

Beat that stress & move ahead

BUST IT While some amount of stress is fine, chronic stress can drastically interfere with learning. Therefore, it is important for every student to overcome it.

V Pradeep Kumar shows you how

Recently, Radhika and her worried father walked into my office for counselling. The girl was depressed because she couldn't get admission into an institution where a few of her friends had got in. A few weeks earlier, I had met Sahil, a bright graduate. Although he had topped his college, Sahil was under extreme stress and duress, because he wasn't able to choose an MBA college.

I wonder why simple issues like not getting into a particular college, or choosing an institution should get you depressed and stressed. For long-term career success, the value that you deliver is more important than the brand equity of the institute.

As a student, you may go through similar pressures when faced with competitive entrance exams, coaching classes, university exams, results and when you have to choose an institute or a career. The impact of stress due to board/university exams and a multitude of entrance exams for professional courses/campus recruitment is so high that students can't relax even for a day.

The pressure builds up right from schools and keeps increasing exponentially, until students complete their education and begin their career. In recent years, the pressure to perform has increased to such an extent that failures and disappointments are leading to an increased number of suicides. It's indeed unfortunate that our education system, as well as our society are still examination oriented.

What causes stress?

'Stress' is derived from the Latin word *stringere*, meaning to draw 'tight'. Stress is an individual's reaction to a situation requiring physical, mental or emotional response. Chronic stress releases powerful hormones to deal with short-term emergencies, but they can also damage, shrink and kill brain cells. With ever-increasing demands on education and career, stress has become chronic. The main causes of stress are:

- Career success having become an all-encompassing, inescapable and ruthless goal to pursue, beginning right from kindergarten
- The division of our society into nuclear families and, well-intended but ambitious parents adding pressure on students, pushing them to take up courses such as Medicine, Engineering and Management
- Post globalisation, several offbeat career options have emerged along with career-oriented courses. Yet, only a few are

choosing offbeat courses due to parental and peer pressures

■ **The focus in Indian educational system and pedagogy continues on traditional theoretical models, with little emphasis on soft skills and holistic development of students, which is so essential for career and life success**

■ **We also reinforce in young minds that success has to be achieved at any cost, without building in them life-supporting value systems**

The highly dogmatic thinking in our society has to change, which may take a few years.

How can you reduce stress?

As a student, you need to take crucial career related decisions. Look forward to the destination, which is a successful career, but also enjoy the journey controlling your stress levels.

■ **Choose a passionate career:** Research career prospects corresponding to your interests and passion. The research outcome will guide you on whether to pursue a passionate or a conventional career. Be convinced about the prudence of a career by considering longevity, financial returns, satisfaction and success possibility. Unconventional and offbeat careers take longer to establish, demanding a greater degree of patience, determination and family support; however, they offer satisfaction and fulfillment. Decide your career choice jointly with your parents.

■ **Set the right goals:** Highly inspiring career goals act as strong motivators channelising your energy into action and utilise your full potential. Integrate personal goals around realistic career goals.

■ **Studying techniques:** There are different learning, memorising and problem-solving techniques. Use questioning, group-notes, case studies, assignments, presentations, study groups, as appropriate. Concentrating in the class enhances your retention power, reducing related stress.

■ **Balance study and relaxation:** Stress is also an outcome of either too much studying or too little. Studying continuously leads to exhaustion, making studying ineffective. Instead, take a short break in between to refresh and rejuvenate. Use the break for a walk, a game, breathing exercises, music or a power nap. Judiciously mixing studies and activities relaxes your mind facilitating effective studying. Similarly, hobbies are a wonderful way to free your mind from stress.

■ **Time management:** To manage studies, college and coaching classes, sports, hobbies and daily routine, practice time management. List all tasks, classifying them into different quadrants: urgent and important; not urgent, but important; urgent nor important; and neither urgent nor important. Highly acclaimed author Stephen Covey, says that people who spend more time on urgent and important tasks are bound to find their life stressful. This means, you should prioritise your tasks and avoid doing only deadline-oriented tasks or managing crises. Minimise indulgence in mails, mobiles, movies, shopping and networking sites.

■ **Get organised:** Learn to organise your books, notes, clothes, documents, digital files etc. This will make them easily accessible, avoiding the stress caused by misplacement.

■ **Eat right; sleep right:** Eating the right food is important to provide nutrients and vitamins to your body. Skipping your breakfast and eating junk food in the canteen, is counterproductive in the long run. With lack of sleep and gnawing hunger, you can't concentrate on lectures. A consistent dietary and sleeping habit is essential to maximise your efficiency.

■ **Learn to communicate:** An important technique to reduce stress is to talk to people close to you. Don't allow your emotions to suffocate; share your concerns and issues with parents or a mentor. Mentors empathetically listen, making you relax and open up. When disappointments trig-

ger negative emotions, they willingly provide vent to such emotions. Importantly, mentors help you avoid career and course related mistakes, which otherwise is a major cause of stress.

■ **Healthy environment:** Exam times are especially lethal, with a charged and stressful environment at home. Parental and peer pressure create highly stressful, must-win situations. Trust your ability to succeed and build the same trust in your parents by reassuring them of your abilities. This can pave the way for a healthy and supportive environment.

■ **Positive thinking:** Despite your efforts, disappointments may still occur in university/entrance/career outcomes causing a surge of negativity. Allow the disappointment to subside and get more determined, with a realisation that any failure is just a temporary setback from which you can bounce back stronger.

Live in the present moment

Psychologists opine that carrying emotional baggage from the past and endless worries about the future also cause stress. Therefore, shift your focus to living in the present moment, which can dramatically reduce stress and change your behaviour. For instance, don't worry about the outcome of a CAT/JEE/university exam; instead focus more on the preparation, which will reduce stress and increase efficiency.

Vicki Baum, an American writer appropriately said, "you don't get ulcers from what you eat; you get it from what's eating you." While, there is no perfect stress-free environment, you can certainly reduce stress levels, which is a manageable challenge. If you still feel over-stressed, slow down the pace a bit, because the key to winning is composure under stress. (The author is a management and career consultant)



**ONE DEGREE
MANY CAREERS**

ANIMATION – MULTIMEDIA – WEB DESIGN
GRAPHIC DESIGN – PHOTOGRAPHY

100% CBSE results for the second year in row

**Your quest for a school that prepares students for top
Careers and Universities worldwide ends here**

treamis
World School
DAY AND BOARDING