing the experiments/activities etc. in an examination-setting.

Literature reviewed so far shows that most of the researches are related to test anxiety and examination stress, explaining the occurrence and causes of stress. However, there is scarcity of researches suggesting 'coping or interventional strategies' to come out from the stressed situations, particularly the examination stress in Indian context. Hence, a need was felt to suggest effective interventional strategies at school level to cope with the examination stress.

#### **INTERVENTIONAL STRATEGIES TO COPE WITH EXAMINATION STRESS**

Existing system of school education, including the declaration of examination results, particularly the public examinations, exerts

pressure on students to excel in the examination. It might be due to parental and school expectations; apart from the environment at home and school. In reducing the pressure of examinations, the school can play a crucial role because the child spends more than six hours per day in the school. Therefore, it becomes necessary to look into the environment of school complex where some help or intervention can be provided to students to reduce their pressure of examinations. Hence, keeping in view, the major contribution of school environment, some interventional strategies are suggested as under:

### **I. CREATING CONGENIAL PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AT SCHOOL**

Environment of a school plays an important role in stress reduction of the child. Hence, the school administrator should take care of the school environment by putting efforts to improve the physical, social, academic and organisational facilities in the school. Some of the suggestions for making school environment congenial are as under:

#### **(a) Making the colour of classrooms in the school pleasant.**

Every colour has a psychological and an emotional impact on the individual. The colour reflects the personality, emotions and moods of an individual. Light green is considered the most restful colour for the eyes and has

a calming effect. Blue colour gives calm and positive effect. White is associated with cool and cleanliness because it is the colour of snow. The red colour gives a sophisticated look to a monochromatic colour scheme while off-white is the most suited colour for a classroom. Hence, the colouration of the classroom has an impact on individual's personality and behaviour.

#### **(b) Making the classrooms adequately lighted up with proper ventilation.**

Classrooms should be adequately lighted up because a dark room creates some visual difficulties in students. The head of the institution should make sure that the school and classrooms have proper ventilation because clean and fresh air is much needed for proper working of the brain. The provision of natural lighting and ventilation keeps the children and staff healthy and vibrant.

#### **(c) Managing proper sanitary condition in the school.**

It is the duty of school management to take care about the sanitary condition in the school. They should ensure that the sweepers are doing their duties wisely; because if the school sanitary conditions are not hygienic, then not only the students but also the staff would be prone to infection easily. Cleanliness of the school indirectly affects both health and academic performance of the students.

**(d) Pasting encouraging posters on the wall of school and classroom.**

Some encouraging slogans may be crafted in the classroom to create positive effect among the students. Motivational posters encourage students to fight against the tough times and to go ahead in life. It not only boosts the morale of the students and teachers, but also helps in changing their attitude in a positive way. Hence, the efforts should be made to break the monotonous outlook of the walls, pillars, corridors and stairways. Students'-made posters have more impact in enhancing the beauty of the surrounding walls of the school. Sticking or hanging motivational posters on the walls of classroom or school may be inspiring and filled with positive vibes, that in turn will make children motivated to do their best for getting better results.

**(e) Motivating students to establish eco-clubs for the betterment of the environment.**

To have a soothing effect, schools should encourage the students to take part in activities like *Van Mahotsav*, preparation of flowering beds etc. by providing facilities in the school premises. In recent years, global warming effects can be seen, in terms of, melting of glaciers which unexpectedly is affecting the whole world's weather conditions and creating many problems like land

slide, drought, flood, volcano eruption etc. In school, it is important to make the students environmentally aware. For that eco-clubs may be established in the school where participation of every student should be ensured.

**(f) Organising get-together activities in school by involving students.**

Schools should organise some get-together activities on different occasions like teacher's day, children's day, school foundation day etc. In such activities, even senior students and alumni may be invited to share their experiences and views. These activities not only enhance the interaction among the students but also help in clarifying their doubts related to academic and non-academic problems, career choices, etc.

**(g) Provision of encouraging books, magazines, articles etc. in school library or reading room.**

School library or reading room exists to provide a range of learning opportunities to students with a focus on intellectual content, information and literacy, where they could get more information regarding their academics problems, examination, career guidance etc. Now, digital libraries are being established, through which one can search the information about books, journals, magazines, articles etc. online. Moreover, online public access

catalogs have replaced the traditional cards catalogs and provide an index and listing. If school provides more facilities like e-learning, then students will take more interest in studies.

**(h) Organising the lecture series to develop self-confidence and morality among students.**

A number of lectures may be organised by the school from time to time. These lectures may be delivered by teachers, principal and invited scholars to share their learning experiences and the way they tackled difficulties in their life. This would encourage the students to face the problems boldly and to find out amicable solutions in different situations of life. It will broaden the horizon of students to meet out various demands in life and would be helpful in developing self-confidence among the students.

**II. COGNITIVE AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT**

Cognitive and academic supports play a crucial role in reduction of stress of the children. It can be provided in terms of the following:

**(a) Management of stress by the teacher in the class and school.**

Future of all students is indirectly dependent on teaching skills and cooperative behavior of the teacher. Teacher can provide timely suggestions to students about

learning strategies, time management and solving their problems. A good teacher not only completes syllabus as per academic schedule but also adjusts time for revision of each and every aspect of subject individually. Further, she moulds the students to develop their skills or improvise them; and teaches good habits/attitudes which help them to become good citizens of the nation. There are many students who feel shy and may have some personal problems. It becomes quite important for teacher to attend these students personally and encourage them to overcome their problems. Moreover, monotonous subject(s) can be made interesting by the motivated teacher. She/he can overcome all these issues by keeping himself updated with new concepts, teaching methodologies, and technological advancements.

**(b) Developing the study-habit among students from the very beginning of the course.**

Teacher can provide timely suggestions to students about learning strategies and timetable for studies. It will help them to learn how to focus on studies with respect to time. Further, weak areas may be pinpointed by the subject teacher to the students so that they know where they need to put more efforts to get success. It is better on the part of the teacher to encourage students to prepare for exams daily because it will save time in exam days and be helpful in reducing the pressure of

study during examinations.

**(c) Remembering all deadlines and test dates.**

Even in senior classes, the school can provide annual activities calendar and daily diary to each and every student of school. It will help them to remember all important events and dates of tests which will be organised by the school. The teacher should motivate the students to write a daily diary which will reflect the work done by them and improvement made by them over the period of time.

**(d) Freedom to ask teacher about all queries regarding examination or syllabus.**

Students should feel freeness to ask the teacher as many questions as they wish like—what types of questions will come in an exam? How many questions will be in the question paper? What would be the options in the question paper? etc. They need not hesitate in clarifying any query related to examination or syllabus, even their personal problem, if any. On the other hand, teachers may guide students on how to divide the time in proportion to the questions asked in the question paper, what should be the criteria for time allotment to each question? How nature of a question affects the time distribution? etc. This sort of exercise will nurture the skill of time management in students while answering the different types

of questions asked in the question paper.

**(e) Making use of visual representation and preferred learning style by the teacher.**

Students' preferred learning style—read, re-read, and revision makes learning perfect. Techniques like rhyming, singing the study material, linking it with previous information, writing it down and then checking for accuracy and completeness etc. helps in learning the contents. The teacher may use visual representations like web diagram, venn diagram etc. or make notes for students. This makes the learning of difficult tasks easier and interesting.

**(f) Making complimentary remarks on students' achievement rather than blaming their failure on any task.**

Teachers are the well-wishers of the students. Good teachers always make complementary remarks on students' achievements rather than blaming their failure on a task. If students have poor academic performance, teachers should not blame those students for their failure. It is the duty of a teacher to make them clear that it is the part of life and things can be learnt, more from failure. Compliments/remarks on students' achievements develop self-confidence in them.

### **III. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT**

Socio-emotional support plays a crucial role in stress-reduction of the children. It can be provided in terms of the followings:

**(a) Encouraging students' participation in sports and co-curricular activities for refreshing their minds and regaining of energy.**

Sports and co-curricular activities in daily routine keep students away from stress and divert their attention from the studies for sometime, which leads to maintaining balance by refreshing their minds. In fact, sports and co-curricular activities need physical involvement, which is a much needed aspect nowadays, because of the changed lifestyle. Most of the time, students work in a sitting posture and don't have active involvement of body during class activities or during self study. They involve themselves mentally rather than physically. Hence, to regain the energy and freshness, it is much needed to participate in some physical activities like walking, running, playing etc. Further, involvement in sports and co-curricular activities provides an opportunity to the students to improve their interpersonal skills required for success in life.

**(b) Encouraging students' participation in cultural programme, debate, recitation, singing, dancing, quiz competition etc.**

The school should encourage students to participate in various activities like drawing, drama, essay-writing competitions, debate, recitation, singing, dancing, quiz competition etc. by organising these activities in the school. These activities not only help in enhancing participation of students but also facilitate in enhancing their confidence level. In fact, these activities help the students in releasing their pressure and enhancing creativity by diverting attention from studies for the time-being.

**(c) Forming students' study groups for better understanding of the subject matter.**

Forming certain groups in class is a useful way to revise their notes and subject matter in a free and fair atmosphere. When students work in a group, each one of them has opportunities to share his/her views, which helps them to learn from each other. If any student is having problem in their studies, he or she gets help from other members of that group to learn more through their peers.

**(d) Sharing of tales of moral lesson to students.**

Sharing of tales in the class may prove a useful strategy to reduce stress among students on one hand and imparting moral lesson on the other. During listening of tales, students get a chance to relate themselves in certain situations

where they can get clarity and make their own mind to deal with the situation. The realisation of different situations and roles of various actors in the tale help them to learn morals. It is an effective strategy for children, specially the younger ones.

**(e) Making students understand that one exam can't measure failure or success.**

The teacher should explain students that education is more than just marks and grades. Exams are a part of life and Board exam is not different from their school's exam. It could not be the sole deciding factor of life. There are many other options or alternatives, if one ends up getting less marks in Board exam. They should not lose their hope that future always stores success for them, if they continue working hard. Further, X<sup>th</sup> standard board exam is no more a deciding factor of their careers nowadays.

**(f) Feeling of every student must be honored and nobody in class should hurt others in any sense.**

Teachers are the mentor of the future of their students. Good teacher always take care about the feeling of each student and never be partial to any one in any sense. Hence teacher should be courteous as well as intelligent in handling others' feelings. He/she should behave in a

way that students feel comfortable during interaction. Further, students should not be exploited by the teacher for personal interests.

**IV. STRESS BURSTING MECHANISMS AT SCHOOL**

To reduce the stress among students, a number of stress bursting mechanisms may be adopted by the school. Some of the stress bursting mechanisms are suggested as under:

**(a) Teaching students how to associate with people whom they enjoy and who support them.**

For achieving this, arrange the students roll numberwise in the classroom and divide the class in groups having 6 to 8 students in each group. Then, distribute the drawing sheets to all students in each group and ask them to write the name according to roll number provided to each groupmates. Now, instruct them to write down the strength and weakness, with respect to their name and roll number of groupmates in the given sheets. Then ask every student to write on what changes he/she wants in him/her. Further, each student will write his/her name and roll number at the back side of the paper, along with his/her own strength and weakness as they think. Now, the teacher will initiate an open discussion, based on the comments shared and consolidate comments as strength and weakness.

**(b) Practicing muscle-relaxation techniques in school assembly or recess.**

To deal with the stress, muscles-relaxation techniques like Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) developed by Jacobson (1939) may be practised. It teaches students to relax their muscles deliberately, by applying tension to certain muscle groups and stopping the tension for a while, and then relaxing the muscles with the feeling that the tension is flowing away. The place of practising should be quiet and calm. It is advised that the exercise should be done bare-footed and by wearing loose clothing. Moreover, the exercise should be carried out before meal rather than after meal. Some of the techniques of relaxation are: facial relaxation, arms, shoulders and neck relaxation, back and lower limbs relaxation.

**(c) Practicing yoga and asanas regularly in morning assembly or in evening time.**

Yoga and asanas help the individuals in reducing stress. If it is done regularly, then one can have feelings of freshness and vigour. Some *yogic kriyas*, *vyayamas*, *asanas* and *pranayams* are given under:

*(i) Yogic Kriya*

There are number of yogic kriyas which can be carried out for *sudhi*, hence these are also known as *suddi kriyas*. For example—*jalneti kriya*.

It is done for cleansing the nasal path known as *neti*. The purpose of this *shuddhi Kriya* is to facilitate breathing, right from the nostrils to the throat. It cures ailments related to nose, eyes and throat.

*(ii) Suksham Vyayam*

*Suksham Vyayam* may be practised daily in the morning for refreshing the body. It includes three components namely—(1) breathing (2) concentration point and (3) actual exercise. Breathing may be very light or very fast and very deep. Mostly it should be done through the nose but sometimes may be through the mouth. *Sukshma Vyayama* improves breathing, reduces stress, controls blood pressure, improves posture, minimises allergies, lowers cholesterol, controls indigestion, decreases weight, reduces insomnia, increases immunity, slows ageing and improves concentration.

*(iii) Asanas*

In broader terms, an 'asana' is a posture of body which is adopted by the person during yogic exercises. As per the Indian philosophy of yoga, it is a immobile bodily posture that a person assumes in an attempt to isolate the mind, by freeing it from attention to be given to bodily functions. Different types of asanas, such as *Tadasana*, *Padamasana*, *Vjarasana*, *Bhujangasana*, *Surya*, *Namaskar* or Sun-Salutation etc. are believed to provide not only physical, but mental benefits as well.

*(iv) Pranayam*

*Pranayam* is made up of two words taken from Sanskrit. 'Prana' is the life force, or vital energy called 'breath' and 'ayama' is to extend, draw out, restraint, or control. Doing different types of pranayam, such as, *bhastrika*, *anulom vilom*, *kapalbhati*, *bhramari* etc. are helpful in increasing appetite, releasing of toxins produced from the excess of air, bile and phlegm, purification of the *nadis*, maintaining of body temperature, eradication of asthma, oxygen- deficiency disorders and muscular dystrophy, elevating mood and relieving anxiety and depression, regulating circulation of blood etc.

**(d) Meditating for reducing the stress level.**

Meditation in daily life may really help in reducing stress level of an individual. One can practice it in a comfortable chair or in carpet on the floor for 5-10 minutes. It can be done in the examination hall just before or after getting the question paper. Two-three minutes meditation can do miracles during the examination. The steps of meditation in examination hall are given as under.

- Sit in a comfortable position.
- Close eyes and relax your mind.
- Breathe deeply and slowly through nostrils to fill the lungs up to the brim.
- Hold the breath for a second or two.
- Exhale slowly, deeply and

steadily, until the lungs are completely empty.

- Repeat the cycles for five to seven times.

Meditation and yoga strengthen body and mind, provide mental peace and physical power and help the individual to fight against diseases and stay healthy. Therefore, these should be compulsory in schools.

**(e) Teaching students how to prioritise activities by allocating time.**

For developing the skill of prioritising activities, divide the class in groups of 6 to 8 students and distribute drawing sheet, pencil, compass and colour pencil to all students. Now, instruct each student to write his/her name and class in the upper right side of the drawing sheet. Then ask them to draw big circle (of say, 8cm radius) and divide this circle into 24 hours. Further, each student will write how much time he/she spends in various activities in 24 hours and represent each activity in pie chart by different colours. Then, the teacher would ask the students to reflect their pie chart and discuss in his/her group. After having a discussion about time spent in various activities, changes in time-allocation in the pie chart may be made. Lastly, each one has to reflect again that she/he is satisfied with the changes made by her/him or not. Then, the teacher will consolidate the information presented by all the groups by drawing a reference pie-chart on board. Thus, through this

exercise, students will learn the skill of time management by prioritising their activities.

In a nutshell, it may be concluded that examination stress is an unavoidable phenomena in students' lives but it can be reduced up to a considerable extent if proper steps are taken at the appropriate time by the school principals, teachers, parents, students themselves and well-wishers of the society. However, the role of school principals and teachers is very crucial at the adolescent stage. At this stage, students need specific guidance in a number of situations at a particular point of time. A positive and constructive approach of dealing with

the students' needs might make the future of students. Hence, the teachers should be aware about the age-specific requirements of the students and intricacies involved in dealing with the students' problems so as to provide need-specific interventions. In this way, the teacher's job is to identify the best suited intervention strategies as per the student's requirement, keeping in view the gravity of the situation without making any harm to the child. The interventional strategies discussed so far are suggestive; however, head of the institution or the principal and teachers can devise their own strategies to deal with the specific problems of the children.

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