



Stress: A common point for Counselling

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Stress: Why and How

Common Physical reactions:

- ✓ Muscle tension
- ✓ Indigestion
- ✓ Sleep difficulties
- ✓ Rapid uneven or pounding heartbeat
- ✓ Frequent urge to pass urine
- ✓ Fast, shallow breathing
- ✓ Chest discomfort
- ✓ Change in appetite, constipation or diarrhea
- ✓ Backache/headache
- ✓ Cramps

Common Psychological reactions:

- ✓ Feeling under pressure, frustration and aggression
- ✓ Feeling tense and unable to relax
- ✓ Feeling mentally drained out
- ✓ Fussy, gloomy or suspicious, being constantly frightened or irritable
- ✓ Inability to concentrate or complete the task.

Stress Management

(A) Eating healthy:

- Balancing food choices over time is what counts.
- Breakfast provides the energy needed through an active morning.
- Children who skip breakfast may have trouble concentrating.
- Fast foods supply more fat, salt & calories than good nutrition.
- Fast foods in moderation won't ruin a healthful diet, especially when consumed with green salads.
- Replace finger chips with an apple.
- Add roughage to your diet – Dalia, Corn etc. will help prevent stomach discomfort and you will feel lighter.
- The golden rule for food safety is to keep hot foods hot & cold foods cold.
- Parents should teach good habits by example.

(B) Good Sleep

- Insomnia (the inability to fall or stay asleep) can be caused by stress & anxiety of Exam.
- Disturbances of sleep wake cycle during exams.
- If sleep struggles continue, talk them over with your doctor.

Physical activity and Yoga

- ❖ **Exercise:** planned & structured subset of leisure time physical activity undertaken for improving or maintaining physical fitness.
- ❖ **Physical fitness:** includes cardio-respiratory fitness, muscle strength, body composition and flexibility.
- ❖ **Sport:** any choice of outdoor game for a brief period. For example badminton, squash, tennis, etc.

The Psychological Approach-

Stress can lead to both anxiety & depression. However, some amount of anxiety is imperative for good performance.

- Increased disinterest in studies.
- Seeing more TV, sleeping more
- Irritable/ crying / cranky
- Nervous and irritable
- Feelings of frustration and aggression
- Preoccupied, absent minded
- Symptoms like headaches, fainting spells, vomiting
- Wanting to be alone
- Major changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Lack of attention and concentration
- Forgetfulness
- Inability to complete tasks or make study plans
- Staying out longer, stop communicating with their parents and have health problems.

How Can a Student Deal with STRESSSS.....

- Make realistic study plans.
- Assess priorities, assets and difficulties.
- Follow a normalized routine atmosphere at home should be recommended.
- To take frequent breaks.
- Not to strip off TV or entertainment and outings.
- Feel comfortable about oneself.
- That imagining extreme consequences and worst situations is of no use and needs to be discouraged.
- It is helpful to make the student see what he can accomplish in the remaining time is not negligible.
- Constant encouragement and reassurance is essential from all significant members in the school and family.
- It is important that the student is clear about how to take the examination, how to tackle questions and how to manage time.
- Students tend to magnify failures and try to talk to them out of it. They should not demean themselves, and learn to manage time.
- Students are advised to contact the teachers or counselors if they feel low or anxious or disinterested in studies.



Psychosomatic Symptoms



These refer to physical symptoms that the student shows but there is no biological basis for them and the root cause is in psychological factors. Initially, the biological causes of any symptom should be seen, only when they are eliminated should the symptoms be considered as psychosomatic.

Symptoms

- Nagging headaches
- Backache
- Fainting spells.
- Diarrhea/gastric trouble
- Asthmatic attacks
- Breathlessness
- Vomiting
- Feeling tensed and unable to relax
- Writing cramps bloomed or
- Absent vision

What to DO

- ✚ An expert opinion is required to help students to see the mind body connection and understand how the anxiety is manifesting in pain.
- ✚ Help should be provided to the student to develop alternative coping strategies and thus defocus from the pain.

Not to DO

- ✚ The symptoms should not be denied with statement like “you don’t have any physical problem” or “stop using this as an excuse”. Usually the student is genuinely in trouble and is not pretending pain.
- ✚ Symptoms should not be encouraged by repeating enquiries or suggesting remedies for the pain.

High risk Behavior: Drug abuse, self harm, aggression

Basic Features

- It is behavior that is potentially harmful to self or others.
- Behavior relating to consumption and abuse of psychotropic drugs or commonly used medicines like cough syrups, sleeping pills, painkillers, without prescription.
- Behavior related to smoking and consumption of alcohol. Self-harming behavior like Suicide, Wrist slashing, Hitting self, Starving deliberately etc.
- Harm to others in the form of abusive and aggressive behavior like rash driving or violence to others in any form.
- No medication for High performance.

Handling Suicide

Majority of suicides are impulsive while others are well planned. Impulsive students are likely to decide on the spur of the moment. However, suicides which are well planned require careful & practical handling by buying time.

Indicators for increased chance for suicide

- Withdrawal behavior for few days
- Mention of suicide repeatedly.
- Suicide note
- Disinterest in studies.
- Changes in eating and sleeping patterns
- A history of serious psychological problems.
- A history of impulsive, poorly controlled and destructive behavior.
- A history of continuing academic problems and learning difficulties.
- Adjustment difficulties with family, school, peers etc.

Interventions

- Periodically, keeping in touch will reduce the intent of ending their lives. Counseling needs to be practical and useful.
- Long lectures with a moralistic tone are not advised. These make the already depressed student guiltier and his intent stronger.
- The student is advised to contact a professional counselor as soon as possible. If not, efforts should be made to encourage him to meet his teachers or school counselors or talk to his parents. The more he talks about his problems to various people; he is likely to feel much better.
- A student who is severely depressed and expresses absolute helplessness about future is more at risk than a student who talks about casual things.
- No medicines should be prescribed.

Dos & Don'ts

Dos:

- ❖ Discourage the behavior.
- ❖ Keep communication channels open
- ❖ Talk about the negative and long-term effects.
- ❖ Teach (quick) relaxation/breathing
- ❖ Teach anger management
- ❖ Teach to evaluation consequences.
- ❖ Talk about the need for sharing this information with parents/teachers.
- ❖ Make the child understand that monitoring by parents or counselors is essential for early recovery.

Don'ts:

- ❖ Do not prescribe medication.
- ❖ Do not punish or reprimand harshly.
- ❖ Do not moralize or made person feel guilty. Help him to think of it as a problem needing help.

Do's for Students and Parents



Must Dos for students: For improved concentration, motivation, work blocks

- ✓ Know your concentration span, study with breaks.
- ✓ Work out best time for concentration.
- ✓ Group study for difficult subjects.
- ✓ Do not let previous results discourage you – identify your weak areas from previous exams. And work on them.
- ✓ Time management plan must be made for all subjects.
- ✓ Choose a study place with minimum distractions and autosuggest to yourself about your resolution.
- ✓ Try to coincide study time with the time, you would be giving an exam.
- ✓ In case of average achievers, master what you know and are comfortable with.
- ✓ For low achievers, master the essential information first.
- ✓ Prioritize the workload. Give your best concentration time to the toughest subject.
- ✓ Repeat your learnt work so the recall in exam is easy. Work not repeated or revised is easily forgotten.
- ✓ Try to plan your revision time by drawing up a timetable. Build in time for the things you enjoy – like watching your favorite TV programme, going out with your friends, or going to play football in the park.
- ✓ Give yourself a few treats – pamper yourself with a long hot bath, or listen to your favorite CD for an hour after you have finished your revision.
- ✓ Relax with what you know before entering the exam hall.
- ✓ Do not get anxious about the result – cross that bridge when you come to it..options await.

Must Dos for parents

- ✓ Student can fail to do well if they fail to cope with stress. Parents should guide their children in planning, organizing and setting a timetable.
- ✓ To avoid a stress situation for the child the parents must provide right kind of motivation and a conducive environment.
- ✓ Help the child to develop self-discipline self-direction, self-confidence and a sense of achievement.
- ✓ Just good schooling and tuition are not substitutes for emotional cushioning.
- ✓ Help the child in maintaining his confidence especially when he seems discouraged by his dropping marks or grades. Do not displace your anxiety on the child.
- ✓ The achievement goals should be realistically set according to the child's capability.
- ✓ Do not mix academic issues with family conflicts.
- ✓ Praise your child when he does well. Encourage the child's performance with positive statements like, "well done", "you can do better", rather than saying "that was not enough".
- ✓ Work out your child's schedule with him instead of nagging him. There could be learning problems.
- ✓ Do not harp on previous failures or results.
- ✓ Under achievement may be due to some children believing it is safer not to try than to try and fail.
- ✓ If achievement expectations are too high then some children would prefer to be criticized for being lazy than being considered not good enough.

