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Causes and Management of Stress in Children

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ABSTRACT

Stress is always a part of human's life. But stress causes significant harms to children as compared with the adults. Parents and family members must empower their children to effectively deal with tensions and stresses from their childhood itself. The family and teachers should maintain intimate contact with their children enabling them to share their anxieties, concerns and mishaps freely, should do what soothes their mind and soul, and should motivate them to develop a positive outlook in their life. Therefore, family and schools should find out causes of stress in children and devise strategies for effective and timely management of stress.

"It's not the load that breaks you down, it's the way you carry it."

LOU HOLTZ

We generally use the word stress in our routine life. When we feel that everything became too much to bear, we get overloaded and wonder whether we really can cope up with the pressure placed upon us. Stress is the feeling we develop under pressure.

Children are supposed to be stress free, but unfortunately they are not so in the present time. School going children experience a significant amount of stress due to their busy schedule in activities, exams, result, etc. Parents also overlook their children as they remain preoccupied with their lifestyle. When children are successful in addressing a demanding

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situation, it builds confidence in them. But if they fail, it makes them stressed. If the quantity of stress is unmanageable or threatening, it may affect their emotional, intellectual and/or physical fitness.

Stress can originate from different sources. It is necessary to identify these sources in order to cope up and even to reduce stress. We can categorise stress in four domains:

1. **Family Stress:** This is the first source of stress. Family is the place where a child spends maximum time. It is also the first institute for informal education for children. They learn many things such as tradition, culture, social interactions, etc. In the present scenario, the concept of joint family is getting demolished and being rapidly replaced by nuclear family. In a typical modern nuclear family, children hardly get a rich company for playing, sharing their anxieties and building emotional stability, since both parents remain busy with their professional life. There are hardly many children or cousins, forcing a child to experience loneliness. The latter results in frustration leading to psychiatric problems which gets further aggravated due to high expectations of parents. Domestic violence or sexual harassment also leads to emotional trauma.

2. **Social Stress:** This is the second major source of stress. The advent and popularity of social media has promoted a culture of virtual relations that rarely promotes emotional bonding among children. Online bullying, trolling and sometimes abusing create lot of stress among children. The lack of actual interaction with others, socialization and communication increasingly isolate children. A high intensity of competition adds to stressful experiences in life.

3. **Financial Stress:** Children depend on their parents for their financial needs. The modern lifestyle coupled with availability of latest electronic gadgets creates financial stress in children as well as parents. Digitisation, entertainment, shopping, fast foods, etc have become a common thing amongst the children which add to financial burdens on parents. When parents attempt to moderate their demands. children readily get despaired and stressed which can result in serious situations.

In order to excel in their life, children require parental and social interventions in reducing stress and lead a emotionally healthy life. The following tips can help in managing stress in children:

1. **Power naps:** Taking a nap in the afternoon will help a lot to reduce stress. So advice them to practice it. It should be around half an hour. A prolonged sleep will spoil the purpose. A short nap will increase concentration and memory.

2. **Visualization:** Visualization helps to calm down. Helping children to visualise planned activities will help reduce stress and make it easier to complete each activity in stipulated time.

3. **Exercise:** Regular exercise will make mind and body strong and stable. A healthy body will surely have a healthy mind. There are simple, easy to practice exercises such as breathing exercises which can strengthen children's mind and help reduce stress.

4. **Music:** Sometimes music gives pleasure and motivation. Playing calm music in background while engaged in activities will have a soothing effect on children's mind.

5. **Stay organized:** Staying organized means having an order in everything; in the activities and in study schedules also. Once on the right track, we don't have to worry about preparations.

6. **Eat right:** Eating the right thing at the right time is very important to have a healthy mind and body. Children should avoid junk and oily food. Sufficient water and a planned diet will reduce their stress and make them energetic.

7. **Positive thinking:** The habit of positive thinking and optimism should be cultivated from childhood itself. It will result in good performances and high grades.

8. **Student-friendly classrooms:** The classroom atmosphere should be friendly to children. A healthy interaction of a child with his teachers and classmates enormously helps children to develop a confident and stress-free personality. Children must have liberty to freely express and share their ideas and thoughts in the classroom which can facilitate analytical and creative skills among them.

9. **Effective parent-teacher communication:** Parent-teacher communication is necessary to reduce unwanted stress from the minds of children. If a teacher knows the family background of children, he can accordingly treat them and mentor them to effectively deal with family and social stresses. Both the parents and the teachers can share their views about the child's welfare. It

will give a better idea to both parties about the best way to nurture their child.

To make childhood more colourful and stress-free, parents and teachers should be an active part of children's life. The practice of unhealthy comparisons and declaration of grades in public should be avoided to effectively manage stress among children, specially the slow learners and poor performers. Family should be supportive, which in itself would make students more relaxed. Only a stress-free mind can become creative. So for the development of a creative new generation, let us help our children to wipe out all their worries and tensions.

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