

# 'Provide students emotional stability, boost self-esteem'

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**A**s more and more schools reopen in physical mode, both students and teachers are trying to adapt to the new normal. Though physical classroom teaching has always been the norm, the conditions in which it is being held pose a new set of challenges. Right from having students back on the campus after a long gap, the psychological fear which the devastating second wave has instilled and the pressure to keep the wheels of education rolling is something all stakeholders are trying to get used to. Senior academic Neeru Kapai speaks to TOI on priorities for teachers now that schools have reopened in physical mode.

Excerpts...

## SUNDAY INTERVIEW

Neeru Kapai

**Q. Though it's back to the classrooms, it's actually a very different set-up now.**

**A.** Physical classrooms are now operating under certain guidelines issued by the government and that's why it will be different from what they looked like in 2019. Though there's a limit to the number of students present in the class, a simultaneous webcast is being conducted to ensure that students at home do not miss out. Hybrid teaching methods too are being adapted to. So, overall it's a new experience, but there is no denying that having students back in the classrooms is much better.

**Q. Will students need a lot of hand-holding even after they are back on campus?**

**A.** For all schools now, the priority should not be curriculum completion but to provide emotional stability and boost self-esteem of students. There was never a greater need for students to be trained in the 21st century life skills. Parents and teachers will have to ensure that they put in all the efforts to help their children learn how to be responsible and accountable for their behaviour and decisions.

What has happened during this prolonged Covid-induced lockdown is that students have been affected mentally, because their normal routine, their life with friends etc was suddenly snatched from them. For adolescents, such sharp changes and that too for a prolonged time are hard to deal with.

**Q. Is the situation better because it eases the learning process?**

**A.** Better because teachers can take care of students' emotional as well as academic needs in an optimized way. You have to understand that teachers play an important role in the overall development of students. Teachers are always observing the body language of students, how they interact with peers and seniors. This observation gives teachers a very clear idea on which student is acting aloof, depressed etc. And then, a bit of counseling or a pep talk or giving specific responsibilities to that student which draws him/her out of that shell is all part of a trained teacher response to such situations. However, in a virtual classroom, making such observations is very difficult.

**Q. So, dealing with students at an emotional level, rather than only academic, will be a priority now?**

**A.** All good teachers always connect with their students at both levels. But yes, the need to do so will be much greater now. Covid has played havoc with the feelings and emotions of students. Uncertainty of their future dreams is increasing anxiety. This is leading to frustration and depression which is compelling them to commit suicide. Hence, change in the mindset of both parents and teachers is now required.

**Q. Will this be a slow process?**

**A.** It need not be. The biggest problem in solving any issue is that the stakeholders don't want to accept that there is a problem. There should not be a hesitancy in recognizing that there is a serious issue which needs to be dealt with.



# Parents get tips to help wards deal with exam stress

HT correspondent

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**PUNE:** Dr Swati Bhave, head of Adolescent Clinic Jehangir Hospital and executive director of Association of Adolescent and Child Care in India, hosted a free workshop for dealing with examination stress and ensuring good performance in examinations for parents on Saturday.

Parents and counsellors who had gathered for the session spoke about the behavioural pattern of the students.

Doctors from various specialities are part of the Association of Adolescent and Child Care in India and their mission is to spread awareness among parents, teachers and students on various issues related to children and young adults to promote holistic mental and physical health.

Besides Bhave, Smita Salunke, clinical psychologist Jehangir Hospital; Sharmila Gujar and Sujata Hingne, both life skill educators were also present to help audience under-

## BHAVE AND HER TEAM OF CO-EDUCATORS EXPLAINED VARIOUS CONCEPTS USING POWER POINT PRESENTATIONS

stand about stress. Bhave and her team of co-educators explained various concepts using power point presentations. Parents and counsellors exchanged ideas, too.

Dr Archana Shankar Gore had come all the way from Dighe. "My son is in Class 9 and we want to be prepared from now for the next year.

"We want to know and learn how to handle with stress. Even we feel the pressure with the kind of competition around."

While another parent, Dr Sandeep Kavde who travelled from Moshi for the workshop said, "Though my children are young, I want to gain an understanding about dealing with the pressure of examinations."

## POINTS TO NOTE FOR PARENTS

- Keep a positive and encouraging attitude that gets transmitted to the child.
- Keep a relaxed tension free happy atmosphere at home.
- Ensure that the child gets proper diet and adequate sleep the day before examinations.
- Avoid high fat, high salt and high sugar food.
- A good night sleep is essential for a better performance.
- Help the child relax with various techniques like deep breathing exercises, meditation, yoga or music.