

Addressing Adolescent Stress: Techniques for Positive Mental Health

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Abstract

It has been observed that from the last few decades, the level of stress is increasing among adolescents. There are different factors responsible for this. It is necessary to deal with stress positively. Parental pressure, academic pressure, low self-esteem, and wrong study habits are some of the factors responsible for developing stress among school children. Stress causes many psychosomatic diseases. So, it is very necessary to identify the causes of stress and use some techniques to manage the stress. In the present paper, some stress management techniques are introduced. Secondary school teachers can orient students about these techniques for managing stress in a positive way.



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Introduction-

Mental health is a prime concern of the present century. We are very much cautious about our physical health but do not show very much concern about mental health. It is generally observed that in comparison to physical health, mental health is a less important priority of the people. If we are mentally healthy, then and then only can we use our full potential and contribute to national development. Modern physiologists say that the root of most of the physiological diseases is in the psychological problems. Persons of all age groups are facing some or the other type of stress. It is also an accepted fact that school children are also facing stress. It is very important to take measures to help school children to cope with stress positively.

Stress Management Techniques

Hans Selye, an authority on stress research, says that we need a preventive measure to buffer us against the harmful effect of stress, which will still allow us to enjoy a full, busy life. Stress management is a wide range of possible options to manage stress. The various procedures commonly employed in stress management reflect the multidimensional nature of the stress response. Some

techniques, such as relaxation training, biofeedback, and meditation, emphasize modification of psychological response.

Some relaxation and stress management techniques are introduced to manage the stress positively.

Breathing Technique:

Physical relaxation is the foremost step in the management of stress. Breathing pattern leads towards physical relaxation. Usually, when we experience stress and anxiety, our breathing becomes fast and uneven; it affects our blood circulation and heartbeats. So, whenever we experience stress, we have to concentrate on breathing. With the help of this technique, within three minutes, one can feel relaxed. During practicing this technique, one has to keep all his worries and tensions away for some time. Concentration on breathing is very important. While inhaling the breath, one has to count up to seven in mind and while exhaling up to eleven. During exhalation, also imagine that stress is going out. This technique gives quick relaxation to body and mind and helps to tackle stress.

Positive Auto Suggestions: When we experience stress, we have to give positive suggestions to our minds because our thoughts give us energy and strength to perform actions. If the thoughts are negative, then we may hesitate to take actions, and it will not be a wholehearted effort. So, during stressful situations, we must energize our mind through positive auto-suggestions. E.g.

- I am feeling quite better now.
- I accept I have a problem, but I know that certainly there are many options to solve it.
- I will concentrate on my efforts.
- Next time I will do much better.

Self-acceptance & positive self-criticism:

For success, self-acceptance is very much important. An individual knows better about his/her strong points, weak points, etc. Comparison with others is a big hindrance to self-acceptance.

PMR is a purely physical technique for relaxing your body when muscles are tense. The idea behind PMR is that you tense up a group of muscles so that they are as tight and contracted as possible and hold them in a state of extreme tension for a few seconds. Then relax the muscles to their previous state. Finally, you consciously relax them again as much as you can.

Experiment with PMR by the hand as tight as you can for a few seconds. Then relax your hand to its previous tension and then consciously relax it again so that it is as loose as possible. You should feel deep relaxation in the muscles. PMR can be used in conjunction with breathing for better results and deep relaxation.

Dorothy Sarnoff gave an exercise: Clench all the muscles of your body as tightly as you can.

- Toes and feet
- Legs and arms
- Screw up face as well.

Hold for three to five seconds, and then quickly release all the tension from the muscles. Repeat it if possible. Take three to four deep breaths. After this activity, experience the change in your mindset. Write a few lines about your experience.

Dorothy Sarnoff gave a very effective relaxation technique in her book, ‘Never be Nervous Again (1988, Century Hutchinson, London). It involves tensing then relaxing the muscles under the diaphragm.

Press the palms of your hands together, fingers pointing upwards, forearms horizontal with the floor. Push until you feel the pressure on the heels of the palms and under your arms. Breathe in, and then let the breath out slowly and gently through a slightly open mouth. While breathing out, tighten the muscles in that triangle between the ribs. Relax the muscles at the end of the exhalation. Breathe in gently. Repeat it if you can. This exercise has the added advantage of aiding voice control—you will be able to communicate without a nervous tremble in your voice and project without excessive volume or shouting.

Technique of Meditation –

This meditation technique is based on the thinking process of our mind. Our mind is continually busy in thinking about some or the other thing; sometimes we are aware of it, sometimes not. Many times, a thought came in our mind, and we created the related thoughts. This is an endless journey. Even in sleep, we think! The incidences towards which we were highly conscious and the incidences where we were totally unaware and neglected these two cases recapitulate in the form of dreams. Complete awareness is the key to successful meditation.

Before understanding the process of meditation, we have to understand the types of thoughts we come across while thinking. Following are the broad categories of different types of thoughts.

1. **Positive Thoughts** – Positive thoughts are good thoughts that give us energy and positive force to achieve our goals.
2. **Creative Thoughts** – Creativity is a gift of nature. Every person is creative to his possible extent. A creative thought helps us with problem-solving, contributes innovations, develops humour, and gives the vision to see the world in a different outlook.
3. **Negative Thoughts**-Negative thoughts have various dimensions, like
 1. Fear of death/disease/other phobias
 2. We may lose our near and dear person.

3. Fear of failure.
 4. I can't do anything. (Low self-esteem)
 5. What will people say?
 6. I am doing wrong.
 7. Negative thoughts about life because of unemployment, corruption & other social evils.
 8. Revenge thoughts
4. **Thoughts about Past and Future**—Many thoughts come to our minds that are related to the past and future; we engage ourselves in entertaining them. To some extent, it is good, but if most of the time we are thinking about the past and future, we will lose our present, which is our real asset.

Above are the broad categories of the thoughts. Through this meditation technique, we will train our mind to think.

Process of Meditation –

Step One: In this step you have to sit comfortably on the mat/chair. Your neck, back, & head should be straight. Keep yourself relaxed. Close your eyes slowly. (3 Minutes)

Step Two - In this step you have to relax your body. Just concentrate on the various parts of your body. Make those parts relax. Where you have any aches in the body, concentrate on that specifically. (5 Minutes).

Step Three: In this step you concentrate on your breathing. Generally, our breathing is so irregular, and we never concentrate on it. Here it is a time to train your breathing. Rhythmic breathing helps us to relax our body and mind. To make your breathing rhythmic, you can use any mantra you like and repeat it with breath inhalation and exhalation. (5 Minutes).

Step Four: Now you concentrate on your mind and are mindful of thoughts coming into your mind. Here you have to classify your thoughts. Imagine that there are four boxes: box no. 1 is for positive thoughts, box no. 2 is for creative thoughts, box no. 3 is for negative thoughts, and box no. 4 is for thoughts about the past and future. The flow of thoughts might be constant in your mind, but don't engage yourself in entertaining them by extending those thoughts; in a simple way, send them in an appropriate box. Further, you imagine that Box No. 3 & 4 are dustbins. Let the negative thoughts and thoughts related to the past and future move into these boxes. (10 Minutes).

Step Five: In this step, only keep aware of your surroundings. Be alert. Listen to the sound around you. You may realize/listen to small sounds too. Don't give any reply in mind or even evaluate. Just be watchful. (2 Minutes).

Slowly, open your eyes. This 25-minute meditation will certainly refresh you.

Assertiveness

Passive and aggressive behaviours come naturally to us and often seem the easy option, whereas assertive behaviour requires a cognitive process rather than a gut reaction. It is learned we were not born assertive.

Assertive behaviour means being honest with yourself and others. It means being able to say what you want, but not at the expense of the other person. It is about being able to negotiate and reach workable compromises. The assertion is based on the belief that the needs, wants, and opinions of both people matter. Some of the characteristics and behaviours that are associated with assertion include:

- Steady, medium-pitched voice.
- Being prepared to compromise and look for common ground.
- Regular eye contact but without staring.
- Relaxed posture.
- Treating people with respect.
- Using open questions.
- Smiling when appropriate.
- Active listening.
- Taking responsibility for ourselves and our actions.
- Being trustworthy.
- Behaving consistently.
- Matching words, tone, and body language.
- Shouting or a loud voice
- Pointing fingers
- Foot tapping
- Threatening and intimidating behaviour
- Extreme impatience
- Invading someone's personal space
- Excessive eye contact
- Not listening to views that contradict our own
- Stating opinions as facts
- Advice in the form of 'should' or 'ought'
- Interrupting

Learning to Say ‘No’

Managing stress is simple when we learn to say no, which will avoid several sorry and mental strains. It is also important to develop the habit of accepting no when others say no, even mildly. Each one of us has the capacity to do a certain number of jobs, and this has to be kept in mind. Similarly, the people with whom we deal—above and below—have limited capacities. If we are to reduce our stress, we must keep this fact in mind while accepting assignments or giving assignments to others. Let us not forget that we get stressed when we are not able to do the assigned jobs or when others to whom we have assigned some jobs are not able to do what they had agreed to. To reduce stress in life, add "cushions" and do your own calculations before you give commitments. It only requires common sense. Add to it, keep on checking sensibly, and do not forget once you have given or taken a commitment. Frankness hurts in the beginning, but in the later stages, it helps you in building your reputation. It reduces your stress. And it also reduces the stress of others.

Conclusion:

Relaxation techniques and meditation are powerful techniques that help to revitalize our thoughts and help us to face various situations in our lives successfully. If we are mentally healthy, then and then only can we contribute to a great extent to our work.

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Internet Resources

- 1) <http://stressabout.com>
- 2) <http://www.lifepositive.com>
- 3) <http://changingminds.org/>
- 4) www.mindtools.com