

POWERFUL TECHNIQUES FOR MANAGING ANXIETY AMONG STUDENTS IN SCHOOL SETTING

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ABSTRACT

Anxiety has been observed as the major cause of problem for all of us. This problem has also been observed in students as a result of which, behavioral problems have been on an increase among them. A significant role can be played by the school authorities, teachers, parents and counselors to reduce the anxiety level in students. Mindfulness, Compassion, Positive thinking, unconditional Love, and a strong bond between the teacher and taught can play an important role in reducing the anxiety level among the teenagers.

Keywords: Anxiety, adolescents, mindfulness, human emotion, academic anxiety

INTRODUCTION

“Anxiety is a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained.”

(Arthur Somers Roche, 1883)

Our world is changing every day and so are our society, environment, educational system, curriculum, technology, social media, and so on. Sometimes we feel anxious about the changes and demands placed on us. The demands of school, peer pressure, homework, extracurricular activities, high academics, career expectations of parents and their relations make children and adolescents feel unrealistic and the amount of pressure leads to an increase in the anxiety level among students in the school setting. In today context, an increase in the level of anxiety is a common occurrence. In simple term anxiety is an uncomfortable and unpleasant feelings that a human being experience when in fearful situations .Anxiety is not a disease and it is very

common and everyone experiences high anxiety level at some point or other. Anxiety is one of the psychophysiology difficulties (Roger, 2001). According to Sarason “Anxiety is a basic human emotion consisting of fear and uncertainty that typically appears when an individual perceives an event as being a threat to the ego or self esteem” (Harris & Coy, 2003). The concept of anxiety is characterized most commonly as a diffused, unpleasant, vague sense of apprehension, often accompanied by autonomic symptoms such as headache, perspiration, palpitation, tightness of the chest, mild stomach discomfort and restlessness, indicated by an inability to sit or stand still for a long time (Sadock, 2007) . Anxiety is a major factor contributing to a variety of negative outcomes including psychological distress, academic underachievement, academic failure, and insecurity (Hembree, 1988).

Generally, anxiety can be either a trait or a state. A trait anxiety is a stable characteristic or traits of the person. A state anxiety is one which is aroused by some temporary condition of the environment such as examination, accident, punishment etc. Academic anxiety is a kind of state anxiety which relates to the impending danger from the environment of the academic institutes including teacher, certain subjects like Mathematics, English etc. Anxiety stems from many sources, but is most commonly caused by a lack of positive attitude, exam preparation, Poor study habits, cramming the night before the exam, mindfulness, poor time management, lack of organization of the text, notes, and homework are examples of being unprepared. Not studying at Zeidner (1998) outlines three components of anxiety:

- **cognitive:** the negative thoughts and depreciating self-statements that occur during assessments (e.g. ‘If I fail this exam my whole life is a failure’) and the performance-inhibiting difficulties that may arise from anxiety (e.g. recalling facts and difficulty in reading and understanding questions);
- **affective:** the person’s appraisal of their physiological state (such as tension, tight muscles and trembling);
- **behavioural:** poor study skills, avoidance and procrastination of work.

As a teacher, you have the power to teach students effective ways to deal with academic or test anxiety. Teaching various techniques and strategies to your students may serve to close the gap between children’s abilities and their academic performance. Some easy-to-implement strategies include allowing students the use of stress balls or music. Taking 10

minutes prior to the test to do deep breathing and tension reduction exercises with the class may also be effective.

Reasons of Anxiety

The Anxiety Disorder Association of America (ADAA) identified a variety of variables that cause anxiety which include:

- a) Anxiety, attention or obsessive compulsive disorders.
- b) Perfectionist tendencies and unrealistic expectations.
- c) Negative self esteem, self statements and criticism.
- d) Poor motivation, lack of confidence and procrastination.
- e) Inadequate study and test taking skills.
- f) Poor prior testing performance.
- g) Pressure from peers, family and teacher.
- h) Unfavorable testing environments.
- i) Invalid flawed and timed tests
- j) Ineffective teaching.

Children struggling with excessive anxiety show the following symptoms:

- Apprehension of failing in the examinations
- Lack of concentration and hard work
- Demands from parents and teachers to do well in the examinations
- Wrong eating habits
- Not getting enough sleep
- Lack of exercise
- Fear of securing less grade

Techniques to Reduce Anxiety level among Students

Modern living has been characterized by stressful lifestyles that demand striving for success and competition. Nowadays high profile performance of the student is an indicator of status for the family as well as enhancing reputation of the school. Parents also try to put more pressure on their children to achieve the highest percentage in examinations. Another dimension of the

problem is crucial age of the student that is adolescence . In this age their self esteem easily gets hurt on simple issues The characteristic of this age is reflected in their energetic, semi-mature and ambitious behavior. Developmentally, adolescents consistently experience changes between the ages of 11 and 18 (Hofstra, Van der Ende and Verhulst, 2011). Moreover, the process of growing up is complicated and challenging because this is the period when adolescents are faced with many expectations, responsibilities, influences, uncertainties, and lack of experience (Healy, 2009). In a study on parent characters and anxiety in adolescents, Moore (2008) concluded that adolescents are prone to some kinds of anxiety such as tension and worries in a family with a lot of stressors. Therefore students are in consent pressure and it also increase anxiety level in them. High level of anxiety affects students badly and turns out to be a big barrier on their studies and daily life. So it is very important to manage anxiety at initial stage though it is a challenging task and need regular guidance. All these issues could be resolved by introducing the following activities in school each day for few hours. In this parents and school have a major role to play. They should follow some guidelines and practice in advance so that students can beat anxiety The solution lies in five powerful techniques:

- Mindfulness
- Yoga Muscle Relaxation
- Prioritizing
- Positive thinking
- Unconditional love for student

Mindfulness:

**“Buddha was asked, what have you gained from meditation?”
He replied, “Nothing! However Buddha Said,
let me tell you what I lost: Anger, Anxiety, Depression, Insecurity, Fear of Old age and
Death”**

Mindfulness is the most powerful technique to reduce or remove anxiety and stress free classes and for better decision making in life situation. It’s not only a meditation technique, but also a way of thinking. In simple words mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations and surrounding environment. "Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; On purpose, in the present moment,

and no judgmentally." - Jon Kabat-Zinn . With regular practice for at least 25 minutes during assembly every day ,students can see improvements in not only to health but also to academic performance, creative thinking, practical intelligence, IQ, Absenteeism and addictive and anti social behavior.

Mindfulness is an old concept and was introduced in the late-1970s by Jon Kabat-Zinn, an American doctor who developed mindfulness classes for patients dealing with all sorts of physical and mental ailments, and it has become increasingly popular over the past 20 years. Early research suggests mindfulness can help alleviate student anxiety and improve learning. A 2009 study published in *Advances in School Mental Health Promotion* found students learning about mindfulness reported being more relaxed and calm following their training.

When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we're sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future. Research has found that mindfulness changes our brains. It increases density of gray matter in brain regions linked to learning, memory, emotion regulation, and empathy. It helps to reduce anxiety, negative thoughts and managing stress. The ultimate goal is to give you enough distance from disturbing thoughts and emotions to be able to observe them without immediately reacting to them Teachers trained in mindfulness also show lower blood pressure, less negative emotion and symptoms of depression, and greater compassion and empathy. Teaching and implementing mindfulness in the school and classroom is a necessity. Our children are stressed and anxious. Teachers and parents are stressed and anxious, too. Our lives are busy, and we often find our thoughts buzzing over the past or worrying about the future. So all need mindfulness because it teaches us to live in the present moment, enjoying and experiencing what's in front of us. In schools we must keep one period actually first period for mindful sessions.

Yoga & Muscle relaxation Techniques: Yoga is benefit for not only the physical wellbeing of students but also to reduce problem behavior, anxiety, anger, improves self regulation, concentration, focus and support academic achievement. Yoga increase flexibility and strength through breathing and relaxation techniques. Research suggests that school-based yoga cultivates competencies in mind-body awareness, self-regulation, and physical fitness. And classroom teachers benefit as well. Taken together, these competencies may lead to improvements in

students' behavior, mental state, health, and performance, as well as teacher resilience, effectiveness and overall classroom climate. Deep breathing is a simple yet powerful relaxation technique. It's easy to learn, can be practiced almost anywhere, and provides a quick way to get your stress levels in check.. All we really need is a few minutes and a place to stretch out.

The figure below outlines some of the potential benefits of yoga for youth (and adults):



Butzer, B., Bury, D., Telles, S., & Khalsa, S. B. S. (2016). Implementing yoga within the school curriculum: a scientific rationale for improving social-emotional learning and positive student outcomes. *Journal of Children's Services, 11*(1), 3-24.

Meditation and yoga strengthen body , mind ,provide mental piece and physical power and help individual to fight against diseases and stay healthy. Therefore this should be compulsory in schools every day after or during assembly. Relaxation techniques have been found to be highly effective and have produced long-term benefits in treating children, adolescents, and adults for anxiety (Rasid & Parish, 1998). Relaxation training was effective in reducing anxiety in any kind of participant, male or female, young or old, affected or not by physical or psychological disorders (Francesco et al., 2009). All of these techniques have been shown to significantly reduce anxiety levels in children and adolescents who have difficulty relaxing when in anxious situations (Zuercher-White, 1998).

Prioritizing:

It is very important to make children learn to prioritize the activities. In the school the teacher must teach to figure out a balance between school and other activities that works for them and set an amount of time for each activity. They should be told to make a list of what and when you have to do it and also understand what times you want to set aside for study, and what time you have for other activities (Study after breakfast, take a break for lunch, play a sport for one hour, study until dinner, then relax for the night and get a good night's sleep so you can focus the next day) Your parents and teachers can help you set goals and prioritize your activities.

Positive thinking: Positive thinking is simply to think more positively, focus on the positive, rather than the negative. A positive attitude is exceptionally important for children of all ages, and it can be taught as well as reinforced by teachers, parents, and other authority figures in the child's life. Here are a few ways you can help to teach children to have a positive attitude. "In order to have a 'good life', youth need to have a positive view of the future. Researchers at Search Institute have found that a positive view of one's future is a protective factor. This protective factor can guide youth in a positive direction and help them avoid negative influences." (Teaching a Positive Attitude, 1997). Teaching students to keep a positive attitude is the foundation for other character lessons for children and will have a meaningful affect on their lives in the long run.

Unconditional love for student: A significant role can be played by the school authorities, teachers, parents and counselors to reduce the anxiety level in students. Teachers have an important role in building the personality of students and the relationship they develop with them determines the student's academic and personal growth. Concern, Understanding, Love, Care and a strong bond between the teacher and taught can play an important role in reducing the anxiety level among the teenagers. Empirical evidence does show that teacher-student relationships are very important for high school students (Alexander et al., 1997; Cataldi et al., 2009; Dika & Singh, 2002; Hughes et al., 1999; Midgley et al., 1989; Ryan et al., 1994; Wentzel, 2003

All these techniques support the development of students who are better able to manage the day to day activities and pressure of school, who are stronger and happier and who are tuned for success. We should make little change in the timetable and introduce these techniques as a compulsory periods in the school every day to make our students to live happy and anxiety free life.

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