

Strategies for Coping with Academic Stress, Stress Management

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to find out the significance of health education strategies for coping with stress. Stress management defines stress precisely as a person's physiological response to an external stimulus that triggers the "fight-or-flight" reaction. Stress management is a wide spectrum of technique and psychotherapy aimed at controlling a person's level of stress, especially chronic stress, usually for the purpose of improving everyday functioning.

All events in life brings about a reaction, but there are varied ways through which people reacts or responds to them, coping with stress is the attempt to manage or deal with stress. In their view, coping does not necessarily result in success. They comment that successful coping includes becoming aware of incidents and situations that one perceives as being stressful, and recognizing stressors means being aware of how your body responds to stress. Even though the counselling centre advices individual students who avail themselves for counselling on time management, it is envisaged that workshops, seminars and conferences on "techniques in managing stress" and "time management" for all students will go a long way to equip students with ways of coping with stress.

Keywords: Health, Strategies, Coping, Stress, Counselling.

INTRODUCTION

Studies have recently called attention to high levels of student stress in academic canters. Surveys have found that most students identify academic pressure as the main reason for their stress. Consequently, researchers have chronicled increases in cheating, sleepless nights, depression, drug use, and self mutilation. While it has long been assumed that struggling students are most prone to academic stress, recent studies indicate that high achievers are especially vulnerable to academic stress. Chronic academic stress often leads to physical, emotional, and behavioural symptoms, such as frequent illnesses, depression, irritability, decreased academic performance, drug or alcohol experimentation, and cheating. Causes of academic stress include high-stakes tests,

pressure from parents, overly demanding academic content, overbooked schedules, and pressure to gain admittance to prestigious colleges and universities, and conflicts with teachers. Researchers have identified strategies of academic centres, parents, and students could be used to manage academic stress. Academic centre's strategies include reducing the preoccupation with "grades for the sake of grades," incorporating stress education into the curriculum, and revising student work and testing policies. Parents can use several strategies to help their children cope with academic stress, such as emphasizing learning over grades, talking openly with their children about the pressures at school, college and university, limiting extracurricular activities, and building their children's feelings of self-worth. Student

strategies for reducing stress include setting realistic goals, learning stress management skills, finding time to relax, and talking to a trusted adult about their problems.

TYPES OF STRESS

Time stress.
Anticipatory stress.
Situational stress.
Encounter stress.

CAUSES OF ACADEMIC STRESS

Different students respond to academic pressures in different ways. Academic centres are not the only source of stress for students. Parents, other students, and government policies, and the school, college and universities admissions process all play a role in increasing students' stress levels (Conner et al., 2009). Following is a summary of the most common causes of academic stress.

1. Developmentally inappropriate classrooms.
2. High-stakes tests.
3. Pressure from parents.
4. Demanding academic content.
5. Peer relationships.
6. Fear of failure.
7. Lack of preparation.
8. Excessive homework.
9. Overbooked schedules.
10. Pressure to maintain high grades.
11. Pressure to gain acceptance to prestigious colleges.
12. Conflicts with teachers.
13. Transitioning to secondary school.
14. Poor diet and lack of sleep.

HEALTH EDUCATION STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH STRESS

Comprehensive health education strategies for coping with academic stress can help students obtain the greatest benefits from education and become healthy and productive adults'. One child out of four has an emotional, social, or physical health limitation that interferes with learning (Dryfoos, 1994; Tyson, 1999). Such problems include poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, substance abuse, family

and social violence, mental health problems, and factors during pregnancy affect child development (Swingle, 1997). Teachers and parents are in a unique position to influence young people's physical, mental, and social well-being. The following sections of this report summarize strategies that can be used by academic centres, parents, and students to alleviate academic stress. Researchers have suggested that academic centres could be the ideal place in which to conduct stress intervention and prevention programs because so many stressors are directly related to the academic environment and these stressors affect students' performance in academic center. In response to high levels of students anxiety disorders, depression, substance abuse, and disengagement, educators and health specialists creating research-based intervention at the academic centres . The initiative, challenge success, works with academic centres to design and implement site-based policies and practices that could be in reduce student stress and promote greater student engagement, academic integrity, and physical and mental health. While the stress reduction process varies based on academic centres unique circumstances, some strategies that have been used successfully at academic centres include:

1. Reduce the preoccupation with "grades for the sake of grades" and shift the focus to learning and understanding; Health Education Strategies for Coping with Academic Stress.
2. Identify students demonstrating high levels of stress.
3. Incorporate stress education into the curriculum.
4. Change the academic centres daily schedule.
5. Revise homework policies.
6. Revise testing policies.
7. Reduce test anxiety.
8. Ensure that students receive adequate support.

9. Communicate with all stakeholders about the causes and consequences of academic stress.
10. Promote healthy behaviours.
11. Help students develop effective coping strategies.

STUDENT STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH STRESS

Researchers have identified strategies that can help students deal with their academic stress.

1. Eat well.
2. Exercise.
3. Sleep well at night.
4. Don't use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco.
5. Set realistic goals for yourself.
6. Learn stress management skills, such as relaxation techniques and problem solving.
7. Don't over-schedule activities.
8. Find time to relax.
9. Keep a schedule.
10. Get organized.
11. Be optimistic.
12. Build resiliency.

Researchers have identified qualities that make some people naturally resilient even when faced with high levels of stress. To build resilience, Teens Health (2007) recommended that adolescents work on developing the following attitudes and behaviours:

- a) Think of change as a challenging and normal part of life.
 - b) See setbacks and problems as temporary and solvable.
 - c) Believe that working toward goals will lead to success.
 - d) Take action to solve problems.
 - e) Build strong relationships with family and friends and ask for help if needed.
13. Talk to an adult about unmanageable stress.

CONCLUSION

Conclusions and Implications All events in life brings about a reaction, but there are varied ways through which people reacts or responds to them, coping with stress is the attempt to manage or deal with stress. In their view, coping does not

necessarily result in success. They comment that successful coping includes becoming aware of incidents and situations that one perceives as being stressful, and recognizing stressors means being aware of how your body responds to stress. Students should manage stress by creating a positive meaning for it in terms of their personal growth and feeling. Students have to understand that positive stress and coping with negative stress can change them in a good way. It is therefore recommended that the counselling centre of the academic centres should put in place improved services such as social support groups made up of lecturers, administrators and students. With this, supportive skills like talking and sharing could be developed. This will enable students to feel comfortable and free enough to express their feelings. Even though the counselling centre advices individual students who avail themselves for counselling on time management, it is envisaged that workshops, seminars and conferences on "techniques in managing stress" and "time management" for all students will go a long way to equip students with ways of coping with stress.

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