“FOSTERING RESILIENCE AMONG STUDENTS”

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ABSTRACT

Recent discussion of resilience in the educational media considers student’s mental wellbeing as a growing challenge requiring greater attention. Resilience is often defined as the ability to recover, to bounce back from adversity to adjust easily with change. In individual, the development of resilience is linked to the number of factors that contribute positively to a person’s overall emotional and physical wellbeing. But every student may not acquire that natural ability of bouncing back, especially in this competitive age. To reverse the trend of reduced self efficacy and emotional resilience in young adults, we have to re-examine our approaches to parenting and create condition that encourage and enable parents to allow their children more freedom than is currently in the norm. In this article, an attempt has been made to discuss the nature of resilience, its factors and strategies for building resilience among students.

“I have learnt that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached as by the obstacles overcome while trying to succeed”—Booker T.

Introduction -

One of the serious issues that jerk all of our heart in the year 2017, was the fear of ‘blue whale game,’ the game of self destruction making oneself feeling unworthy in this world and we lost many young dreams. Very often we come across incidents of self destruction by the young for losing ones confidence. Many times, students up to secondary level were spoon feed by their teachers for good results. Besides, due to ‘helicopter parenting’ where parents solve all the problems faced by their wards, students do not learn how to soothe themselves in adversity. When these students have to work independently using their own intuition, they feel quite difficult to meet the pressure. Declining student resilience is thus becoming a serious problem for students, parents, teachers and the society as a whole. To deal with this, students are increasingly seeking help for, and apparently having emotional crisis over problems of everyday life. Besides, due to ‘schooling mentality’ that says children develops best when they are carefully guided and supervised by adults, parents in some ways become victim of such social forces that do not allow to let their wards in public places without adult accompaniment. For preparing students for college and life, we have to counter these social forces. We have to give them freedom, to get away from adults so that they can practice being adult-that is practice of taking responsibility for oneself. As a parent, negotiating in protecting our children and giving them freedom they need for psychological growth is a challenging issue. To reverse the trend of reduced self efficacy and emotional resilience in young adults, we have to re-examine our approaches to parenting and create condition that encourage and enable parents to allow their children more freedom than is currently in the norm.

Resilience -

A shift in emphasis in mental health policy to include promotions of positive mental health as a preventive measure (WHO 2005), together with the identification of resilience and coping as one of the eight positive mental health grouping underlies the value of resilience. The etymology of the term ‘resilience’ has its roots in the Latin verb ‘resilire’ meaning to ‘jump back’. In physics, resilience is linked to elasticity and the ability of an object to return to its original shape after it experiences significant levels of stress. As it applies to people, the development of resilience is linked to the combination of a number of factors and key traits which, when put together, contribute positively to a person’s overall emotional and physical wellbeing. As a personal characteristic, resilience is attributed to individuals, who in faces of overwhelming adversity, are able to adapt and restore equilibrium to their lives and avoid the potentially deteriorating effects of stress. As such, resilience is considered as strength, a desired quality, a characteristic that is likely to affect an individual’s performance, achievement, health and well being positively. It connotes emotional stamina and has been used to describe persons who display courage and adaptability in the wake of life misfortune that consists of mainly two factors –Personal Competence and Acceptance of self and life.

Academic resilience is interpreted as an increased likelihood of academic success despite environmental adversities. It depends on ‘Grit’ and ‘Mindset’ as said by Duckworth and Deweek (2013). Grit is the tendency to sustain interest, passion and persistent effort towards achieving long term future goals. Mindset may be of two types – fixed one, in which students have fixed believe on their level of intelligence and ability. The growing mindset on the other hand views their intelligence as a basis for development and believe that challenges including failure are opportunities to develop their capacity for success through effort and practice.

Resilience and Factors -

The Resilient Student, as defined by researchers, is one who embodies a set of identified characteristics, referred as “internal factors”, and makes use of them in order to bounce back from setbacks and difficult situations. As regards to youth, risk factors are vulnerable factors that increase the probability of poor outcomes, increase the likelihood that a young person will experience negative outcomes. The causes or factors associated with risk factors can be discussed at four levels –

- At Personal level risk factors are—insecure attachment, difficult temperament, non-compliance, chronic illness, low self esteem, poor social skill, impulsivity, low locus of control etc.
- At familial level, such students may experience the problem of parental unemployment, death of family members, differently abled family members, members with chronic illness, family breakup, violence in family, physical or emotional abuse, conflicting family relationship, possessive or uninvolved parents etc.
- At school level, bullying by peers, peers rejection, peer pressure, school failure, discrimination by teachers, unsupportive teachers, head of the institution etc.
- At community level, socio cultural discrimination, lack of support services, isolation, neighbourhood violence, lack of recreational facility.

Protective factors counter balance the risk factors, increasing the likelihood that he or she may make a positive transition to adulthood. Protective factors alter responses to adverse events so that potential negative outcomes can be avoided. These factors may be mentioned as -

- At Personal level, easy temperament, adequate nutrition, attachment to family, above average intelligence, school involvement, problem solving skills, internal locus of control, good social skills, social skills, social competence, effective coping skills, moral beliefs and values, optimism, high self esteem etc.
- At familial level, supportive and caring parents, family harmony, secure and stable family, strong family norms and...
Developing Resilience and Education –

It is observed that there is growing concerns with student mental health, isolation and stress, for which developing resilience in students is necessary. The pursuit of these factors that distinguish resilient from the non resilient students and the promotion of resilience became the concern of existing research. Better understanding of resilience could have a significant impact on improving outcomes for both students and educational institutions. Resilience is influenced by both internal and external factors, in which student’s social environment have significant role to play. Higher resilience is associated with higher life satisfaction which can be developed through innovative pedagogies and student’s living and social environment. Research has established that resilience can be taught and everyone has a capacity for learning resiliency. Further, besides family, teachers are better positioned to provide the supportive conditions that promote resiliency in youths. Schooling is vital in enabling students to make the best of adverse circumstances like being in care, both through offering opportunities for academic success to compensate failure in family life and in affording access to alternative supporting relationships with teachers, peers, may offer opportunities to learn coping styles and gain a sense of self worth. Most authors consider resilience as a mixture of “Nature’ and Nurture and have suggested different strategies and practices for development of positive and hopeful resilience. Such as—

Promoting Resilience at personal level –

- Students need to derive good self esteem from the task accomplished of their own and ascribe value to achievement.
- Taking responsibility of one’s activities, making decisions and valuing how far they overcome the adversities in their lives enhance optimism and self efficacy.
- Willingness to take action and initiation with a sense of responsibility in finding creative responses to deal with adversity enhance resiliency.
- Believing in broader value system with a sense of tolerance help students to persists in adversities leading to the conviction that life has meaning.
- Students need to believe in others, experience others as reliable, feel respect for them and valuing others build self confidence in themselves.
- Considerable exposure to playing meaningful roles in (besides academic) non academic activities at school, sports, part time work, volunteering, caring of siblings, peers, taking domestic responsibility may help in distracting oneself from negative effect of adversity proving a positive identity and self esteem.
- Practicing autonomy of taking decisions along with learning from mistakes by student leads to gain increasing control over one’s emotion, learning and behaviour. Taking reasonable calculated risk also help in increased resiliency.
- Searching for identity, understanding and probing who they are, why they are, to whom they are important by themselves also helps in accepting one’s self.
- Good insight of one’s own difficulties, besides a realistic assessment of their own contribution and contribution of others to one’s difficulties helps students in recognizing benefits as well as negative effects from sever adversity. It also help in making appropriate choice and taking right action to maximise their strength and minimize weaknesses.
- Sense of Humour is another building block of resilience that help in reducing emotional pain and sustain relationship.

Promoting Resilience at Family Level-

- Family members should also participate in community activities and be in regular contact with teachers, school, college, sports group, cultural organization, religious institutions etc.
- Family must keep clear, realistic expectation from their children with support, acknowledging each others strength and weaknesses.
- Children and youths should be assigned with responsibilities and given opportunities to participate in discussion and decision making.
- Family should form the habit of listening and respecting each others opinion.
- Quality time should be spend with children in working, playing, visiting, sharing together.

Promoting Resilience At Classroom level –

- Caring relationship and sense of belongingness should be developed among students and teachers by keeping interest in student’s achievement and wellbeing.
- Disciplinary styles used in classroom should focus on behaviour modification than blaming
- Besides engaging in community activities, teachers should also encourage students to develop broader interest in classroom, institutional and community activities.
- Teachers also need to offer support and guide students to achieve their goal and acknowledge students performance.
- Teachers need to use variety of approaches in teaching and assessment for catering diverse educational need of students.
- Teachers also need to listen and share student’s attitude and opinion and incorporate group activities.

Promoting Resilience at Institutional Level-

- School and College should initiate caring relationship and sense of belongingness by
  - Publicly rewarding academic and other achievements of students.
  - Providing support for welfare and counselling services and academic flexibility for needy students.
  - Enforce policies for safe and supportive institutional environment, prevention of bullying and substance use.
  - Providing opportunities for variety of courses, option and co curricular activities.
  - Students should be encouraged to participate in discussion and decision making process.
  - Giving opportunities to foster links with community, group and agencies.
  - Encouraging teachers to use varied teaching styles to fulfill the varied needs of students. Institution should maintain partnership with relevant groups and agencies for students placement.

Promoting Resilience At Community level –

- Community should invest time and resources in educational, recreational and social opportunities for students.
- Provide health, welfare and counselling services to youths.
- Enforce and establish social protection and safety policies as well as guideline for expected acceptable behaviour of youths.
- Recognize the achievement of the children and youths locally, nationally by awards, media and other ways.
- Flexible arrangement should be made for apprenticeships, employment, education and training or work experience programme in industries without any discrimination of age, sex, religion, disability or ethnicity.
- Youths should be given opportunities to make decisions and take social responsibilities.

Others –

- Print and non print media should incorporate videos of stress management, inspirational videos of management, communication skill, interpersonal relationships and effective parenting.
- Counting programmes should be organized to assist students to bring desired changes in students, making right choice in
academic and non-academic pursuits, to develop problem solving skills, build resilience coping skills, developing positive relationship with others, developing achievement orientation.

- Capacity Building programme should be organized for teachers and parents to strengthen the protective factors by providing training for maintaining family co-hesion, consistent guidance, modelling behaviour excepted from students, accepting error and failures and providing opportunities to practice to deal with problems and adversities.

In conclusion, it can be said that for development of resilience among students, continuing conversation at every level including students, family members, friends and other members along with the teachers are necessary. Students need to be treated as individual. ‘One size fit for all’ responses are not helpful in enhancing resiliency. Communication of our interest and concern towards our children and students, to listen to them matters more for their wellbeing. Mental well being of students requires making useful and strategic intervention that is rooted in positive thinking, avoiding labelling of students and empowering the students. ‘Atamanag Ridhi’ the age old teaching of Indian Culture still proves true to students overall mental well being.

References –