



## ENABLING STRESS-FREE LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

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The present paper focuses on that the threshold of stress that can be tolerated is different for different people and that stress is rooted in the way teaching and schools are organized, the author avers that stress in the schoolchildren is a universal phenomenon.

Any challenge, change, demand or threat that exceeds the coping abilities of the individual is known as Stress. If the strain laced on a material falls within the 'elastic limits' then the material will return to its original 'condition' when the stress is removed. If the strain passes beyond those elastic limits, then some permanent damage will result.

A thunder, a flash, a slash, a fall or a crash, creates strange feelings of horror and tempest in the hearts of humans at all stages in the life cycle. The BP of a doctor while checking the BPs of patients will also rise due to the external stimulus in the environment. Life implies a constant interaction between organisms and environment. When a dog hears a strange noise, its ears prick and its head turns; we do much the same. It is a complex massive bodily operation -we involuntarily use our muscles to direct our sense organs towards the incoming stimuli. The adoptive reaction known by the dramatic term 'STRESS' can be switched off by changing the psychological climate around us. Present day work schedules in schools need rapid modification to solve some acute problems relating to stress for the teachers, taught, parents and all those who work for a stress-free education in the schools.

Everyone has his or her own WATERSHED OF STRESS. The threshold of stress that can be tolerated is different for different people. What one perceives as stressful, others will not. What annoys someone will not annoy others.

It was observed that stress is rooted in the way teaching and schools are organized. Stress

in the schoolchildren is a universal phenomenon and is the prime concern for all the people. The main reason behind the stress of children is attributed to the parents. It is felt that there are more disturbed parents than disturbed children. All behaviour problems are the result of poor parenting. Stress may come from self, home or school for a child. The child may carry it from home to school or from school to home. And in both cases the self is affected. Stress generated from any of the three sources will affect the child's performance at school and his attitude to work, teachers and other children.

### **Stress Symptoms among Children**

- Aggressive behaviour and negative approach
- Poor self-confidence and self-esteem
- Poor communication
- Lack of interest in anything
- Mood swings
- Depression etc.,

There are constitutional disorders, physical illness and mental illnesses that can account for disturbed behaviour or stress in a child. Physical handicap, moderate learning difficulties, deafness or partial deafness and autism can create similar behavioral disorders. Not all stress in children can be blamed on environmental factors. In majority of the cases the child himself is the source of stress for the following reasons.

### **Self Factors are**

1. Physical illness
2. Personal appearance
3. Moderate learning difficulties
4. Mental illness
5. Speech defects
6. Hearing impediments
7. Sight impediments
8. Examination pressure
9. Peer group pressure
10. Interaction with teachers, and so on

It is difficult to accept that aggression, withdrawal, petty theft, bullying, truancy, self-mutilation,

such as puncturing the skin with a school compass, and many other reactions to stress that can be displayed are Normal. To us they may not be acceptable or desired but they are Normal Psychological Mechanisms for a child, who cannot comprehend or reason sufficiently or have the wisdom or experiences of life to cope with what is happening. The child reacts instinctively and there is purpose behind the reactions.

There are more sources of stress for children nowadays. More children are suffering from stress now than before. The sources of stress for children seem to be on the increase. These factors are generated from home or society.

They are,

1. Physical abuse
2. Sexual abuse
3. Emotional abuse (like broken families, quarreling homes, disturbed parents)
4. Parental problems
5. Social demands
6. Poor communication at home
7. Overprotection
8. Under-protection and so on

Teachers and parents should understand that stress is not a weakness. It is essential in many situations as a driving force.

The real issue is to see that when the child leaves the school s/he is well established and can combat stress both outwardly and inwardly.

### **Issues of Stress**

Boring life at school cannot make use of the child's talents. Improper planning of school programme.

No interesting books to read, too many holidays, feel too tired, not many film shows, little time for playing games, irritating bells to change periods, too many tests, more tests on the same day, not satisfied with ranking system, harsh punishments,

Too many teachers, attention given to clever children.

Parents pester at home for study.

Parents do not understand and don't allot much time to attend to their needs.

These are all the factors causing stress among children.

To create stress-free learning, some bold decisions are to be taken. The following may be considered for a change. Adopting right attitude can convert a negative stress into a positive one.

### **Stress-free Education**

- Homework should be restructured with interesting and innovative activities. Instead of monotonously repeating class work, something different should be designed as homework.
- Arts, music, dance, and library should be given equal importance. These are the areas where the children enjoy recreation. They bring out the aesthetic talents of the children, which promote the cognitive development of the child.
- Sports and games should be made compulsory for more time. Play field is the antidote for stress. It is a pity that majority of the schools do not have play fields and even if they have, games and sports are not given any importance.
- Grades should replace the ranking system. This will keep the children in competitive spirit but in a group. Periodical meeting and participation of teachers, pupils, heads of institutes and parents should be arranged to understand the children better. Parents also should focus the non-scholastic requirements of the children without confining to the coverage of syllabus and method of teaching.
- Progress cards can be converted and given as merit and reward certificates.
- Yoga and meditation should be given due place in the timetable. These are the only two ways to make children free from stress easily.
- Regulation, Relaxation, and Respiration are three important techniques, which are required to be taught to the younger generation. This will help them to discipline themselves. They would be in a position to get out of any stress prone environment by effective use of the above techniques.
- Special watch and care for guidance and counseling for future career may be set up. The treasures of career avenues are to be better explained to the children. Majority of the parents are orienting their children for Medical or Engineering from the very childhood onwards.
- Attention should be diverted towards extensive reading, skills in writing - cartooning, dramas, social and science club activities and projects, model parliaments, scouting, Red Cross, environmental studies and NCC and so on.
- Sufficient time in the year be utilized for outdoor learning (excursions, fieldtrips, pilgrimage centers, observation in scientific development).

- In order to cope with life strategies the students should be taught basic life skills. They should be empowered to face the realities of life with a positive attitude. Appreciation of nature's beauty, sense of dignity of labour and several other basic attitudes need to be developed so that the students understand the life in proper perspective. This will help them to distress whenever required.

A child should love to go to school as s/he goes to a zoo, swimming pool or a playground. **The most wanted thing for stress-free learning is to make the parents stress free with right thinking and correct view of education.**

"Much of shallowness discursive lightness and fickle mentality of the average modern mind is due to vicious principles of teaching" - AUROBINDO.

### **References**

*Knowing Children Better, A Handbook for Teachers by CBSE.*

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