



Stress coping strategies and adolescents

Dr. Khan Tanveer Habeeb

Assistant Professor, Marathwada College of Education, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India

Abstract

“Just as a bud requires adequate nourishment and watering to bloom in to a beautiful flower, an adolescent also requires adequate physical, mental and emotional support and nourishment to develop into a healthy and responsible adult”. Adolescence, needless to say, is the most beautiful, wonderful and yet ‘dangerous’ period in an individual’s life. Stanley Hall (1904), came up with the term 'storm and stress' to describe adolescence in 1904. He referred to an adolescent's decreased level of self-control as the 'storm' and their increased sensitivity as the 'stress'. The present research article focusses on the Stress relating coping strategies which will help the adolescents to cope of with stress actively.

Keywords: stress, strategies and adolescents

Introduction

Stress is being experienced by everyone nowadays. Stress Management has become very essential. Stress can be constructively channelized to reduce the stress. Managing stress is also a skill which we all have to develop. Stress among the Adolescents can be crucial in the well-being of the family as a whole. Stress can be caused due to many factors and can alter the relationships dynamics in the family. Especially stress in the adolescence can be very taxing on the parents and the adolescents themselves. During adolescence boys and girls go through lot of turmoil. The reasons for Stress during adolescence as per the review of literature are because of disturbed family dynamics, peer pressure, inability to cope with studies, drug abuse, lack of competence. One of the important trends which are being observed is getting instant gratification from the electronic media and gadgets. The involvement of adolescents in getting instant gratification of needs has led to lot of stress in them and in their relationships with family and peers. Stress leads to maladaptive behavior (Ramamurthy, Rohini, 2005).

How stress affects your thoughts and emotions

You might notice signs of stress in the way you think, act, and feel. You may:

- Feel cranky and unable to deal with even small problems.
- Feel frustrated, lose your temper more often, and yell at others for no reason.
- Feel jumpy or tired all the time.
- Find it hard to focus on tasks.

- Worry too much about small things.
- Feel that you are missing out on things because you can't act quickly.
- Imagine that bad things are happening or about to happen.

Symptoms which will be helpful in identifying the stressful behaviour of adolescents

- Adolescents may be experiencing irritability because of lack of proper sleep at night. Then it's a Wakeup call for parents.
- They may be unable to concentrate on academics and sports.
- Adolescents may be having unexplained fears or increased anxiety.
- Adolescents isolate from family activities or peer relationships.
- Adolescents may be experimenting with drugs and alcohol.
- Adolescents may complain about headaches or stomach aches.
- Adolescents may have poor appetite and low immunity.

Stress coping strategies

At individual level, there are two ways of dealing with stress

(1) By drug therapy

In Drug therapy, individuals use drugs continuously to cope with stress related ailments such as headaches, backaches etc.

(2) By non-drug treatment

In non-drug treatment the coping is more advantageous and much safer, for example exercise, yoga relaxation response, such as acupuncture, meditation, hobby, practice relaxation techniques, rearranges schedules etc.

Some specific techniques that individuals can use for coping with stress include the following:

a) Physical Exercise: Physical exercise is necessary to keep the body healthy both physically and mentally and is the best antidote for stress. Emotional strength is a by-product of regular exercise, and self-confidence is a natural consequence. Regular and regulated physical exercise includes walking, jogging, swimming, aerobics, riding bicycle, playing outdoor games etc. Physical fitness helps the body to cope better with stress, whereas relaxation techniques are useful for the mind.

Relaxation practices

i) Yoga: Yoga is a holistic science concerned with all aspects of human functioning. It involves various body postures and breathing exercises.

ii) Relaxation: Relaxation removes fatigue and drives attention away from work or a stressful situation. It is useful in managing a prolonged stressful situation more effectively. Different people respond differently to relaxation activities.

iii) Meditation: "Meditation is of far greater importance than medication for whatever afflicts mankind today." (Bhargava, 1997). It is a mental relaxation technique which has proved to be of immense value to relieve stress and re-energize the body, reduce psychological problems such as anxiety and depression and lead to better emotional and physical health. Practicing meditation results in tranquillity and peace of mind. It helps in lowering the pulses and heart rate, induces a more objective thinking process with an unbroken and maintained concentration. The commonly practiced techniques of meditation are yoga and relaxation response.

iv) Bio-feedback: Biofeedback is a specific relaxation technique which is now being used for treating psychosomatic disorders like hypertension, tension, headaches, migraine headaches, backache, depression etc. Sophisticated biofeedback instruments have been developed that constantly inform the user about the changes which are characteristic of stress within his/her body for example, the intensity of muscle tension, skin temperature, heart rate, blood pressure etc.

b) Recreation and Leisure time activities: Recreation provides an opportunity to let oneself go, become inhibited thus reducing tension and stress. There are various forms of recreation like music, entertainment, painting, movies, parties, gardening, dancing etc. "Recreational pursuits are important to the prevention of the damaging effects of stress" (Husain, 1998). Leisure time can be used for doing some activities which give pleasure and help in building connections with others. Hobbies can easily be pursued in leisure time.

i) Diet: These days, dietary practices are being used to improve a person's overall health making him/her less vulnerable to stress. One's lifestyle, occupation, climatic

conditions and body constitution should determine both the quantity and quality of one's diet. A proper diet can prevent stress caused by unhealthy dietary habits.

ii) Sleep: Human errors caused by drowsiness and sleepiness may lead to accidents and tragedies. "Drowsiness is an urgent warning that should not be ignored" (Castleman, 1997). A good night sleep helps to restore physical resources and increases the stress tolerance level. A person with large sleep debt is more vulnerable to infections and other illnesses. An increased need for sleep is the body's mechanism for producing the desired recovery. Adults require at least 7 to 8 hours of sleep daily even though individual differences in sleep patterns and sleep needs vary.

iii) Time management: Time management is important for people who maintain a busy schedule. They need to prioritise their activities to avoid stress from time pressure and overtime work. Time management helps to balance work and leisure time activities. Working late may also alleviate stress. Working professionals who are dedicated to work are often "overworked" which has an adverse impact on their mental and physical wellbeing. Premature ageing is also seen as a consequence of overwork.

iv) Behavioural Self-Control: Individuals can manage their own behaviour to reduce stress and can avoid people and situations that they know will put them under stress. It is a type of self-cure technique. Even "Cognitive therapy" may be used to alter an individual's self-defeating thoughts that unnecessarily cause a strain by making him conscious of the effects of his thoughts on his physiological and emotional response.

v) Networking or Social Support: Social psychology research has indicated that people benefit from social support. Networking requires forming associations with trusted, empathetic people who may be family members, neighbours etc.

Conclusion

Thus it is very important for the parents and teachers to help the adolescents in reducing stress through various coping strategies which will help in the smooth transition of the period of great storm and stress i.e. the adolescent period to adulthood.

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