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Stress Buster Strategies for Students

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Abstract
Educational prospects are changing very fast in the present scenario. Curriculum and co-curricular offerings have been tremendously gripping students in the adjustment problems resulting in tension, emotional instability and mental illness. Parents, teachers and schools have been demanding their students to climb the ladder of achievements as high as possible. This desire for a high level of achievement puts lots of pressure on students causing extreme stress; and is likely to affect the individual's mental health. Tackling of stress plays important role in student's life and requires that students must be educated on how to deal with different kinds of stress in their life at the earliest, be it anger, frustration or anxiety etc. Hence, this thematic paper describes the causes of stress, strategies to deal with stress and the BREADS formula for stress management to promote mental health amongst students.

Keywords: *Stress Management, Education, Achievement*

Introduction

Stress is a pressure, a force, or a strain, placed on something. Individuals can respond differently to the same events, thus some events may stress one out, but may not bother others. Sometimes trying to avoid stress can lead to more stress. All stress is neither negative nor needs to be controlled. Some stress can create positive energy which motivates and challenge us. False perceptions can often cause stress, so, it should be tackled smartly so that we can reduce the negative influence of stress.

We are living in an era in which education has become a stressful area of life both for children and parents. The need to excel and emerge victorious is every parent's as well as children's goal. During this era of competition, children feel stressed. Fear of failure and fear of achieving higher grades keeps increasing with the increasing benchmark for "high" grades. Teaching is one of the noblest professions in the world and the power of teaching fraternity is dynamic. Imparting education can make a significant change and influence the lives of students. This change can play a vital role in shaping the future of the child and the society in which he or she lives. Thus it becomes a social responsibility of the teacher to make education interesting to children so that they do not hesitate in asking questions and arrive at the answers by themselves with proper guidance in the right direction. The reason for stress among students could be caused by the following reasons:

- Pressure of scoring higher marks.
- Prolonged period of physical or mental exhaustion before an exam or event.
- Juggling between priorities like classes, extra-curricular activities, peer group pressures, family circumstances etc.
- Being away from the family support network.
- Pressure of maintaining reputation as an outstanding student or leader.

Stress Bursting Strategies

Most of the people deal with stress in three ways i.e. Avoidance, Suffering and Managing. While avoidance and suffering may enhance stress, managing is the best way to deal with it. Since stress is a holistic concept involving the entire self, it might be managed by using the following techniques to reduce stress among students.:

1. **Self-analysis of Stress:** Identify the cause of stress. By identifying these situations, one can anticipate and manage the reactions of stress.
2. **Self-Awareness:** Be aware of aspirations, needs, values and desires. Listen to your body.
3. **Assertive Communication:** Assertive communication can reduce stress by allowing to stand up for personal rights without harming others. It can also lead a person be able to say no to unnecessary commitments much easier.
4. **Change Your Way of Looking at Things:** Being positive can reduce a lot of stress. Put problems in a broader perspective, step outside the situation and decide how important the whole thing is.
5. **Relaxation:** Relax body down, both mentally and physically. This includes techniques such as meditation, mental imagery, deep breathing, visualization, massage, progressive relaxation, reading, and praying etc.
6. **Develop a Support System:** Tell about your problems, share thoughts and feelings with someone you trust, who understands and is willing to listen to you. It's a medical fact that those who have close supportive relationship with others live longer, healthier, more stress-free lives. Giving and receiving love and care are basic needs for all of us.
7. **Leisure Activities:** Schedule time and prioritize activities that give pleasure. Have fun! Play to recharge.
8. **Positive Self-talk:** Ensure that self evaluation and inner thoughts reflect a realistic image. By perceiving your-self in a more realistic light can prevent some stress and emotional distress.
9. **Physical Wellness:** Good nutrition and exercise helpsin reducing tension. When stressed, demand of proper nutrition in body increases. When you body is depleted of important vitamins and minerals, you can feel run down both mentally and physically.
10. **Sleep:** Sleep lets body re-energize. Completion of dreams is also important. A lack of sleep can lead to stress and in no state to cope with everyday challenges.
11. **Humour:** Laughter can help overlook the unattractive, tolerate the unpleasant, cope with the unexpected, and smile through the unbearable.
12. **Express YourAnger:** Learn how to fight fairly – it can clear the air and relieve a lot of stress. Be sure the issue is worth fighting for, don't hassle over every little thing.
13. **Time Management and Planning:** Prioritize, plan ahead, make "to-do" lists. Using your time efficiently can free up time for leisure activities. Planning can eliminate last minute work. What are the most important things to do today? Make a list in order of importance and execute accordingly and learn to pace yourself.
14. **Share Your Problems:** Seek out a trusted friend. You'll be surprised how it lightens your burden. Problems, when kept to yourself, tend to appear much worse that when you them with a friend.
15. **Operate in a Supportive Environment:** Organize your personal space so it works. After being around a hectic, chaotic environment, you need to live in a quite and private space to fill the gap to make things meaningful to you.
16. **Rewards:** Give yourself a pat on the back for being successful on smaller things like scoring good in a test or participating in a race or match or being able to follow the stress reduction techniques.

17. **Don't Self-Medicate:** Relieving stress with cigarettes, alcohol, tranquilizers, and sleeping pills may help temporarily, but paying a high price by impairing health. Shouting, crying, or taking a bath may get through, but they cannot be relied upon for a long-term solution.
18. **Know What is Important:** Take time to identify the core values and decide what is most important in life. Eliminate those things that are unimportant or that do not contribute to your values.
19. **Learn the Art of Mini-Escape:** When pressures is too high, give some breathing room and retreat. Take time out for a walk, watch a movie, read a book to relax and re-energize yourself. Putting distance between you and the pressure (even if it's only temporary) sometimes not only relieves stress but also provides some helpful insight into pressure. Learning to deal with stress is a very important life skill. In order to lead a healthy, happy life, you must learn to accept, define, and cope with the stress in your life.
20. **Take a Quick Break:** Get up, walk around, listen to music, use positive self-talk, and visualize self - completing the test, project, speech, etc.

Teaching Strategy

Both good and bad events can cause stress in daily life. If learners have been in an adult education class for several weeks, they may be feeling some stress with their workload and time management etc. Learners have felt stress in their roles as workers, parents, and citizens. Sometimes they will voice their frustration to the class. We can use mind mapping and the Read, Write, Discuss method to bring out the learners' prior knowledge and experiences with stress. Give learners the time to think about where stress comes from in their lives and record their answers on the board. After they have completed the mind mapping, have each student complete a Stress Survey to determine their level of stress.

Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques

In 1990 the institute for Stress Management & Performance Improvement introduced its five step BREAD formula for effective stress management. In recent years, medical and psychological research has discovered new relationships for managing stress. So, the Institute revised its BREAD formula to a twelve steps BREADS formula, to reflect these mind/body relationship:

1. Breathing correctly using deep breadth action involving diaphragm to relax and feel energized.
2. Develop a support system (group of people) who understands you.
3. Practicing relaxation techniques daily, like meditation or yoga.
4. Develop and maintain strong close relationships with other humans.
5. Aerobic exercises at least three times per week for 30 or more minutes.
6. Educate yourself more about stress management through books, magazines, newspapers, class-room discussions, internet etc.
7. Monitor your attitude. Keep it positive and looking forward. Take a break when you find your attitude ruminating and becoming negative.
8. Keep active and develop a hobby if possible. Activities like bird-watching, fishing, hiking, freaking-out can be therapeutic in nature.
9. Eat a healthy balanced diet. As part of your education, learn about proper nutrition. You can eat well and still enjoy what you eat.
10. Determination is the next step. Resolve to be resilient.
11. Sleep naturally and get at least 6 hours of restful sleep per night.
12. Develop serenity, the sense of inner calmness that comes from accepting life as good.

The BREADS formula can also be summarized as:

	Psychological Consideration	Physiological Consideration
B	Belief System	Breath
R	Relationships	Relaxation
E	Education	Exercise
A	Attitude	Activity
D	Determination	Diet
S	Serenity	Sleep

Conclusion

Stress is the physical and mental response of the body to meet the demands made upon it. It is the result of our reaction to outside world, not necessarily the events themselves. Stress can be caused by positive or negative events. By learning how to identify the stress factors in your life and strategies to cope with these factors you take control of your life. Most important is to avoid the situations that may cause the stress. Take up the priorities in life and adopt active life style with proper nutritious diet, adequate rest, sharing of stress with friends and family, and quickly bursting or managing the stress by adopting suitable strategy.

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