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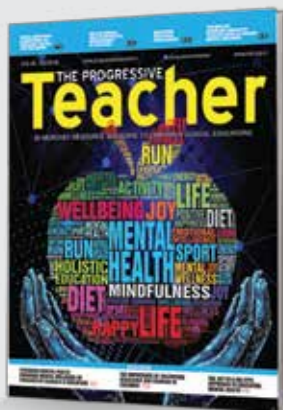


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## OFTEN OVERLOOKED BUT PIVOTAL TO SUCCESS, MENTAL WELLBEING

India has been rated as the most depressed country in the world by World Health Organisation, which brings me to delve straight into the truth: Nowadays, children are either depressed, or are growing up to be depressed, anxious individuals.

Even children who perform exceedingly well in academics, could be crumbling with self-doubt on the inside. Or, a student with excellent grades in Science could be passionate about the Liberal Arts- but does not have the emotional bandwidth to say so, or to admit it before his/her parents and teachers, and can thus get cast into a lifetime of choosing the wrong path and being unhappy with it. Cyber bullying, social media, and peer pressure, instead of decreasing with the progress of our times has seen a steady increase: directly impacting the mental health of developing, sensitive minds, and obstructing their growth and journey to being a wholesome individual.

The importance of mental health should not just be restricted to 'bringing the best out of the student or child' in terms of performance, be it academic or extra-curricular. Rather, it should be centred on trying to mould children into well-rounded, self-assured and secure personalities, so that they succeed in not just professional, but also in their personal lives. Through our volume dedicated to the mental health awareness and holistic development, The Progressive Teacher seeks to re-define the terms success, wellness, and development. Success entails many things- not just a stable career, or even a conventional way of life. Success could mean various things for various people- which is why off-beat careers such as travel writing, public welfare, decorative and performative arts are gaining momentum and popularity in India and in the rest of the world. People are breaking out of their shells and exploring the roads not taken, in the quest for happiness. However, if certain inner-work is done for an individual at a formative age, then the hassle of breaking out of one cycle, and then adopting a different path can be avoided- the pains, turmoil, and struggles associated with the process can be avoided if we teach our children from the very outset to follow their hearts, and as educators instill in them the courage and discipline to do so in a systematic way, and teach them life-skills at a school-level so that they are in touch with their individuality. Once this is achieved, perhaps the world will be a happier place and India won't have a low rank on the Happiness Index!

In this volume, we have curated articles from the best among the best: mental health experts, educationists, teachers, career mentors, counsellors, psychologists, and guides. We hope you enjoy this issue and it helps in widening the average perspective of mental health among children.

**Sonal Khurana**  
Publisher



The next issue of  
The Progressive Teacher  
will focus on  
**INTEGRATING  
ART EDUCATION  
IN SCHOOLS**

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Help our kids cross the finish line with finesse

# SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE: AN ESSENTIAL FACTOR FOR WELLBEING

The phase of childhood and adolescence can be considered to be a critical stage in life. During this time, individuals are yet to completely discover themselves and their surroundings, and at the same time are preparing themselves to set their footings outside the safe environs of their family and homes.

► Saif R. Farooqi



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Saif has also been involved in writing psychology-based articles on his blogs for more than ten years. He writes about relationships, individual differences, communication, emotions, mental health, and paranormal activity on his blog *Life and Psychology*.

In addition to this, the fast-paced life of urban centres, which involve advancement in technology, consumerism, and social distance, the phase of childhood and adolescence often ends up being in a state of confusion and vulnerability. This state of confusion and vulnerability makes them susceptible to a wide range of social and psychological issues, which if not dealt with, timely, may lead to severe mental health problems. It is here where the notion of social-emotional competence comes into play.

**Social-emotional competence** is the capacity to recognize and understand emotions, solve problems effectively, and establish and maintain positive relationships with others. The idea of social-emotional competence has emerged from the widely popular concept of emotional intelligence, which was first introduced by the social psychologist Peter Salovey and the personality psychologist John Mayer. It was later extended and further popularized by author and science journalist Daniel Goleman. Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand one's own and others' emotions, and managing relationships. It has been properly defined as the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior. It involves self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills.

Social-emotional competence enables individuals to deal effectively with the various social and emotional difficulties that they may experience, making them well adjusted, psychologically healthy, and moving towards the direction of personal growth and wellbeing. Individuals may differ in their capacity with respect to social-emotional competence. The good part is that it can be learned. Specific skills can be developed within children and adolescents to make them high on social-emotional competence.

One important skill for social-emotional competence is *self-awareness*. Self-awareness is focusing attention on internal self-aspects such as thoughts, feelings, emotion, changes in mood, and external self-aspects like appearance. It helps in understanding one's internal states and how they relate to the surroundings. Self-awareness is thus a deep understanding of oneself, which has been found to be helpful in many ways.

In this regard, self-awareness gives a realization of an individual's strengths and weaknesses. Realization of strengths and weaknesses gives





an understanding of the true potential, which gives proper direction in life. It gives a good understanding of where one stands with respect to the surroundings. This in turn prepares the individual to deal with the uncertainties and unpredictabilities of life, and helps them to cope effectively with the stress related to that. The positive psychologist Martin Seligman suggests that knowing one's strengths and weaknesses leads to psychological wellbeing. A realization of one's strengths enables to play along those strengths, which according to Seligman leads to a meaningful and highly satisfying life.

Self-awareness also helps in understanding how unique a person is as compared to others. This goes along the idea of the psychoanalyst Alfred Adler, who suggested that every individual is unique, and that the uniqueness of individuals should be emphasized.

It is the understanding of this uniqueness that helps individuals to deal with emotional problems that he or she may face. The idea of being unique enables individuals not to fall trap in making meaningless social comparisons. It gives an understanding that everyone has their own abilities and that they do not have to be good in everything.

The social psychologist, Leon Festinger suggests that individuals have a tendency of social comparison - individuals evaluate

themselves by comparing them to others. Social comparison is an incorrect and inadequate way of evaluating oneself. When students compare themselves to others, then it can give them a negative picture about themselves. This may create some kind of confusion among the students and lead them to evaluate themselves as someone who is unworthy. This tendency, especially among children and adolescents, due to their vulnerability and emotional immaturity, has the potential to accentuate their mental health issues.

Indulging in social comparisons often makes them view themselves as inferior to others. Not having the latest mobile phone, not having those branded clothes, or not being that confident, for instance, are things that individuals may feel after social comparisons, giving rise to feelings of inferiority and emotional instability. Therefore, the idea of uniqueness by Adler enables individuals not to indulge in social comparisons, and rather believe in themselves, which further helps in developing better mental health.

Extending the idea of uniqueness, Adler proposes the concept of compensation. According to Adler, if an individual feels inferior in one aspect of life, he or she could compensate that by strengthening themselves in other aspects of life. This further asserts the notion that everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses.

“

One important skill for social-emotional competence is self-awareness. Self-awareness is focusing attention on internal self-aspects such as thoughts, feelings, emotion, changes in mood, and external self-aspects like appearance. It helps in understanding one's internal states and how they relate to the surroundings. Self-awareness is thus a deep understanding of oneself, which has been found to be helpful in many ways.

“  
 Forgiveness is a replacement of the negative thoughts, feelings, and emotions with that of positive thoughts, feelings, and emotions. It is also a reduction in the negative motivations such as revenge and avoidance, which leads to a motivation to forgive the transgressor. This suggests that forgiveness is a process that involves a reduction in the negativity associated with the transgressor. The individual goes through a transition from the initial phase of being hurt to an alleviation of the pain from the hurtful event.”

Everyone does not necessarily have to be good in everything and that people cannot be compared on the same parameters.

A student who feels that he or she is not good in studies can be good in sports, or a student who feels that he or she may not be good in physical activities such as sports can be good in creativity. An individual who feels that he or she is not a good conversationalist can develop good in writing skills. A person who feels he or she is not that attractive might focus on being more of a good human being rather than just focusing on looks.

Compensation, therefore, helps individuals to cope well with their feelings of inferiority, which makes them deal with all kinds of insecurities and emotional instability. All this becomes highly significant in developing high social and emotional competence.

With respect to individuals having their own strengths and abilities, the educational psychologist, Howard Gardner talks about having *multiple intelligences*. He suggests that intelligence is too complex to be represented by the simplistic IQ, which has been found to be more associated with academic abilities. Gardner suggests that intelligence is too restricted and simplistic if viewed only in terms of IQ. He, thus, in his theory of multiple intelligences suggests of nine different types of intelligences.

These intelligences are linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, and existential. *Linguistic intelligence* is the ability to communicate well, orally or in writing. *Logical-mathematical intelligence* is the capacity to use numbers effectively, to learn higher mathematics and to handle complex logical arguments. *Spatial intelligence* is the ability to perceive the visual-spatial world accurately and to perform transformations upon those perceptions. *Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence* is the ability to use one's physical body well. *Musical intelligence* is the capacity to perceive, discriminate, transform, and express musical forms. *Interpersonal intelligence* is the ability to sense other's feelings and be in tune with others. *Intrapersonal intelligence* includes self-knowledge, having an accurate picture of oneself, and the ability to understand one's own body and mind. *Naturalistic intelligence* is the ability to understand different species, recognize patterns in nature, and classify natural objects. *Existential intelligence* is the capacity to locate oneself with respect to such existential features of the human condition such as the significance of life, and the meaning of death.

According to Gardner, every individual has all of these intelligences in varying degrees. Individuals are high in only few of these intelligences, not all them. A combination of these intelligences reflects the potential

of the individual. An understanding of these intelligences can give proper direction towards where one should head to. Therefore, the realization that there are more than one intelligences coupled with the identification of a combination of specific intelligences that one is more inclined towards, helps to a great extent in self-realization and purpose in life.

Another important aspect of social-emotional competence is self-esteem. *Self-esteem* is said to be the worth that an individual assigns to himself or herself. It is about how positively or negatively a person may feel about themselves. It is a self-evaluation that an individual makes based on his or her perception, personal experiences, as well as others opinion.

Self-esteem is said to be one of the most significant attitudes that one may have. It plays an important role in wellbeing, adjustment, and happiness. Depending on whether self-esteem is high or low, it may have varying consequences on the individual.

*High self-esteem* has been found to be associated with better happiness, fewer interpersonal problems, the ability to sustain positive relationships, being less susceptible to social pressure, and being more consistent in achievement. On the other hand, low self-esteem has been found to be associated with being more prone to psychological problems such as depression and anxiety. They often face difficulties in interpersonal relationships, and are more reactive to the ups and downs of life.

Therefore, high *self-esteem* plays an important role in developing social and emotional competence. It enables individuals to handle stressful situations in an effective manner and cope well with psychological difficulties.

A part of any individual's life involves day to day interactions with a wide range of people. While interacting with all kinds of people, it is very much possible that certain disagreements may arise, giving rise to conflicts. Disagreements, in a way, are a good sign, as they are indicating diverse perspectives. However, if that leads to being stressed out, causing emotional problems, and even comes in the way of accomplishing the larger goals, then it needs to be taken care of. Thus, dealing with conflict or *conflict management* becomes important. Especially, in times of globalization and multiculturalism, the skill of conflict management becomes very useful.

Depending on the situation, different conflict management styles can be used. In avoiding style of conflict management, the individual passively ignores the issue, wherein the relationship is maintained, but somewhere the conflict remains unresolved. In accommodating style of conflict management, the individual passively gives in to the other person, ignoring one's needs and going along with the other ones. In forcing style of





conflict management, the individual aggressively gets his or her own way. The person may seem to be uncooperative, but caters to his or her own needs, and decision is made easily.

In the negotiating style of conflict management, the individual is being assertive, using give-and-take concessions. In this, the decision is made quickly, and relationships are also maintained. However, the decision made may not be the best possible one, which is why this is also called the compromising style of conflict management. Finally, in the collaborative style of conflict management, the individual is being assertive to jointly resolve the conflict with the best possible solution. This is also called the problem-solving style.

All the conflict management styles can be used, depending on the appropriateness and requirements of the situation. The collaborating style, however, is the most difficult, as it involves a lot of cooperation, and there is a will to get the best solution.

Due to many of the disagreements leading to conflicts, often it may all lead to a lot of anger, resentment, and other negative emotions. These negative emotions may even get exacerbated to the extent of leading to severe mental health problems. In such cases, apart from conflict management styles, in the long run, the ability to forgive becomes very useful.

Forgiveness, contrary to popular beliefs, does not in any way mean that the harmful event or

transgression is not acknowledged and that it is completely forgotten. It also does not in any way imply ignoring the transgression or denying it. Forgiveness is rather a way of coming to terms with the harmful event and trying to put oneself in a better frame of mind and has nothing to do with trying to benefit the transgressor.

Forgiveness is a replacement of the negative thoughts, feelings, and emotions with that of positive thoughts, feelings, and emotions. It is also a reduction in the negative motivations such as revenge and avoidance, which leads to a motivation to forgive the transgressor. This suggests that forgiveness is a process that involves a reduction in the negativity associated with the transgressor. The individual goes through a transition from the initial phase of being hurt to an alleviation of the pain from the hurtful event.

The reduction of negativity and alleviation of pain involved in forgiveness gives an indication that the individual goes through some positive changes from the initial phase of being hurt. These positive changes prove to be beneficial for an individual when it comes to both mental and physical health. It plays a role in reducing stress, depression, anxiety, and high blood pressure.

Not just forgiving others, but self-forgiveness also turns out to be very beneficial. Especially, adolescents due to their vulnerability, may often become too guilt-ridden for indulging in activities that may be considered inappropriate.

“

**Critical thinking also involves the idea of not always being right and accepting that one can be wrong, and that there is nothing wrong in changing one's perspective and beliefs according to more reliable and accurate information. This is what in fact makes a person grow. It is about not always being guided by emotions and rather taking more of a rationalistic and skeptic perspective when making judgments.**



They may be constantly blamed and shamed for things, which can turn out to be a huge burden for them, leading them to put themselves under a lot of pressure and experience heightened levels of stress. In such cases, being involved self-forgiving helps in a great deal to let go of all the negativity, and move on towards a more positive direction in life.

Dealing with a wide range of issues and problems, right from a very young age, becomes very challenging. A good way to deal with these challenges is to have creativity. Creativity is the ability to produce something that is novel as well as useful and appropriate.

Creativity may not be necessarily confined to a particular task. Being creative can also be helpful in many other aspects of everyday life. A student may like to do things in his or her own unique and creative style depending on his or her own comfort level and satisfaction. Rather than doing things or being forced to follow the old conventional style, a creative approach will not only be more satisfying, it will also enhance his or her abilities.

Creativity can also be helpful in using decision making and problem solving, regarding various aspects of life. Instead of making the same regular, stereotypical decisions, a student may make creative decisions that suit him or her. In this way, a student can make important as well as appropriate decisions of his or her life, especially with respect to careers and other future prospects. Thus, creativity can be a very important factor in determining social and emotional competence.

When it comes to problem solving, decision making, and making sense of the world around, the highly important skill of critical thinking comes into play. Critical thinking is the ability to not always believe in the given, in what is stereotypical, and what seems obvious. Critical thinking is about always doubting, questioning, and challenging one's ideas and beliefs, even the deepest of beliefs. It involves not accepting any information as a given, even from the most

trusted individuals or the highest of authorities, and looking at multiple facets of the same information, before coming to any kind of conclusion.

Critical thinking also involves the idea of not always being right and accepting that one can be wrong, and that there is nothing wrong in changing one's perspective and beliefs according to more reliable and accurate information. This is what in fact makes a person grow. It is about not always being guided by emotions and rather taking more of a rationalistic and skeptic perspective when making judgments.

Reality, especially in today's time, when all kinds of information are easily available, can often be misconstrued. This distortion of reality, tends to misguide adolescents, giving them a picture of the world that exists only on the surface level. However, truth lies in much beneath the surface.

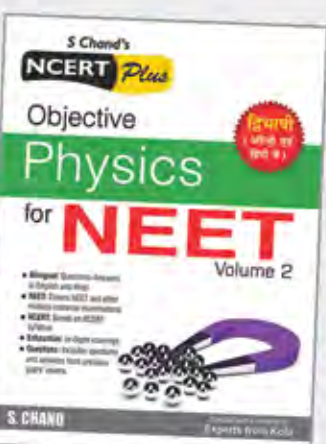
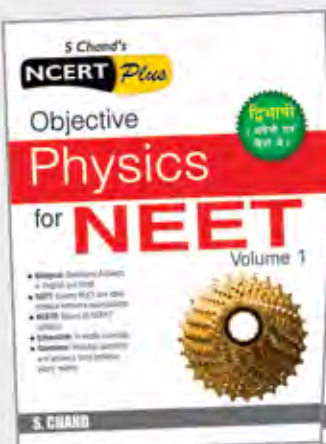
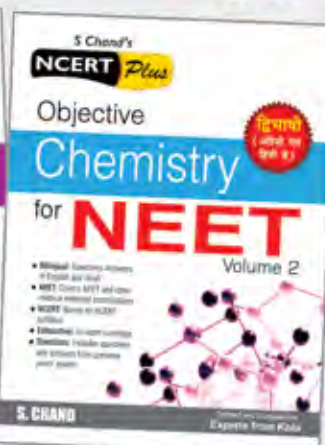
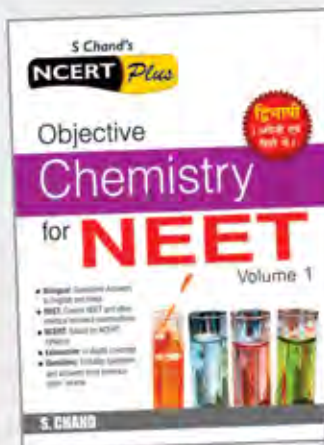
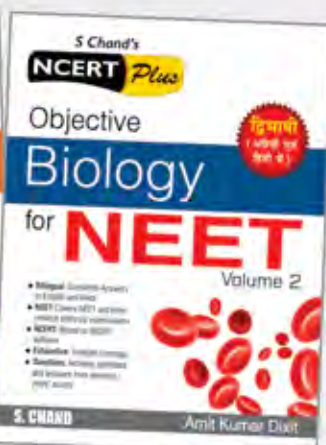
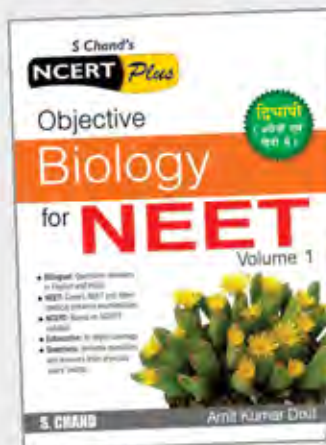
It is the ability of critical thinking that helps individuals to dig in deep into the multi-layered reality and reach out the truth. In this way, critical thinking gives a very realistic perspective about life in general, which helps individuals to see through all the distortions, misperceptions, misinformation, so that they make proper judgments, enabling them to move in the right direction.

Social-emotional competence plays a significant role in wellbeing. It comprises of various aspects such as self-awareness, the idea of uniqueness, self-esteem, conflict management, forgiveness, creativity, and critical thinking. Together, all these aspects of social-emotional competence help the individual to be well-integrated, function coherently, deal effectively with social and psychological issues, develop effective coping mechanisms, being effective in problem solving, judgment, and decision making, have satisfying and fulfilling interpersonal relationships, make significant contributions in the community and society, and living a meaningful life. ■



Dealing with a wide range of issues and problems, right from a very young age, becomes very challenging. A good way to deal with these challenges is to have creativity. Creativity is the ability to produce something that is novel as well as useful and appropriate.



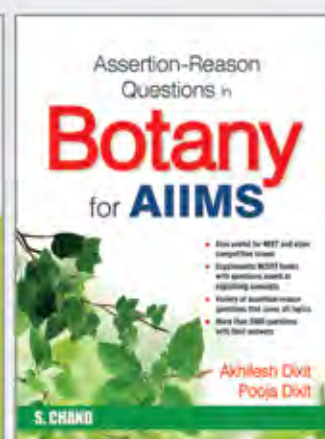
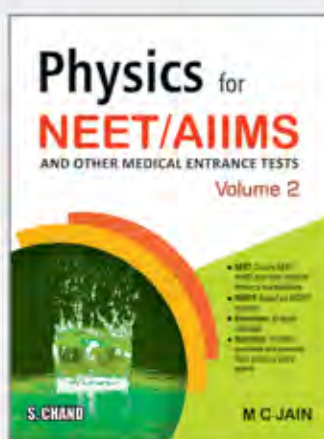
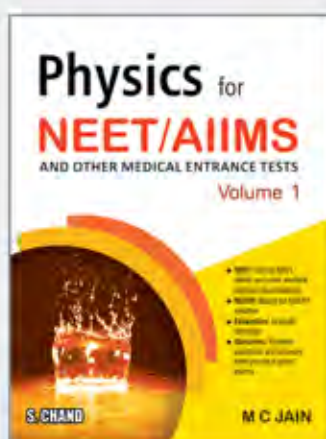


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# WHAT COUNTS AS SUCCESS FOR A CHILD?

How does one measure values such as empathy, kindness and resilience? What happens when we measure the wrong things that have no bearing on how well our young people are empowered to live meaningful, purposeful and flourishing lives?

► By Mick Walsh



*Mick Walsh has been a leading and innovative Positive Education author, educator and speaker across Australasia and internationally for many years. As a highly experienced former college leader and an avid researcher of positive psychology, he created and authored the Learning Curve Positive Education and Wellbeing program, which is used in numerous schools across the globe. All of the strategies and activities in the program, are underpinned by evidence-based research.*

I have reason to believe that in today's date, adults, educators and administrators, have forgotten what childhood entails! Data has become more valued than wellbeing. It seems that the only things that count are the things that can be counted. And what's more, they only value what they measure. How does one measure values such as empathy, kindness and resilience? What happens when we measure the wrong things that have no bearing on how well our young people are empowered to live meaningful, purposeful and flourishing lives? The consequences of this approach which we are seeing today are escalations in adolescent mental health and teacher burnout rates, in an attempt to balance out multiple demands. Add to all this modern predicament of social media and gaming, and our students' mental wellbeing is further compromised.

However, at the end of this tunnel too there is a beaming light!

At numerous parent-teacher and leaderships forums I conduct across Australasia, I often ask attendees to describe how they prefer their children and students to act like, look like, sound like, and their answers are invariably the same. They say that they want them to be happy, confident, and resilient, know right from wrong, respectful, diligent, perceptive, compassionate, kind, independent thinkers, enthusiastic, curious, persistent, welcome challenges, self-aware, self-disciplined, creative, and empathetic, have courage to stretch them to make mistakes and then be prepared to learn better ways to fix them. What a wonderful image they have in their minds of their sons, daughters and students. Now I will share effective and meaningful approaches that can turn this image to reality.

Over the last two decades, one while I was a college leader, and the other as a wellbeing author/speaker travelling Australasia, I have strived to address the holistic development of young people, to immunise them somewhat from the 21st century addictive pressures of social media, gaming and the mental health issues associated with those and academic aspirations. To this end, I created the Learning Curve Wellbeing and Resilience Curriculum, which is underpinned by Seligman's PERMAH model of wellbeing.

Doing comes before becoming. So, let's explore this model to learn how it can be used to support our efforts.

## **PERMAH+ Positive Emotions+ Gratitude.**

To quote Barbara Fredrickson, the world renowned expert on positive emotions, "it is the frequency of positive emotions, not their intensity, which best build our wellbeing." They affect "how we think, what we pay attention to, our relationships" and many aspects of our life (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener). So, in a school context, it is healthy for students to experience their full



range of human emotions (Ciarocchi & Tal Ben Shahar). To enable this, we need to deliberately establish greeting expectations of smiling and saying hello, listening empathetically with our eyes, ears and hearts alike, saying sorry, being kind, forgiving others etc. These may seem like little things, but they are qualities that build socially and emotionally resilient young people. To enjoy a healthy state of wellbeing, we need a ratio of about 4:1 positives to negatives in our daily lives (Losada & Fredrickson), and we need to work very hard to accomplish this. Especially, when many societies around the world struggle to go beyond even 2:1. For example, an excellent way to achieve this, in addition to the weekly wellbeing activities, is to have Strengths for Relationships Weeks during week 5 of each term. Over the four terms we explore Gratitude, Teamwork, Kindness and Leadership. You may choose other strengths to focus on, just ensure that the activity is across the whole school; you can feel the positive emotions pumping through the school on such weeks.

Positive Priming fills students with positive

emotions, so start every lesson with the Fabulous First Five Minutes, by asking students in pairs to discuss a question such as, explore when are times you told your friends clearly and firmly that you didn't want to do something? Or, what body language do you use to show that you believe in yourself? The most important thing to impress on our school population is that the greatest source of positive emotions comes from believing and showing that other people matter.

## PERMAH+ - Engagement + Mindfulness.

Young people in the 21st century are comfortable being connected to everyone else, but how often do they engage and connect with themselves? Their attention is fragmented from the constant interruptions of social media, and they crave the short term feel good hits which come from dopamine when their phones ding. To engage with them and just be, we need to guide them to disconnect for a while by doing mindfulness activities such as the one opposite.

Also, the most interested and engaged

# PERMAH+ ELEMENTS OF WELLBEING

Knowing about and talking about wellbeing isn't enough to grow, you must do. There is no single factor which shows how healthy your state of wellbeing is. Rather, it is a combination of the six equally important elements below, which you can develop in yourself by doing the activities and journaling/writing down your thoughts in this planner/journal.

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| <b>POSITIVE EMOTION + GRATITUDE</b> – to create and enjoy positive emotions, handle negative emotions and be grateful for how these benefit your mental and physical wellbeing, respectful relationships and personal and academic growth. <table border="1"> <tr> <td>What do you do to self-generate positive emotions?</td> <td>What are three things you are grateful for in life?</td> </tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> | What do you do to self-generate positive emotions?          | What are three things you are grateful for in life?       |  |  |  |  |  |  | <b>MEANING + PURPOSE</b> – to identify and have a purpose in life bigger than yourself and to show other people and our planet matters, to build your life satisfaction to live meaningfully. <table border="1"> <tr> <td>What is something larger than you which is meaningful?</td> <td>What is your purpose which drives your efforts?</td> </tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>                                    | What is something larger than you which is meaningful?     | What is your purpose which drives your efforts?           |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| <b>ENGAGEMENT + MINDFULNESS</b> – to live your life with curiosity, zest and interest by having a focus on accomplishing your goals, and involving yourself fully in your passions to grow your state of wellbeing. <table border="1"> <tr> <td>What is something you passionately engage with?</td> <td>What do you do to notice things to connect with yourself?</td> </tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>                     | What is something you passionately engage with?             | What do you do to notice things to connect with yourself? |  |  |  |  |  |  | <b>ACCOMPLISHMENT + OPTIMISM</b> – to have optimism and hope for the future by setting, striving for and accomplishing personal goals, and feeling positive emotions through your efforts to deliberately practise. <table border="1"> <tr> <td>What are goals that you are determined to achieve?</td> <td>What things give you optimism and hope for the future?</td> </tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>           | What are goals that you are determined to achieve?         | What things give you optimism and hope for the future?    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| <b>RELATIONSHIPS + EMPATHY</b> – to develop the social and emotional skills to build and maintain respectful and caring relationships with others and yourself and grow your resilience to mental health issues. <table border="1"> <tr> <td>What expectations do you have for respectful relationships?</td> <td>What do you do to show that other people matter?</td> </tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>                     | What expectations do you have for respectful relationships? | What do you do to show that other people matter?          |  |  |  |  |  |  | <b>HEALTH + STRENGTHS</b> – to use your strengths to develop habits which will enable your thriving mental and physical health, support your learning progress and reduce the likelihood of disease later in life. <table border="1"> <tr> <td>What are your healthy exercise, eating and mindset habits?</td> <td>What are your top five strengths and how do you use them?</td> </tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> | What are your healthy exercise, eating and mindset habits? | What are your top five strengths and how do you use them? |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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Acknowledgment: P - Lyubomirsky, King & Diener; E - Harter & Csikszentmihalyi; R - Norris, Robinson & Williams; M - Cohen, Borki & Diener; A - Finkelhor, Skowron, H - Harter, Robinson & Williams

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Over the four terms we explore Gratitude, Teamwork, Kindness and Leadership. You may choose other strengths to focus on, just ensure that the activity is across the whole school; you can feel the positive emotions pumping through the school on such weeks.

# Why Show Empathy?

Studies have shown that it is the **frequency** of positive emotions that builds our and others' wellbeing, not their intensity. This creates feelings of hope and optimism for the future in everyone. (Barbara Fredrickson)

Showing **empathy** for the needs and feelings of others and communicating that you understand and accept these things:

- enables feelings of social connectedness in them, which is the greatest factor in building their wellbeing
- creates in them a belief that they can make a positive change in their own lives
- indicates that you care and believe that they matter, because they do
- broadens their attention and engagement to their situation, boosting their mindfulness
- fills both you and them with positive emotions, building wellbeing all round.

When **listening** to others' concerns, seek first to understand how they feel by listening to their words attentively. Beware of listening to your possible judgemental self-talk about their situation; it's not about you, it's about them.

Showing **empathy** is about listening and connecting, not about suggesting solutions. Your interest and positive attitudes are contagious and will rub off to empower them find their own solutions. When they are ready, they will ask you for your thoughts on what they intend to do.

**Thinking Tool**

**THREE JOYS**

1. Do I listen to others?  
☐ Usually ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not Yet

2. Communicate that I understand and accept their situation?  
☐ Usually ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not Yet

3. Resist judgemental self-talk when they are telling me about their concerns?  
☐ Usually ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not Yet

4. Let them know through my body language that they matter to me?  
☐ Usually ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not Yet

Ask yourself:

- Do I listen to others?  
☐ Usually ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not Yet
- Communicate that I understand and accept their situation?  
☐ Usually ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not Yet
- Resist judgemental self-talk when they are telling me about their concerns?  
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- Let them know through my body language that they matter to me?  
☐ Usually ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not Yet

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## PERMAH+ - Relationships + Empathy.

Is their anything in the world more important than relationships? I think not. For all of us, "like food and air, we seem to need social relationships to thrive" (Diener & Biswas-Diener). The evolving over reliance in the 21st century of communicating electronically via devices, rather than by face to face in person conversations is creating several concerning issues. Firstly, over 90% of what we communicate, we do so through body language, voice tones and expressions. Young people unfortunately, are not having sufficient in person experiences to learn these vital skills. I would suggest that you ban mobile phones at school, to enable person to person conversations to exist. It will be tough at first, but persist. After about a month, the beauty of human interaction, will be flourishing throughout the school.

Secondly, humans are hard wired to be at our best when working and cooperating with other people side by side. Since our ancestors this has occurred, and when we do so, two of the most powerful feel good brain chemicals are released, those being, serotonin and oxytocin. Students experience serotonin when the feel other people think they matter. They experience oxytocin when they feel empathy, loved and cared about. Social media can't do this.

Activities such as the one opposite provide students with opportunities to converse, share feedback, watch, read and send body language messages and practise voice tones and welcoming facial expressions. Welcoming students as they enter class and asking discuss with your partner – when are times you have enjoyed quality relationships with each of your teachers? Or, when have you been a positive role model for other students in class with your teachers?

"Relationships are the best antidote to the downs of life, and the single most reliable up" (Seligman). If children and adolescents feel included and accepted, particularly by a larger peer group, they are more likely to feel positive about themselves (Berndt & Hartup).

## PERMAH+ - Meaning + Purpose.

Having a sense purpose in life is linked to having more resilience, an ability to bounce back despite difficulty, and the ability to pursue goals despite hardships (McKnight & Kashdan). A major risk factor for young people in mental health is not having a sense of purpose, or something bigger than themselves that adds meaning to their lives. A great sense of purpose is knowing and expressing that other people matter. One of the best ways to build students' (and our) wellbeing is to give of themselves to make others' lives better. They don't have to be big things, just little hellos, smiles, nods, winks

Any activity which has pattern, repetition and control, can be used as a mindfulness activity when concentrated on fully. Also, create a ten minute session each day called Genius Time, to ask the class questions such as, discuss with your partner – What do you want other people to experience when they meet you?

adolescents tend to have an internal locus of control. That is, they feel as though they are in control of their actions and circumstances (Hunter & Csikszentmihalyi.)

An effective, yet very simple way to flush excess cortisol from their (and our) systems, which is produced by the frequent fight or flight reactions they experience due to the above pressures, is to connect with just themselves and colour in for ten minutes. Any activity which has pattern, repetition and control, can be used as a mindfulness activity when concentrated on fully. Also, create a ten minute session each day called Genius Time, to ask the class questions such as, discuss with your partner – What do you want other people to experience when they meet you? Or, when are times you have increased the difficulty of what you practise and what happened? These questions stimulate interest in students. When they are fully engaged in an activity, powerful brain chemicals are released into their systems producing natural highs, cultivating a love of learning in them.

The combined strategies required to nurture mindful engagement in the classroom, are positive priming to broaden and build attention, clear learning intentions and purpose, clear and immediate feedback and a balance between the challenge and the students' skills (Csikszentmihályi, Abuhamdeh & Nakamura).



## Finding Ikigai



What is your personal ikigai for getting out of bed each morning?

Acknowledgement: Nakanishi

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and generally just showing that they care. And from little things, big things grow.

### PERMAH+ - Accomplishment + Optimism.

The accomplishment of worthwhile goals has been found to lead to positive emotions and well-being (Sheldon). The feel good brain chemical we experience when we achieve something we have worked for is dopamine. And the harder we worked and the more grit we showed, the greater

the natural hit of dopamine. But something big has changed in today's school environment.

21st century students get a hit of dopamine every time their phones ding. Why strive and struggle to accomplish something to feel dopamine, when they just have to wait for their phones to supply them with it. One thing though, the surge of dopamine from long term efforts to accomplish a goal, is much greater than the little phone hits.

How do we get this through to our students?

“

Welcoming students as they enter class and asking discuss with your partner – when are times you have enjoyed quality relationships with each of your teachers? Or, when have you been a positive role model for other students in class with your teachers?

As per the New Curriculum published by the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations for the Upper Primary Level

Author  
**Gita Duggal**  
Consultant Editor  
**Baruna Ray Chowdhury**

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# Mindset Movers

Today and onwards are times to explore ourselves. We are our students and our own most valuable assets.

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| <p><i>"Reality is merely our brain's relative understanding of the world based on where and how we are observing it."</i></p> <p><small>Acknowledgement: Sanja Lyubomirsky</small></p> <p><b>Do you believe</b> you can change this perspective at any moment?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>  | <p><i>All of us possess an evolutionary negativity bias to look for threats and what is wrong with things.</i></p> <p><small>Acknowledgement: The Peninsula School</small></p> <p><b>Do you believe</b> you can contest this negativity bias with the mindful use of your top character strengths and positive self-talk?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><b>What's so bad about feeling good?</b></p> | <p><i>We all possess mirror neurons which imitate the moods, expressions and feelings of those around us.</i></p> <p><small>Acknowledgement: University of Parma</small></p> <p><b>A question:</b> Are you becoming your students or are your students becoming you? One of these is true.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>  |
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we need to do is to teach students how to contest negative mind chatter, which comes from our human evolutionary negativity bias. Introduce the structure of positive self-talk, which is I can and I will ..... statements. For example, I can improve my fitness and I will get up and exercise four mornings this week. Unhealthy eating and not exercising stem directly from yielding to our negative mind chatter. Overcome it through deliberate and purposeful positive self-talk.

Ask them to set three goals every term. Goals give them hope and optimism that they can influence their own futures. To be self-determined to achieve each goal, ask them to identify possible obstacles, how they will overcome them, what they need to learn and which of their strengths they will need to use (Snyder).

To teach students to be self-determined, we need to cultivate in them a sense of autonomy, a sense of competence and a sense of connectedness (Ryan & Deci).

## PERMAH+ Health + Strengths.

Being healthy is essentially our capacity to successfully adapt and manage physical, social and emotional challenges as they occur (World Health Organisation). The emergence of electronic leisure, gaming and social media have reduced students' available time to enjoy the outdoors exercising and have had a negative impact on both their physical and mental health. Mental health has a profound effect on students' physical health (Hassed). Having a similar adverse effect are diets of processed and junk foods.

I believe that the mind-body connection is the lynch pin for students to enjoy a resilient state of all round health. And this relies very much on their mindsets. Do they feel that they can influence their own health, or do they feel it is out of their hands? The first thing we need to teach students is how to change their thinking when they experience events.

The second thing we need to do is to teach students how to contest negative mind chatter, which comes from our human evolutionary negativity bias. Introduce the structure of positive self-talk, which is I can and I will ..... statements. For example, I can improve my fitness and I will get up and exercise four mornings this week. Unhealthy eating and not exercising stem directly from yielding to our negative mind chatter. Overcome it through deliberate and purposeful positive self-talk.

Joy loves joy and misery loves misery. Thirdly, teach students that they have mirror neurons, which imitate the mood and feelings of those around them. Encourage them to mix with optimistic people.



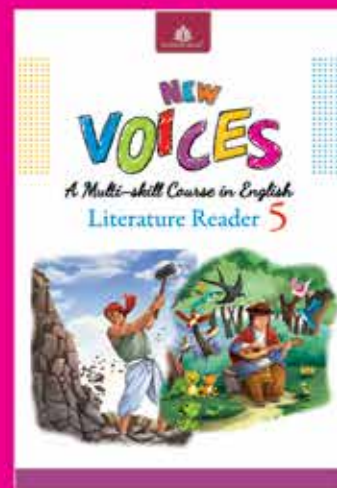
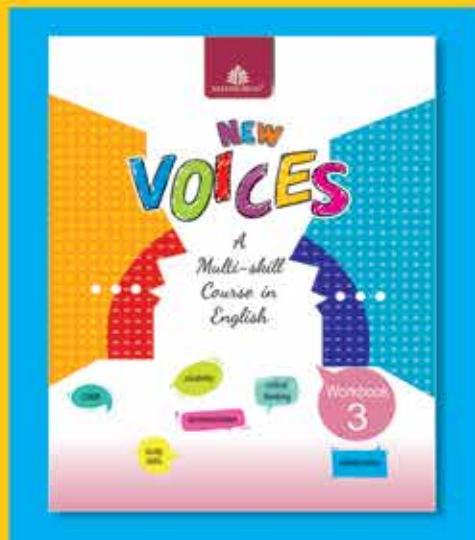
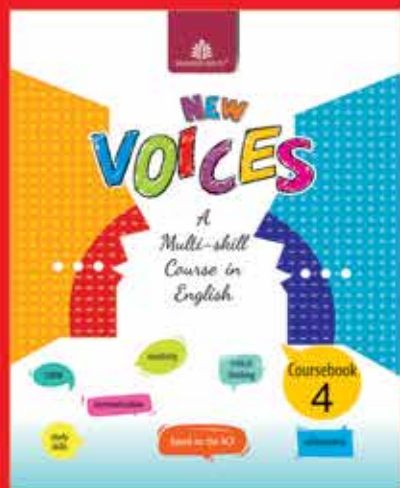
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- Life Skills integrated with lesson themes enabling learners to relate to real-life situations

Tags

**TBL** Task-Based Learning activities present learners with real life situations within the classroom.

**CL** Cross-curricular Links weave cross-curricular references through the chapters.

**LS** Life Skills are enhanced through challenging texts and value-based concept checking questions (CCQs).



Teacher's Resources

# ROLE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN

Moderate stress can be introduced in many ways: by playing unfamiliar music before class, for example, or changing up the format of discussion, or introducing any learning activity that requires individual participation or movement. However, not everyone reacts the same way to any given event. The production of cortisol in response to an event varies significantly between individuals; what constitutes “moderate stress” for one person might constitute mild or extreme stress for another.



Deepak Singi is presently working as the Principal for Eicher School Parwanoo and has been an educator for the last 20 years. Mr Singi has been awarded with Fortune 50 Future Leaders by Fortune 50, Most Innovative Educator 2010 by CMS Lucknow, Lifetime Achievement Award by YS Institute of Barnala in 2018-19. Under his leadership, Eicher School Parwanoo has won many accolades and recognition including Future 50 Schools by Fortune 50, Most Innovative School Himachal Pradesh by Mind Mingle, Top 500 Schools of the country by Brainfeed Magazine amongst others.

► By Deepak Singi

## Neuroscience and How Students Learn

The most fascinating evolutionary development in the history of mankind is of the human brain. The Importance of the brain in the life of a human being can be ascertained from the fact that it is the site where the world is perceived and it is also the site through which the world is responded to.

### The Prominent Role Of The Human Brain In Learning

- From the point of view of neurobiology, learning involves changing the brain.
- Moderate stress is beneficial for learning, while mild and extreme stress are detrimental to learning.
- Adequate sleep, nutrition, and exercise encourage robust learning.
- Active learning takes advantage of processes that stimulate multiple neural connections in the brain and promote memory.

## Fundamentals of Neuroscience

Changing the brain: For optimal learning to occur, the brain needs conditions under which it is able to change in response to stimuli (neuroplasticity) and is able to produce new neurons (neurogenesis).

The most effective learning involves recruiting multiple regions of the brain for the learning task. These regions are associated with functions such as memory, the five senses, volitional control, and higher levels of cognitive functioning.

**Moderate stress:** Stress and performance are related in an “inverted U curve” (see figure for reference). Stimulation to learn requires a moderate amount of stress (measured in the level of cortisol). A low degree of stress is associated with low performance, as is high stress, which can set the system into fight-or-flight mode so that there is less brain activity in the cortical areas where higher-level learning happens. Moderate levels of cortisol tend to correlate with the highest performance of tasks of any type. We can therefore conclude that moderate stress is beneficial for learning, while mild and extreme stress both are detrimental to learning.



**Moderate stress can be introduced in many ways:** by playing unfamiliar music before class, for example, or changing up the format of discussion, or introducing any learning activity that requires individual participation or movement. However, not everyone reacts the same way to any given event. The production of cortisol in response to an event varies significantly between individuals; what constitutes “moderate stress” for one person might constitute mild or extreme stress for another. So, for example, cold-calling on individual students in a large-group setting might introduce just the right amount of stress to increase some students’ performance, but it might produce excessive stress and anxiety for other students, so their performance is below the level you know they are capable of. Any group dynamic that tends to stereotype or exclude some students also adds stress to their minds.

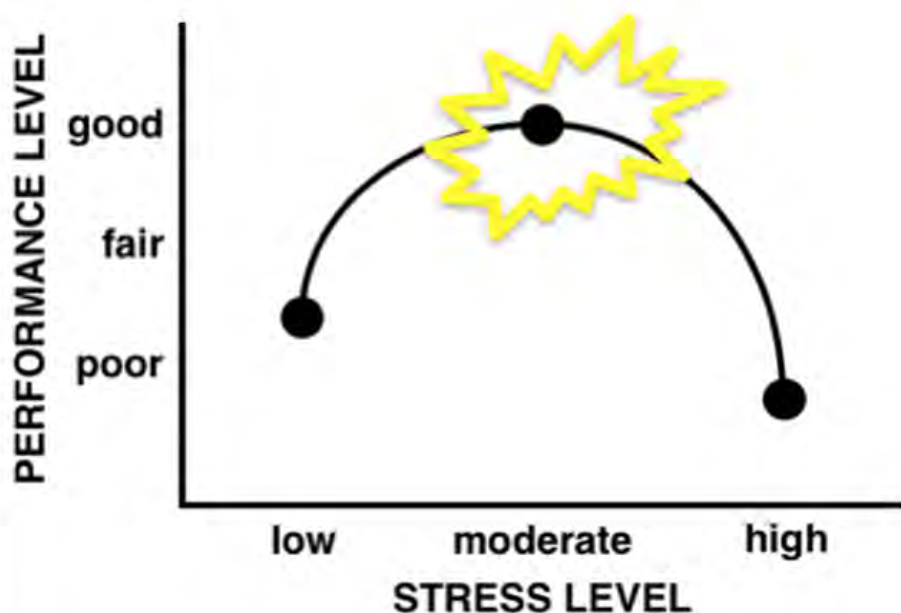


**Adequate sleep, good nutrition, and regular exercise:** These healthy habits promote optimal learning performance in two ways. First, they promote neuroplasticity and neurogenesis. Second, they keep cortisol and dopamine (stress and happiness hormones, respectively) at appropriate levels. All-night cramming sessions, skipped meals, and skipped exercise can actually reduce the brain’s capacity for high academic

performance. This holds true for teachers as well as students.

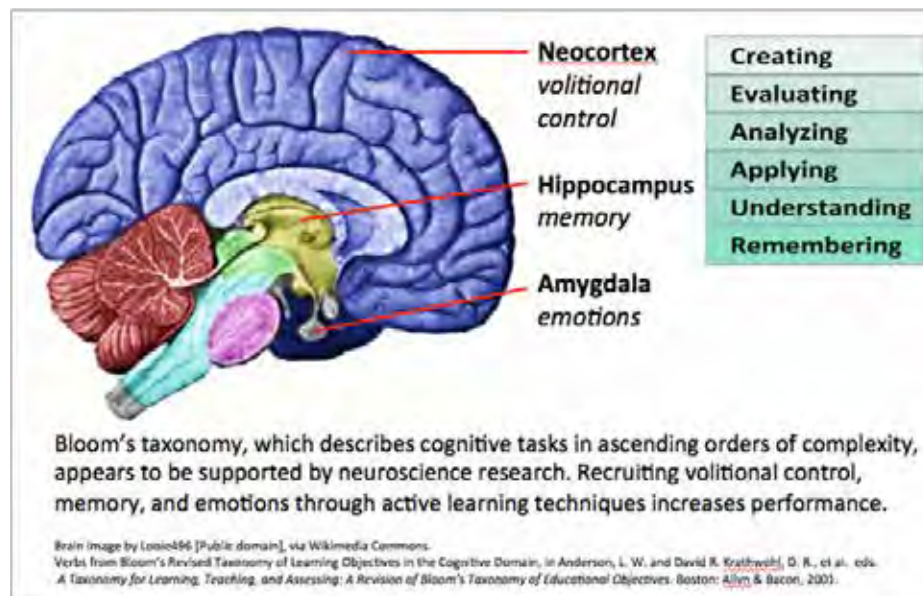
**Active learning:** Cognitive functions associated with the lower levels of Bloom’s taxonomy (see diagram ), such as understanding and remembering, are associated with the hippocampus (the area of the brain responsible for memory and spatial awareness). The higher-level cognitive functions of Bloom’s taxonomy, such as creating, evaluating, analyzing, and

## Classic inverted-U curve



“

The most effective learning involves recruiting multiple regions of the brain for the learning task. These regions are associated with functions such as memory, the five senses, volitional control, and higher levels of cognitive functioning.



“

The most beneficial effect of meditation is to create a distance from the vicissitudes of human brain and not falling prey to storm of emotions and sensory impulses which could elicit unwanted and unhealthy responses from the individual.

applying, involve the cortical areas responsible for decision-making, association, and motivation.

More complex thought processes are more beneficial for learning because they involve a greater number of neural connections and more neurological cross-talk. Active learning takes advantage of this cross-talk, stimulating a variety of areas of the brain and promoting memory.

### EFFECT OF SPIRITUALITY ON MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN

Its scientifically proven now by several researches that spiritual practices like – meditation have positive effects on the health of human brain. Reference can be made to “Vipasanna” meditation which focuses on the witnessing of breathing which ultimately leads

to quieting of the mind.

### MECHANISM OF EFFECTS OF MEDITATION ON MENTAL HEALTH –

When a meditator religiously practice the witnessing of breathing like in Ana-pana (Initial phase of Vipasanna) it takes away the entire consciousness away from the activities and rigmarole of the brain and in effect quieten the mind

The most beneficial effect of meditation is to create a distance from the vicissitudes of human brain and not falling prey to storm of emotions and sensory impulses which could elicit unwanted and unhealthy responses from the individual.

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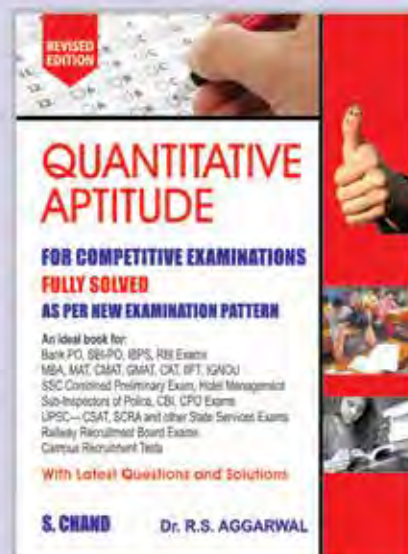


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NOTES



# FOSTERING MENTAL HEALTH: ENSURING MENTAL WELLBEING OF CHILDREN BY SCHOOLS & EDUCATORS

In the World Happiness Report 2019 produced by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions in partnership with the Ernesto Illy Foundation, India ranked 140 on the Cantril ladder. In 2018, India stood at 133. The report, an assessment of “how happy their citizens perceive themselves to be, according to their evaluations of their own lives”, measured the national annual average against six variables including GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom, generosity, and absence of corruption. Finland, Denmark, and Norway lead the list of 156 countries.

► By Rathni R



*Rathni R has worked as an academician and in the non-profit sector with adolescents and young adults. She teaches Psychology and writes on mental health. She has a Masters in Social Work (MSW) from the University of Delhi.*

The state of India's children and adolescents does not suggest a promising future. Of its 430 million children and adolescents, according to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), nearly 50 million Indian children have been diagnosed with mental illnesses and disorders. The number is likely to increase if adolescents are added to the statistics. About 12.5% of children between 0 and 16 years suffer from psychiatric disorders. Among 4-16-year-olds, the percentage remains at 12%. A young population of this magnitude requires consistent intervention and support for its development in terms of physical and mental health. While India's focus has been primarily on physical health – policies on infant health, immunization, and nutrition have been underway under the different incumbent governments. Mental health, particularly child and adolescent mental health, requires measures and strategies for India to tap into the demographic dividend that its children and adolescent represent.

The World Health Organization describes mental health as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.” (WHO 2001a, p.1). Mental health, an important aspect of wellbeing contributes to economic and social benefits at a larger scale; at the level of the individual and community, mental wellbeing brings optimal physical health and positive relationships. In addition to the state and family influencing child mental health, schools and educators are well placed to promote mental and emotional wellbeing.

## What is the Goal of Mental Health?

For schools to understand their role in the promotion of mental wellbeing among children, they must understand their goal. Positive mental health is not the same as not having a mental illness. Additionally, a child's mental health is not standalone rather it is affected by factors that are often outside the control of the child. Factors such as family's socioeconomic wellbeing (poverty, social exclusion, housing instability, and low income), parents' physical and mental health, and chronic stress can impede normative development. Children with mental illnesses may show one or more of the following – behavioural or conduct disorders, developmental disorders, and emotional disorders. In all





these circumstances, children are particularly vulnerable and if not successfully improved, may carry the mental health difficulties throughout their adult lives.

The question that begs an answer is what kind of mental health we want for our children? What do practices for improving mental health look like? According to Samuel R. Laycock, a mentally healthy individual has three main characteristics:

1. She has self-respect and awareness of her shortcomings.
2. She is able to maintain healthy relationships that are she is interested in others, has the ability to trust others, and can be part of a group when necessary.
3. Lastly, she is able to deal with problems, make decisions, and set goals. She is aware of her responsibilities and is not overwhelmed by her emotions

It must be acknowledged that the objective of education is not only imparting arithmetic, language, reading, and writing to the child. According to Robert L. Sutherland of the Hogg Foundation for Mental Hygiene, education has the task to teach children and adolescents to live life well. And, schools are the most prominent spaces for programs pertaining to positive mental health.

Certain other goals may include the child's need for independence, affection, belonging, achievement, and recognition. Drawing from the American psychologist Abraham Maslow's

Theory of Needs (1943), a child also requires healthy self-esteem and a sense of personal worthiness. Lastly, her need to develop and live up to her potential must be taken into consideration when designing any policy for child and adolescent mental health programmes. The task is not an easy one. However, schools and educators must understand that their role is not limited to developing the intellect of the child. Unless the emotional needs of a child are met, she cannot learn.

### **What Can Schools/Educators Do about Mental Health?**

Schools and educators must realize that children with mental health issues may display varied behavioural tendencies – aggressiveness, shyness, perfectionism, etc. From this perspective, the classroom environment and teacher-student relationship become the centre of the intervention. Schools must affect the training of the educators to look at behavioural problems with a diagnostic lens. Using this perspective will help them understand that each behaviour displayed by the child is an attempt on her part to fulfil an unmet need (a need most often created by its absence in her environment at home or community). In addition, educators must be trained to find alternative solutions to managing children's behaviours. For instance, punishments effective for a stable child may cause irreparable damage to a child with emotional or behavioural disorders. However, it should be understood that

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bringing the diagnostic lens with the classroom is not aimed at making therapists out of educators. Rather, the objective of this perspective is to help make teachers more effective at what they do.

Schools and educators working for promoting positive mental health among children require considerable support. Educators, considering their existing workloads and personal challenges, may require constant support from systems at work. This could be in the form of seminar discussions, personal conversations with the principal or peers, and training and counselling to overcome their personal challenges and emotional dysregulations. What is important is that school as an institution with its principal, teachers, counsellors, social workers, and/or visiting educators come together to find solutions to promote mental health among children.

Schools and educators need to develop a more meaningful relationship with parents and guardians. Both stakeholders must understand that, according to Samuel R. Laycock, the behaviour of the child “are a barometer to the stresses and strains he is subjected to at home and in the community.” (417). Casual contacts between parents and educators may not help as much as engaged discussions in which both come together not so much to express disappointment in the child but to share her experiences to understand her behaviours better. Laycock suggests 15-20 minutes of engaged discussions between parents and educators twice a year to help achieve this.

Schools must allow all students to fulfil their needs of achievement - that is the curriculum forced on each child must be removed to create a learning environment in which the individual child learns best. The Detroit School Mental Health Project conducted between 1947 and 1952 concluded that children experience good mental health when their individuality is revered

in the classroom (426). The project helped establish the presumption that when educators are more attuned to children, their humanity, and their fallibility, the environment promotes mental hygiene. Unfortunately, experts ensure that each educator has at least forty students under her tutorship forcing her to resort to standard methods of teaching and curriculum implementation. Good teaching methods enable students to develop skills necessary for dealing with problems and inspire them to undertake experimentation, investigation, and creative endeavours. Providing for the individual differences of each child is necessary without which we fail as a society to promote positive mental health among its children.

At the level of the administration, policies that enforce positive self-esteem in children should be encouraged. Educators must come together to deliver positive policies with respect to retention, promotion, competition, examination, and breaches of discipline. The objective of such policies must be upon the factors that have contributed to individual problems rather than addressing the symptoms of the same. Discriminatory policies such as those practised at the time of admissions and examinations can be removed. Where necessary, they must be reviewed keeping at their centre the mental wellbeing of the child than the academic performance of the school and educators.

Ambassadors of wellbeing that is, student role models who emulate positive mental health, good relationships, and overall positive personalities can be appointed. These peer counsellors can facilitate wellbeing programmes that focus on health, values, life skills, among other adolescent-related issues.

### Case Studies

Mental health affects all aspects of a child's life. The implementation of school-based

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programmes for children and adolescents is key in developing long-term benefits such as less anxiety and depression, improved physical health, and less substance misuse. Additionally, improved productivity results from such interventions. One such example is the introduction of the “Happiness Curriculum” in the government-run schools in Delhi. The curriculum intends to achieve mental health awareness among children and includes components such as activities, expression days, mindfulness, and stories. Children have the opportunity to understand their feelings; in addition, the program also focuses on the training of teachers to use the curriculum to help children.

At an international level, Mindful Schools, an organisation working on training educators, mental health professionals, and parents on mindfulness. According to the organisation, educators need support in offering support and guidance to students in the classroom. That they experience stress and burnout affects their performance and cultivating for children and adolescents mindful learning environments. A mindful educator has better skills in emotional regulation in children, “focus, and engagement, as well as improved connection with students and the ability to deliver school curriculum.” In addition, today’s children require a way to help them cope with anxiety, trauma, stress, distraction, and isolation that they face. By learning effective ways to cope and calm themselves along with supportive environments, children can gradually learn to build resilience and meet the demands placed on them.

Margaret Hepworth’s The Gandhi Experiment is bringing values education,

“tools, and resources to build a more positive world. In addition, “Collaborative Debating” has been an educational tool for social change that creates a positive new framework for debate. The purpose of introducing values education is to develop global citizens who will use conflict resolution, forgiveness, reconciliation, and anger management to challenge “apathy and despair to a point of action, whereby they are able to translate their own ideas for positive change into action.”

Some other organisations promoting mental health in schools in India include New Horizon’s Child Development Centre, Sangath, Manas Foundation, Counselling India, and De Sousa Foundation.


### Conclusion


Adequate mental health services need to reach children in the rural and urban areas in India. While this is still a struggle for a developing country, the discussion on mental health has been initiated. School-based interventions at the level of the individual school are the easiest considering that we can wait for a large scale program to begin. Research has shown that it is the one-on-one interaction with the educator that affects the mental health of a child irrespective of the community’s perspective of mental health. Emotional wellbeing is a right that every child and adolescent has. The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” implying that mental health is an integral element if a child’s overall health is to be guaranteed (WHO 2001, p.1).

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTIVATING RESILIENCE AND COURAGE IN CHILDREN

"Mental pain is less dramatic than physical pain, but it is more common and also harder to bear. The frequent attempt to conceal mental pain increases the burden: it is easier to say "My tooth is aching" than to say "My heart is broken." – C.S. Lewis.

► By Fatimunnissa Asghar



*Fathima brings with her close to 17 years of experience in the education sector working extensively with children, teachers and parents in areas of life skills training, personal development and child behavior management. Her passions lie in conducting workshops on Personal safety, Body awareness, Human Sexuality, CSA awareness and has extensively worked with adolescents on responsible behaviors.*

*A teacher trainer and a certified parent coach who now works with families to create a happy fulfilling environment at home and classroom. Believes that relationships are connected by soul and Interpersonal challenges are dealt with both the mind & the heart. She has also conducted training programs outside India and trained teachers and parents in the Middle East. She is a parent consultant and holds an international Parent coach training Mastery certification from ACPI, USA.*

With the prevalence of mental health issues in our society, it's astounding that we still tend to stigmatize mental illness. Many mental health misconceptions still exist and we can't deny that.

It is estimated that the economic loss due to mental health would be around 1.03 trillion (of 2010 dollars) from 2012 – 2030. The mental health work force in India is also extremely low – there are 0.3 psychiatrists, 0.12 nurses, 0.07 psychologists and 0.07 social workers per 100,000 population ("Mental Health in India", WHO).

These figures are alarming. It is exacerbated by the fact that people in many cases are not even ready to acknowledge mental health issue. The patriarchy in India has taught people that "it's not okay to not be okay", and there is a constant pressure on people to act normal when they are actually experiencing a lot of stress and depression.

Because mental health issues often begin during the school-age years, it's becoming more and more apparent that mental health education needs to start at an early age. Because children spend so much of their daily life at school, it seems logical that mental health education should begin in schools.

## What is Mental health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Having good mental health helps you lead a relatively happy and healthy life. It helps you demonstrate resilience and the ability to cope in the face of life's adversities.

## What is Holistic Development?

Holistic Development is an approach (that normally schools look at) to learning that emphasises the importance of the physical, emotional and psychological well-being of children.

It is about focusing attention on the connectedness of a Child's mind, body and spirit that helps adults embrace the real and authentic developmental opportunities regardless of children's culture, socioeconomic background, gender or age.

## What is the role of mental health in holistic development of students?

Considering the fact that it covers almost all facets of our being, it is pretty much the basis of our growth, sustenance and well-being. There is





no role of mental health in holistic development of students. Holistic development is the product of our mind, body, feelings and relationships. Period!

### **Some facts about Mental health in India:**

Over the last five years, more than 40,000 students committed suicide in India. Last year, 8,492 students committed suicide. One student commits suicide every hour in India, and yet, we keep pretending like today's teenagers are anything from fragile to obsessed about their looks -- each of these blame-games make diagnosis and treatment of teenage depression even more difficult\*

The National Mental Health Survey 2015-16, conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru, under the purview of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, reveals that 9.8 million teenagers in the age group 13-17 years suffer depression and other mental health disorders and are "in need of active intervention.

When it comes to countries, India is the most depressed country in the world, according to the World Health Organisation, followed by China and the USA.

As educators we need to know, actually wake up to this very fact. One out of 4 teenagers in India suffers from depression and we don't even realise it. Even after all the (alarming) figures and data emerging from research, there is very little focus on mental wellness, especially in schools.

Recently, A 19-year-old IIT Madras student, depressed over low marks, commits suicide.

The student, a native of Kerala, was pursuing the integrated MA programme at the institute. Police are suspecting the student was depressed because of poor performance in examinations. They believe her low marks were the reason behind taking the dire step. It is also said a professors pressurised her into the act.

No matter who we blame on the outside ( Marks/ professors), the fact remains that she couldn't deal, cope and regulate her inner experiences. She was stuck in the negative moment and didn't know how to get out of it.

I always say if there's anything we're assured of in life besides death and taxes, it's stress and pain. Why don't we educate students to handle pain? Why don't we talk to them about Joy, gratitude, restlessness or shame as a human experience?

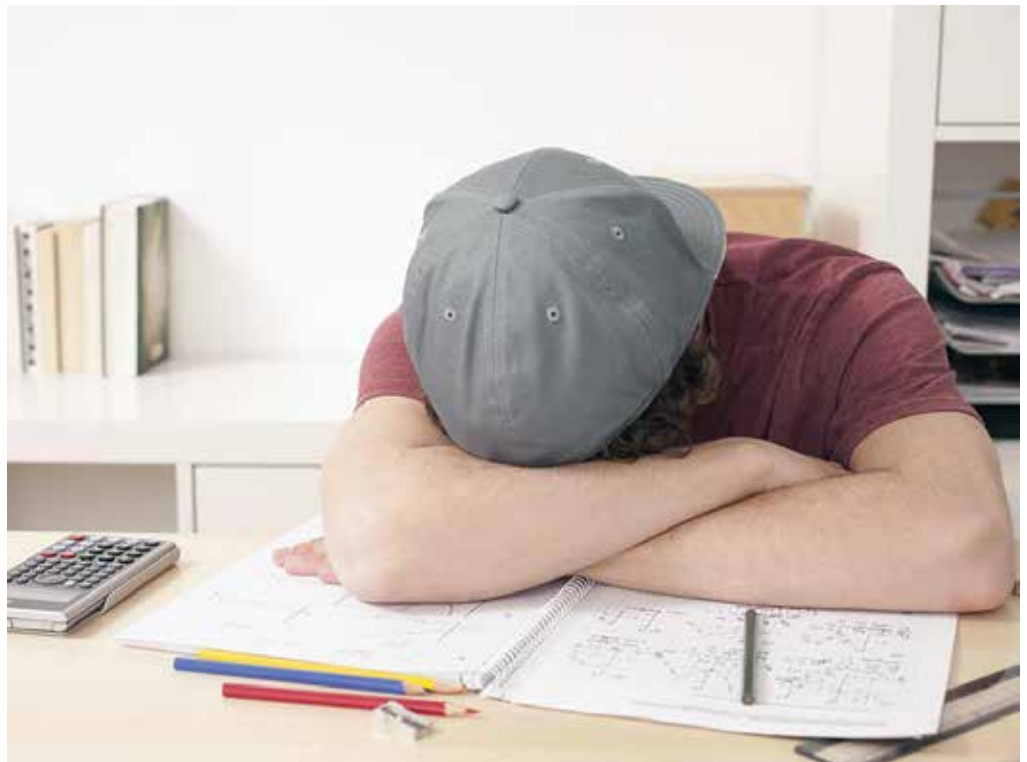
Following pressures from students, IIT - M has agreed to set up a committee of experts to study mental health of students and suggest ways to help them to combat pressures.

What we fail to understand is that students who receive social - emotional support, in childhood, achieve better academically. There are three critical skills that develop in early childhood: paying attention and remembering information, shifting back and forth between tasks, and behaving appropriately with others. These abilities are known as executive functions and they are essential for more advanced tasks like planning, reasoning, problem solving, and positive social relationships. Something that all teachers work for!

A renowned television actor Kushal Punjabi also committed suicide recently. It is talked about

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Punjabi's struggle with mental health conditions. This also means that mental wellness is constant work and not limited to age in any way.

While the world believes its work pressure, bullying, teasing or lack of coping with failures, it's certainly more than that. It's not 'the incident' or 'the moment', but a series of unresolved moments of pain, neglect, emotional suffering, isolation, anger or may be even shame that leads a child or an adult to take the extreme jump.

The Netflix show, "13 reasons why" is currently in its third season. Teenager Hannah Baker is a victim of gossip, bullying, rape and body shaming. Not knowing ways to handle this, she commits suicide and leaves behind 13 tapes explaining why. A narrow narrative that implies that bullying leads to suicide, is a glorified act, most dangerously portrays the idea that a lot of thought goes into a suicide attempt — like, so much thought that one would have the time to make tapes about all of the ways that they have felt wronged.

Watch it, if you haven't as yet. Our teenagers are struggling more than we believe they are.

A child who is vulnerable is constantly absorbing signs & messages from people every day, without being aware of how it is churning inside him. Moment – to – Moment feeling of 'Not good enough' and 'Bad- ness' triggered by Parents & teachers, friends, extended family, society and even Media. Problem Internet use (PIU) is now considered a behavioural addiction with characteristics similar to substance use disorders. This child isn't aware of how and when he gets addicted to negative thoughts and begins

to live those 'feelings' every day. Only if children today are taught to bring back their attention from the 'Pain' to the 'Actual Moment', only if they are taught to 'befriend the mind' and not struggle with the chatter in the head, only if they are given permission to feel 'the feeling' and not fix it, only if they are taught to be kind and gentle to themselves, so they realize that a bully needs 'kindness' the most. Bullying is a form of unkindness which uses power to dominate others. Only if the bully is taught to regulate the "power" and be kind. Only if they have the tools to Pause, Focus on the NOW and take charge of their impulsiveness.

Schools cannot do it alone, it's impossible! The true resolution of a bully or a victim does not lie at the external level, but at the internal level.

Unfortunately, our education is all about the future, tomorrow, what's coming your way. If we wish to create a deeper change, then we need to focus on today - the now.

It is through very - small moments that children learn to trust, love, be brave, be non – judgemental, know their boundaries, be assertive, be kind, show compassion, to feel, be thoughtful.

### **Let me share another story:**

As a Life Skill and Mindfulness educator it is my privilege to help adolescence explore their inner world, their psychological terrain. Day after day I hear thoughts, feelings, emotions and stories of pain and shame. This data helps me understand what emotionally



**Schools need a shift in the way they envision sustainable development, and that shift is in the direction of community wellbeing that exists within the organisation. By community, I mean teachers, students, staff, parents...may be neighbouring schools. It needs to become one's priority**



paralyses us and how is it that we may thrive in a journal called - LIFE. A young girl, super intelligent and a high performer seeks help from me to handle her anxiety and suicidal tendencies. Parents called her a gifted child, and gifted her books to read and gadgets in early years, when they should have gifted her paints and a musical instrument. Today, the girl struggles with a racing mind, and emotions that are beyond her control. Teachers, often mistook her denial to participate as arrogance and at times laziness. What they missed to sense, was her cry for love, understanding and compassion. She didn't know what she felt and why she felt it. Her mind, her greatest strength was also her biggest liability. She needed tools to express herself, strategies that slowed her over stimulated mind, and ways to re-focus and re - engage.

### It all points out to lack of emotional resilience.

#### What is Resilience?

Imagine two equally talented students in your class. Both get a "B" in their first term examination. One is caught up in thinking - "he's is a failure", was "never good enough" and "my teacher hates me". The other chooses to embrace

it as, "This feel super bad, but i know tomorrow i will feel better. " I am stronger than this" "What can i do to bring my scores up?"

#### Who do you think moves through adversity more quickly?

Resilience is the process of effectively coping with adversity—it's about bouncing back from difficulties. The great thing about resilience is that it's not a personality trait; it involves a way of paying attention, thinking, and behaving that anyone can learn. Resilience relies on how we perceive our lives. It starts and end with our thoughts.

We are not educating students about their minds or attention. How do they handle a ruminating mind? What do they do when they feel scattered in the head? How to deal with a worry mind? How do they use attention to enhance willpower? How do they process hard feelings?

How can they get better at setting aside the trivial mind traps that keep us stuck and drag us down into states of anxiety and depression?

#### Safeguarding mental health of students - where do we begin?

Teachers tell their students that mindset

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In order to help students thrive in a volatile and disruptive world, a teacher or an adult needs to safeguard his/her own emotional well - being. After all, teachers are the guardian of spaces that allow students to breathe, pause and be curious, explore the world and be themselves without suffocation.



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Every human being has three basic needs—safety, satisfaction, and connection—that are grounded in our ancient evolutionary history. While our circumstances have changed enormously over the last 200,000 years, our brains have remained largely the same. In consequence, it becomes crucial to administer a classroom based mindfulness programs that can aid the development of executive function abilities in young children, while also helping them cope better with stress.



matters. Yet they do not allow themselves the space or opportunities to receive those same messages of reflection and self-care. We as a society are brilliant in fixing children, without understanding the need to fix oneself.

In order to help students thrive in a volatile and disruptive world, a teacher or an adult needs to safeguard his/her own emotional well-being. After all, teachers are the guardian of spaces that allow students to breathe, pause and be curious, explore the world and be themselves without suffocation.

Make vulnerability a basis for strength, failures as an opportunity to reflect and human connection as a basis of existence.

It is only when teachers are comfortable with their own vulnerability, honour their feelings and be more present, can they create a workplace for students that honours and supports them. It means to work with them as sovereign beings rather than treating them like predictable, controllable machines.

#### **It's easier said, than done.**

Teachers are the most important leaders that we have. Trust, sense of belong, emotional safety,

connection, commitment etc..are taught in the smallest of 'classroom' moments. It is served not through massive, heroic sort of events, but through paying attention, focused listening and gestures of genuine care.

Schools need a shift in the way they envision sustainable development, and that shift is in the direction of community wellbeing that exists within the organisation. By community, I mean teachers, students, staff, parents... may be neighbouring schools. It needs to become one's priority.

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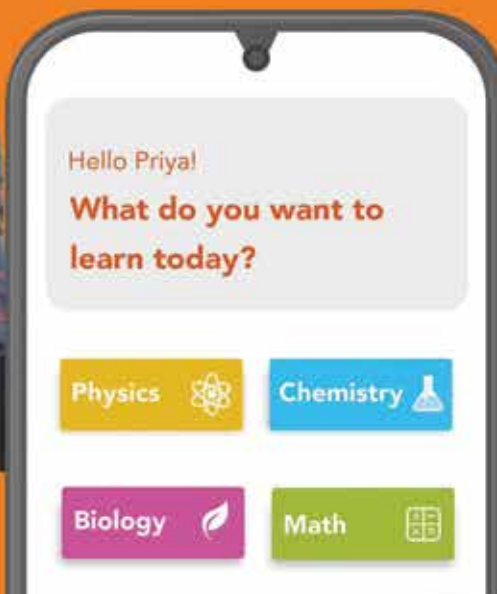
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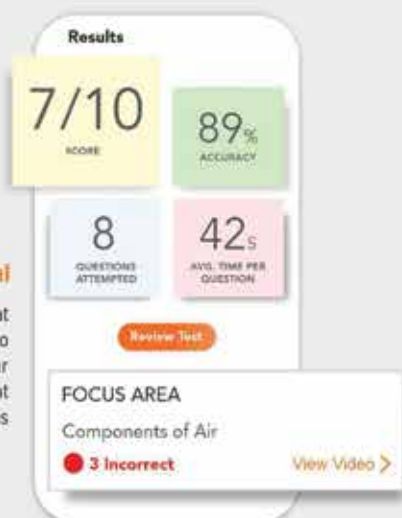
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► By Dr Sujata Singhi



Author of the International best seller book, "Power of Sound", Dr. Sujata Singhi, holds a Doctorate in Life Skill Education with specialization in NLP and Sound Therapy and Wellness, (only one in Asia currently honoured by the UN). Founder of Divine Soul Sound, Dr. Sujata Singhi has been honoured with 2 more doctorates for her research and service to mankind by the Universities recognized by GOI and the United Nations. She has researched and founded a new technique for emotion well-being called as MERT-Music and Emotion Release Technique.

Succinctly put, it is due to a shortage of Emotional Intelligence. Emotional Intelligence is what makes us better workers, lovers, friends and citizens. While we make linguistic, mathematical, scientific, biological and many other subjects part of our scholastic curriculum, sadly we are rarely taught to nurture our Emotional Intelligence. In leaving it out, we as a society, pay a heavy price for this gap in learning.

## What is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is the quality that helps us confront any adversity with patience, insight and imagination, especially in relationships. It is a specific type of intelligence which often does not enjoy the prestige it deserves. While Intelligence Quotient or IQ measures our cleverness, there are several situations where extremely clever people with strong IQ scores make a mess of their personal lives. There are cases of extremely rich and successful people facing restlessness and a sense of unsettlement. There are people who are quite powerful, yet they are unimaginative in their problem solving methods or are intolerant.

The importance of Emotional Intelligence (also called Emotional Quotient or EQ) is manifold than IQ. A person with a low EQ – however successful they may be in their career – has a personality that is flawed and often abrasive. They fail to understand what really may have triggered a person's behaviour or reaction. For example, a person lacking in EI may not be able to identify a violent outburst from someone as an actual cry for help. On the flip side, an overtly happy person may actually be hiding an underlying sorrow that may be affecting their psyche.

A person with high EQ is more adept at understanding fundamental conditions. Hatred many a time may mask love, and anger may be the face of extreme sadness. An emotionally intelligent person can pick up the signs and correctly read superficial outbursts to resolve issues – be it of the self or others known. EI also helps people deal with rejections and failure and powers their resilience to bounce back time and again, thereby leading them to success. It was once said, "Never let success get to your head; never let failure get to your heart". This is a trademark of an emotionally intelligent person.

## Is Emotional Intelligence inborn? Or is it a skill that needs to be learnt?

Emotional Intelligence, like IQ, is inborn. The degree varies depending on multiple factors, including environmental conditioning. There are ways to





take control of one's emotions, and these can be learned. It is a set of skills that can be acquired and thereafter improved with practice. Parents can teach their children EI example. Their responses to challenging situations at home equips a child with tips and tricks to implement in similar circumstances. Since it is basically the ability to identify and handle our emotions, as well as the emotions of others, developing or honing this skill will help people interpret their own selves and others.

### Education for Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is an in-born skillset that varies in degree. Similar to IQ, EQ can also be nurtured externally. While the family plays a role in moulding the EQ or EI of a child at home, it is extremely important, more than ever today, for educational institutions to integrate a child's social and emotional development with cognitive development. This has been reiterated many a times by June Auton, the founder of the Human Values Foundation, England.

### Are EI lessons for kids alone?

Is education for children alone? Not really, right! The same goes for EI too. It's never too early or too late to upskill your emotional intelligence. It's a lesson that one needs to learn and improvise upon throughout life to manage surprises that come at various turns.

The environment one lives in is a great teacher to polish one's EI skillset. While the television, internet and books can assist one in learning this skill, it can also prove dangerous at times considering cases of violent thinking and action wrapped in a goat's skin that find their way into these media. Instead of elucidating

on EI via constructive representation, ideas and ideologies may, at times, be downright contrary to what should be portrayed. This is a direct result of 'intelligence' in all areas sans Emotional Intelligence.

Here is where educational institutions can fill the gap and providing the right direction to students at a young impressionable age. Today's fast-paced and unrelenting environment has created challenging factors that the young generation is dealing with, without proper guidance. Their age and consequential lack of experience make them soft targets. EI can be a trusted and important ally.

They can equip them to counter the effects of society and the world around us with confidence. The world needs this NOW, more than ever.

Expertise in all forms of intelligence has helped man take giant strides in almost all fields. However, a sounder, healthier and wiser future for the human race is largely dependent on building the capacity of EI globally. We need a future workforce that is more prepared to tackle the emotional upheavals that come well packaged with the growing competitive and increasingly global business environment. Our future leaders, educators, politicians and business professionals – all need to have a high level of EQ to meet competitive expectations.

Excellent vehicles for this type of education are our established centers of learning - our schools and colleges. They are ideal for overcoming emotional challenges and providing opportunities in the education of EI. After all, personal happiness, success in relationships, career and achieving personal goals are equally dependent on both EQ and IQ.



Emotional Intelligence is an in-born skillset that varies in degree. Similar to IQ, EQ can also be nurtured externally. While the family plays a role in moulding the EQ or EI of a child at home, it is extremely important, more than ever today, for educational institutions to integrate a child's social and emotional development with cognitive development.



### EQ-IO vs. Stress

Being academically smart and being people smart together results in shaping an individual into a well-rounded human being, ready to find a place in this ever-changing and constantly evolving world. It is imperative to understand that there is a big difference in the knowing of something and the application of it. Learning about EI and applying it to one's life are two different things. Stress can be a big deterring factor, and it can override our best intentions.

Schools and colleges can play an institutional role in powering students with the required skills to beat stress from the word go. Yoga and spiritual instructions can help one manage stress effectively and boost EI.

### Five elements of Emotional Intelligence

Emotionally stunted people are those who are stuck in their negative emotions and are unable to move on in life. They need to see life clearly and accurately for what it is and to deal with what it throws up.

Daniel Goleman, an American psychologist who propounds Emotional Intelligence states that there are five key elements to it:

- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Motivation
- Empathy
- Social skills

According to Goleman, EI is the ability to recognize, understand and manage not just our emotions, but also that of others. Managing our own emotions and with understanding, influence the emotions of others, is paramount. It is a vital tool in handling stress, both positive and negative. Mastering this art is the need of the

hour; this especially, when several studies have found EI on the decline globally, thus fostering lack of emotional understanding and empathy for others, and instead provoking aggression and violence.

A March 2016 study conducted by World Economics Forum called New Vision for Education: Fostering Social and Emotional Learning through Technology, stated that by 2020 creativity, people management and emotional intelligence will be among the top ten skills required. Schools and colleges have to step up to the challenge. Parents and educators alike need to work with their protégés to develop their EQ.

This is even more of a challenge considering the pressures of today's fast-paced world that parents need to manage as well. This definitely tilts the balance more towards educational institutions to play a greater role in helping children understand and handle human emotions. A school that integrates and imparts a strong program on EI, shows evidence of its commitment to build a stronger world. Its students grow and emerge as strong and confident individuals who accept responsibility for their behaviour and know what corrective measures to take to exploit their own potential. And that, my dear friend, is the human force that will make this world a great place to live in.

Being honoured with doctorate in Sound and Music therapies and founder of MERT (Music and Emotion Release Therapies), I use Sound and Music Therapies to help the clients and patients to shed off their emotional burdens, environmental conditionings, social masks and disempowering beliefs which in turn empowers them to be more confident, empathetic, loving and be in their powers. ■



Schools need a shift in the way they envision sustainable development, and that shift is in the direction of community wellbeing that exists within the organisation. By community, I mean teachers, students, staff, parents...may be neighbouring schools. It needs to become one's priority



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- Various media and techniques incorporated (such as collage, origami, colour schemes, colour theory, etc.)
- Important notes for facilitators explaining interactive teaching strategies and ideas
- Introduction to various art styles, art movements and works of master painters has been done in a very easy and fun way.





# THE KEY TO A **HOLISTIC** **APPROACH TO EDUCATION:** MENTAL HEALTH

Education, since long, has been a tool to bring about change, but traditional methods of teaching have proven to be less than effective; often failing to create independent thinkers and healthy learners that can contribute to society. Therefore, to bridge the gap between purpose and result, more schools and educators are looking to reshape the way students learn. And the answer that the world agrees on is holistic education.

► **By Lina Ashar**



*Lina Ashar is an author, entrepreneur and educationist. She grew up in Australia but came to India in 1987 and became a teacher in Mumbai. However, she was appalled by the straight-jacketed approach of the education system, which 'robbed' children of their childhood. Her experiences as a teacher are what set her on the journey to transform the face of education in India. Today, she is the founder of two successful school chains; the Kangaroo Kids Education Limited (KKEL) and Billabong High International Schools (BHIS) and has authored two books on parenting; 'Who do you think you're kidding?' and 'Drama Teen.'*

In our hearts, we all know that education is much more than memorising information. To that end, holistic education better aligns with what we imagine education to be, i.e., a tool to enable better practical outcomes. In formal terms, holistic education is a personalized and well-rounded method of student development that is rooted in experiential learning and revolves around the relationship between learners and their environment. Education needs to have a holistic approach because it helps children do something useful with their information base while catering to their well-being.

Holistic education has become the need of the hour as it helps children develop academically, socially, emotionally and physically. It aids the creation of a safe space for children to grow and learn. The children are given the attention they need in an environment that is inclusive and open. However, considering the various obstacles that students face on their paths to success (expectations, depression, stress, to name a few), there is a certain aspect of holistic education that deserves greater emphasis – mental health and the priority given to it.

As an educator and parent, my entire philosophy of education has developed from my observations and personal experiences. Kamal, my younger brother, loved football and had the gift of the gab. I watched him score bottom-of-the-barrel grades and even fail in his higher secondary exam twice. Today, he runs a successful company.

In those days, when we were growing up in Australia, we could not afford to buy the bubble gum that offered free football cards. These cards would have information about a footballer and Kamal desperately wanted to get his hands on them. But my mom could afford to give him







only one. This lack of money triggered what could have remained a dormant and unexercised skill of negotiating and trading. Starting with one player, Kamal would trade for two less valued players, eventually owning a hundred, including the original one he started his 'business' with. Now, my younger brother leads a company due to his street-smart negotiating capabilities and the gift of the gab he developed while doing football commentaries. In mentioning this, I don't mean to state that one does not need to apply oneself academically. Instead what I would have liked was a schooling system, similar to a holistic approach to education, that would have helped my brother develop socially and emotionally, and used his interests to teach him and further his talents.

I believe that an education that only educates the brain and not the mind, soul, heart and spirit of children is a system that fails students. Providing children with the right environment as early as possible is important for their physical and mental health. Additionally, the development of one's emotional quotient is directly responsible for inculcating habits of success.

Mental health plays a critical role in the development of students. Schools need to work towards enabling children to feel completely secure, mentally and emotionally, besides physically. Priority should be given to emotional

and mental safety in schools. Every child should be allowed to question and express himself or herself in a non-threatening environment. Additionally, education should help children become confident individuals, and to do that, it should improve their self-esteem and self-belief. By promoting mental health, schools can enable a state of well-being where students can meet their learning potential, cope with stress, and openly connect with their friends and community. Doing so facilitates social and emotional competence and helps in building resilience.

These days, mental health has become a major concern with regards to a student's well-being; this focus is primarily due to the evident increase in stress and depression amongst students. However, mental health can play a much larger role in student success as well. The improvement in a student's frame of mind and self-belief can directly result in better communication, increased focus in class and better performances in tests. Mental well-being helps students understand themselves and subsequently helps them improve themselves. That being said, a lack of it can result in diminishing energy levels, concentration and learning capabilities in students, which is why mental health has become a hallmark of holistic education. It is the platform on which holistic education rests and that which supports a student's drive for success.

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Mindfulness meditation can solve this problem because it directly affects the brain, especially the hippocampus part. Practicing mindfulness can help the students to concentrate better. And since it jogs the hippocampus to be more active, their memory and critical learning skill will be improved and help them get better grades.



*Dr Dheeraj Mehrotra is a renowned Teacher Education Coach, a Premium Instructor of UDEMY, an Author & National Teacher Awardee (2005)*

# MENTAL HEALTH AND MINDFULNESS AMONG STUDENTS

Happiness in every classroom must be a priority first time, every time. The students engage well only when they are happy. Many people think that mindfulness and happiness are only beneficial for adults because it is only adults that can feel stress. But contrary to popular belief, stress can affect children as well, especially in school. Students experience toxic stress every single day due to pressure to get good grades, increasingly competitive environment and also the uncertainty of the future. Learning is a spectrum which imbibes the personality traits among the children with a page of Mindfulness and Confidence.

► By Dr Dheeraj Mehrotra

It is very common now to hear a third grade students said that they felt like dying when they failed to understand a subject in school or got bad grades. This is why teaching happiness and mindfulness in school is very important. It is an important method to help students cope with stress as well as achieve excellence in learning.

## Improve Attention and Cognitive Skill

One of the biggest reasons why students can't focus in class is because of low attention span. Even straight-A students can lose focus every once in a while and it often make them feel bad about themselves.

Mindfulness meditation can solve this problem because it directly affects the brain, especially the hippocampus part. Practicing mindfulness can help the students to concentrate better. And since it jogs the hippocampus to be more active, their memory and critical learning skill will be improved and help them get better grades.

## Develop Better Interpersonal Skill

The competition and also pressure to always be the best in class can affect the student's social and emotional skill. They tend to only focus on themselves and don't care about what's happening around them.

Interpersonal skill is very important to survive in the real world. So, the school must make sure that the pressure to perform well in school will not harm their interpersonal skill. Mindfulness training will also make the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that regulates emotion, more active. As a result, the students will be able to be more empathetic, more sociable as well as improve their behavior in school.





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School should not only focus on lessons and grades, but also education for life. The education system should really start to pay attention to the student's well being too, and mindfulness meditation is one of the best methods for that. It will teach the students to improve their mindful awareness that can help them coping with stress, improve their optimism about life and also improve their performance in school.

### Help Students Coping with Stress

Stress is not a stranger in human's life and it is also very normal for students to experience stress when facing a challenging time in their education. However, the situation of modern education system often forces the students to experience toxic stress, the kind of stress that can negatively affect their mental health.

The worst thing about this is the fact that majority of the students don't know how to deal with their stress. This is the most dangerous part about stress. Stress is normal, but if the students don't know how to cope with it, it will lead to various problems from inability to regulate mood, impaired attention, even physical problems and

depression. School should not only focus on lessons and grades, but also education for life. The education system should really start to pay attention to the student's well being too, and mindfulness meditation is one of the best methods for that. It will teach the students to improve their mindful awareness that can help them coping with stress, improve their optimism about life and also improve their performance in school. We the teachers can just not teach the way we were taught but the fact is that we need to empower ourselves to the novel spectrum of learning to learn as a hobby too.

Best & Cheers on Teaching as a priority!

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# INVEST IN MENTAL WELLNESS AT SCHOOL, TO AID THE HOLISTIC SUCCESS OF STUDENTS

Students spend a considerable amount of time in school; sufficient enough for them to call it their second home. The 10 years or so that they spend in the educational institute become an integral part of their childhood memories, while also being a foundation for their future in education. But is it all positive, especially with the educational structure currently adopted by most schools?

► By **Mukesh Sharma**



*Mukesh Sharma is the founding chairperson of Prometheus School in Noida - an educational institution with a goal to provide re-imagined and holistic education. An entrepreneur and visionary, Mukesh brings in 25 years of industry experience, backed by his initiatives including QA InfoTech, a Software Quality Engineering Services Company, employing over 1300 people globally. An active industry evangelist, Mr. Sharma has authored several books and papers to benefit the software engineering and quality disciplines.*

Today's children are under immense pressure. Exams, grades and expectations have added a heavy burden of stress on them, sometimes culminating in anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. To that end, concern on mental health have become an ineluctable crisis that schools must address. Today, concepts like 'Holistic Development' and mental health programs like the 'Happiness Curriculum' are becoming necessary to help students wade through insidious waters of demands and expectations in education. Schools must become a fundamental part of the students' health systems to ensure that they can stay afloat. This growing realization on the importance of Mental Health awareness was furthered by the World Health Organization (WHO), which advocated for the integration of school mental health programs.

Adding to the point, investments in mental health can be a boon to the holistic development of students, who face numerous transitions in their psychological, cognitive, emotional, social and moral domains during their childhood. Moreover, when done efficiently at a school level, it can further the growth and success of students in terms of their education.

Mental health issues during the education process can be brought about by many small factors including:

- Excessive competitiveness
- Intensifying pressure
- Fear of failure
- Lack of self-confidence
- Social anxiety

However, when addressed by school systems, students are offered the potential to overcome these issues and develop on a broader basis. Even efforts like those done in IB schools, where report cards and marks are not put up for display on notice boards are small steps towards promoting better mental health. To that end, schools and teachers can contribute to furthering an environment that is conducive to improving mental health through the following ways:

1. Spreading awareness – Breaking the taboo around the topic and can help students understand if they need help. They should not feel embarrassed nor judged to talk about it. Schools can start by inculcating regular sessions or weekly discussion around the topic. Teachers can address mental health issues and methods to work on





them in lessons. These steps can help students know that they are not alone. Thereafter, once students start to take care of their emotional and social wellbeing, they start improving in other facets of their development.

2. Counselling and one-on-one sessions – Whether with professional counsellors or teachers, students should have opportunities to discuss what is on their mind and that which is putting stress on them. Communication is key, and students need guidance to understand how they can improve or address their issues. Counselling also sets a precedent for understanding strengths and weaknesses and enables a foundation for future growth. It helps students find a path towards becoming who they want to be. In many schools, especially IB schools, staff members are trained to facilitate mental wellness and crisis intervention for students. This added step ensures that student receive support when they need it.
3. School mental health programs – Weekly or monthly programs that encourage connections, activities and cooperation go a long way towards promoting better mental health. Interaction, exercise and social gatherings help students build necessary skills, set achievable goals and reduce stress. It forms the basis for boosting

self-esteem and improving emotional well-being. These programs help students find the confidence to work on themselves.

Studies have found that students who receive positive behavioural and mental health intervention, such as counselling and open communication, see improvements on a spectrum ranging from academic performance to personal development. Specifically, students with a positive mental health outlook show benefits in the following areas:

- Enhanced resilience and a drive for personal success
- Better time management skills
- Strengthened acumen for setting goals and solving problems
- Greater self-confidence and self-esteem

Simply put, education can no longer solely cater to the students' academic growth. While academics play an important part in student development, it is not the only facet of student life that schools must address. In fact, to boost academic performance, schools should cater to the students' physical, emotional, mental and social well-being. Schools need to invest in addressing mental health issues as it helps enable the all-round or holistic development of students. It can help boost the students' confidence in their abilities and growth and empower them to deal with the stress that stands to hinder their progress and future success.

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**School should not only focus on lessons and grades, but also education for life. The education system should really start to pay attention to the student's well being too, and mindfulness meditation is one of the best methods for that. It will teach the students to improve their mindful awareness that can help them coping with stress, improve their optimism about life and also improve their performance in school.**

# THE ROLE OF ACHIEVING CREATIVITY THROUGH MUSIC TO ENSURE MENTAL WELLNESS

Music is a strong and bold instrument for the holistic development of school-going children. In our country still, the mindset is that whenever an examination will approach, parents ask children to not learn music or dance or any kind of cultural activity. These are actually steps against the holistic development of young kids. The most important issue is how to bring the attraction or increase the interest in the subject of the child.

► By Ayan Adhya



Ayan Adhya is an M.A and B.Ed in music from Rabindra Bharati University in Kolkata. He has worked in many schools all over India namely Orchid International School, Ivy League Academy, Govind International Public School, Indian Heritage School and Taurian World School. Presently, he works at Royal Palace School, Jamkhandi in Karnataka. He has a rich work experience of more than 20 years and is the recipient of the International Education Icon Award 2019 for his contribution in the development of students through music.

I have been working in this field for almost 25 years and have observed that as per the current system, schools are organising workshops for teachers' learning programmes. The trainers come with their own ideas, which are basically repeatedly used by many people but as per presentation, it may look like just another old idea with a new cover.

The basic idea that I have developed is that whatever knowledge we receive from trainers, a very small amount of it like perhaps 2% can be executed in ground reality. Why? It depends on the infrastructure of the school and the workload of teachers too.

We need to find out the easiest way to motivate our children. The amount of effort and videos/images we incorporate in our teaching charts are beneficial to children for short-term memory only.. What we need to be very clear about, are words. Consider the following points:


- Completion of syllabus does not prove the teaching or learning is over.
- Completion of a notebook of a student doesn't prove that the student has learnt.
- Making the lesson plan doesn't indicate the teacher's teaching and student's learning ability moving together.
- Checking the notebook of students doesn't prove that the learning quality of children has been checked because as per my experience, when a child gets delayed in completing his or her work, the students copy each other's work, only to escape punishment.

We need to come out of the showcasing idea, need to find out the road map for the development of school children in the easiest way. Music is one of the most valuable ways to push the children for the next level of improvement. As teachers, we should provide the infrastructure for a new level of learning. Instead of asking students not to sing a song or dance or participate in any cultural activity, we, as a teacher should encourage them to make it a habit to listen to a good song, singing good song or any time take an instrument and should enjoy the happiness of life, The stress they are carrying it should go out from their body and mind. The expectations of all the family members, friends and teachers put huge pressure on their mind that the kids may not express but those who express their anxiety, saying the last word which is not giving us happiness.

Let's talk about some good and effective ways to learn and try to inculcate better methods that we can follow.....

Through music, students are known to be improving their concentration levels towards their general studies. You may wonder how is it possible? As per biology, in our brain, ten points are there which absorbs sounds



A young girl with dark hair is shown from the chest up, playing a violin. She is looking down at the instrument with a focused expression. The violin is dark wood with a black chin rest. She is wearing a white shirt. The background is a warm, orange-brown color.

through our ears. When a child listens to good, especially instrumental music, it makes an invisible boundary in our brain. Why do we make the boundary wall in our area? To protect our privacy or property from outsiders. This is the concept I suggest for school going students because generally and normally children are studying or are reading through the eyes, but if their ears are open to receive various noises or sound so naturally child will have disturbance and be unmindful, and then concentration power will also go down. Here I am sharing a biological diagram whereas non- science people also understand how music can make a boundary wall in our brain.

“Music activates both the left and right brain at the same time, and the activation of both hemispheres can maximize learning and improve memory,” says Dr. Masha Godkin of North Central University. He also said that, it's good to stick with classical music. One reason this genre works well is that there are no lyrics to distract you. You can also branch out into meditation music, which is ideal for concentration as it is meant to

relieve stress and relax your mind. Music has a profound effect on our mood, blood pressure, and heart rate. For the best music to focus and study, choose tunes that keep you awake but won't cause you to start tapping your body to the beat.

#### **Courtesy- Google.**

Learning or listening to music also improves memorization power. We all have seen that when an artist is performing on the stage or platform, maximum of them don't use any notebook or anything, the exceptional case we

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“Music activates both the left and right brain at the same time, and the activation of both hemispheres can maximize learning and improve memory,” says Dr. Masha Godkin of North Central University. He also said that, it's good to stick with classical music. One reason this genre works well is that there are no lyrics to distract you. You can also branch out into meditation music, which is ideal for concentration as it is meant to relieve stress and relax your mind. Music has a profound effect on our mood, blood pressure, and heart rate. For the best music to focus and study, choose tunes that keep you awake but won't cause you to start tapping your body to the beat.

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may observe if an artist has to go through some structural way and practice is not done properly or any other reasons. At least if we take examples of Late Pt. Ravi Shankar or Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, you can see that they were or are not keeping any notebook when they were or are on stage!!! Why it happens?? They have used the exact capability of their brain. Whereas today we are dependent on electronic gadgets only!!! Today, unfortunately, we are far away from using our own brain. If someone will ask

us ten or fifteen mobile numbers, maximum people will fail to remember the said numbers. But those musicians who can remember more number other than non-musical persons. In students' brain, I have used many times how this musical ability can increase memorization power and also will power. In school, I love to make fusion, along with performing song- dance and playing instruments. And I proved that without seeing any notation or lyrics my students can perform very nicely.

Sometimes we make the practice of meditation. The mindset of the children and the school or the parents is that it is a waste of time. But I pursue my students to have meditation with soft instrumental music; it cannot be a one day try....continuously we need to have like this session at least two weeks, and give a pause for the day you will see students will ask you why the meditation is not there is today!! Its means the effect of music along with meditation started working on children. It will increase the patient quality of child will improve will power, concentration, anxiety, stress and every issue can be sorted out in this way.

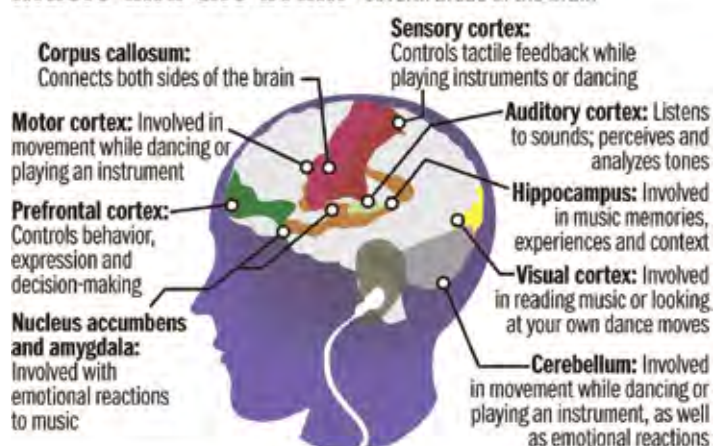
Music also improves mental math. Many schools are having practice to keep extra mental math class for the mathematical improvement of the child. The whole conception can be done through music and it's easy, because by singing or playing music, children can learn more mathematics by using their brain.

Another important and significant idea of learning music in school is – students have much improved their coordination quality. In a group musical event they learn how to help each other, even taking care of belongings or someone is not taking care of him or her, and If someone is going the wrong way, bringing back to the right way. Many things can be done naturally through musical ability.

In school, when I teach songs, I am looking for

## Music and the brain

*Playing and listening to music works several areas of the brain*



SOURCE: Music for Young Children

DESERET NEWS GRAPHIC

various type languages including English song. In India, we have many states and hence many languages. Each state varies different accent of English. Here also music helps a lot to correct mispronunciations!!! Children also get many ideas from other languages. I can remember one small experience - almost all Indians know a very beautiful song "Hum ko man ki Shakti Dena". At the second last line, one word is there "Badi". Many times I pronounced the word wrong. But when I worked in Punjab, then I came to know actual pronunciation and meaning of that particular word. The whole song is based on pure Hindi but only one word is inserted from Punjabi Language!!! Like that way, students get many ideas of languages also.

There are many more options through which music is helpful for the development of students. Music is very Bold- Soft – Sharp and strong method to develop students learning ability. Side by side music teachers also needs to be upgraded according to the needs of students. Each and every child is different and unique. Every day we have to do some homework for taking the challenges of students. This is true, as per my experience where another teacher may fail, their music teacher may rise. Actually, this is our duty to help other teachers to hand over weak students to bright students. Other teachers should pay respect to music teachers because behind the success of students may work music teacher contribution to students development, that will remain covered by our state of mentality. Because still in India, in school, music means, showing to own parents that the school is looking for the holistic development of their words. Sometimes getting awards into some reality show or event wise participation and child got some prize ...That much only.... But the purpose of learning music is not getting the proper light so the importance of learning music is also not clear to schools as well as parents too.



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## सहायक सामग्री

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- शिक्षक-संदर्शिका (पाठ-योजना, अभ्यास प्रश्नों के उत्तर एवं हल सहित कार्यपत्रिकाएँ)

### Digital

- Portal – e-resources.saraswathihouse.com
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## शृंखला के बारे में

‘संस्कृत-व्याकरण-वैभवम्’ पाठ्य-पुस्तक शृंखला सी.बी.एस.ई. समेत विभिन्न शिक्षा बोर्डों के नवीनतम पाठ्यक्रम पर आधारित है। कक्षा 05 से 08 तक कुल चार पुस्तकों को इस शृंखला में संस्कृत व्याकरण का बेहद सरल, सहज एवं प्रभावी ढंग से प्रस्तुत किया गया है। नवीन गतिविधियों एवं शिक्षण युक्तियों की सहायता से निर्मित इस पुस्तकमाला को बहुरंगी चित्रों के माध्यम से पूरी सजीवता के साथ मनमोहक स्वरूप में प्रस्तुत किया गया है। इस शृंखला का निर्माण नई राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 2019 के सुझावों एवं सिफारिशों के आधार पर की गई है।

## मुख्य विशेषताएँ एवं उपयोगिता

- ★ नई राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति की सिफारिशों के अनुसार सी० बी० एस० ई० समेत विभिन्न शिक्षा बोर्डों के लिए उपयोगी
- ★ ‘ज्ञात से अज्ञात की ओर’ अधिगम सिद्धांत के आधार पर विषय-विवेचन
- ★ किं ज्ञास्यामः के माध्यम से निश्चित पाठ में समाहित विषय-वस्तु का बोध
- ★ संयोजनम् के अंतर्गत छात्रों को विषय-वस्तु से जोड़ने के लिए वैविध्यपूर्ण रोचक प्रसंग
- ★ किम् अधीतम् द्वारा पाठ में पढ़े गए विषयों का स्वमूल्यांकन एवं पुनरावलोकन
- ★ उच्चारणम्/श्रुतलेखनम् के अंतर्गत उच्चारणाभ्यास के लिए विषयानुरूप शब्दों व वाक्यों का संकलन
- ★ अभ्यास के लिए मौखिकम्, लेखनम्, एहि, चिन्तयित्वा लिखामः तथा परस्परचर्चा कुर्मः शीर्षक के अंतर्गत विविध प्रकार के प्रचुर प्रश्नों का समावेश
- ★ भाषाक्रीडा/गतिविधि: के अंतर्गत बच्चों को जटिल व नीरस प्रतीत होने वाले व्याकरणिक परिभाषाओं व सूत्रों को खेल-खेल में सीखने का अवसर
- ★ कियत् अद्भुतम् के अंतर्गत संस्कृत भाषा से संबंधित रोचक तथ्यों के माध्यम से गौरवपूर्ण भारतीय संस्कृति से परिचय (कक्षा 5 और 6 में)
- ★ वयं भविष्यामः के माध्यम से आजीविका एवं व्यवसाय के क्षेत्र में संस्कृत भाषा से जुड़े अवसरों के विषय में जानकारी (कक्षा 7 और 8 में)
- ★ जीवनमूल्यम् शीर्षक के अंतर्गत हिंदी अर्थयुक्त सूक्तियों के माध्यम से जीवन मूल्यों के विकास एवं चरित्र-निर्माण पर बल

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# CULTIVATING CONFIDENCE AND JOY TO SLAY THE MAMMOTH OF COMPETITIVE EXAMS

In a world where the definition of success is changing faster than a social media update, the onus on parents and educators to ensure children don't succumb to the rat race is far higher than ever before. Earlier, the measure of success was confined to school assemblies, newsletters, and school magazines. Sometimes, an exceptional performance was reported in local newspapers and that was the pinnacle of achievement for a child.



*Ajar Rab is a lawyer by profession and partner at Rab & Rab Associates LLP, Dehradun, Uttarakhand's first law firm. Apart from practice, he shares a great passion for teaching and has been training CLAT aspirants in legal reasoning and methodology for nearly a decade at various coaching centres and schools including Welham Girls, the Doon School etc.*

*He is a Visiting Professor at National Law School of India University, Bangalore and National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata as well as the author of a book on real estate law. His work on commercial law and arbitration is published regularly in various reputed national and international journals. He also coaches teams for international moot courts and other competitions.*

*Ajar is a master's thesis supervisor at Bucerius Law School, Germany, where he is also pursuing his doctorate in international arbitration.*

► By Ajar Rab

Those days are long gone, and children today compete for likes, designations, status updates, etc. Take a step back and think what the pressure must be like to outdo each other and more importantly, outdo an infinite pool that cannot be identified. The begging question then is, should educators add to the pressure or understand the already stressed life of a high school child?

Adding to this potent mix, there are other stress factors such as tuitions, extra-curricular activities, peer pressure, expectations of parents, the reputation of the child in the community and then to top it all the mammoth of competitive exams. Recently, there was a news article that discussed IIT preparation from Class V for students in Delhi. Then there was news about admissions being booked right after the mother's pregnancy is confirmed. If this doesn't appall you, or you are one of those, who believe that in a global world, a child should start early, then unfortunately, you may be looking at a child who has succeeded with achievements but failed in life.

The rapid rise in feelings of insecurity, depression, body consciousness, lack of confidence, etc. among school children is not only a concern but a silent epidemic and now more than ever, as educators, we need to question ourselves as to the true meaning of education. Are we to train our children at being excellent in rote learning and spilling that information at lightning speed in an exam? Or is it more important that they understand and question what is being taught?

Unfortunately, the epidemic is a result of several systematic failures. Firstly, our education system does not recognize or create any room for individualistic differences. It tests each student on the same parameter of the ability to rote learn concepts without any iota of understanding what it is. Students skilled at the game become the cherry eyed pupils of the teachers who then ensure that it is only those pupils who speak at events, take part in dramatics, sing and dance, etc. In short, if you can memorize, and repeat you are an excellent student. This is the beginning of killing the confidence of a child who may not be so skilled at the game of rote learning but has several other skill sets that don't find a place in our education system. This feeling of not being enough or not being good enough gradually grows over time, and when it comes to the board examinations, that student walks in knowing he or she is not going to excel. It's the same feeling when taking a competitive exam as well.

The solution is not to overhaul our education system from the ground up,





though that would have been ideal, but create more room for discussions, activities, and evaluation parameters that permit recognition of skill sets, acumen and other factors beyond the memory game. To take an example, I am reminded of my Economics teacher in school. He was generally regarded as the most fun teacher, despite being well over 60 years. One would assume that fun teachers are a myth or such teachers are those who do not restrict students in anything, mark liberally, and are often absent from classrooms. He was not one of them. He would walk into class and tell the students to close their notebooks. Jovially, he would remark, “if you understand what I am about to say, why take notes, if not, what use are the notes anyway.” Right after that, he would discuss the cricket match on the previous night, some explosive news in the newspaper that morning, the events happening in school, the problems in the cities to which the students belonged. Little did the students realize, the class was over, and even though we learned no chapters in economics, my economics teacher had ensured that every student participated, communicated his/her

ideas and most importantly, he knew each child individually. He had understood the needs, problems, and way of thinking of each of the 60 students he taught.

The next day, he would come to class and teach economics. You would be surprised to see the class participation and the clarity of concept each student had when the class was over. Till today, the concepts he taught back then are crystal clear. He taught us much more than economics. He taught us why it is important to have your own opinion, be aware of current events, think about the problems of other people, and go beyond the books to find solutions. While we were never tested on those skills during schools, we were prepared for life. More surprisingly, we were even better prepared for competitive exams. He knowingly created an interest in current events, history, general knowledge, and we were unknowingly prepared. To put it in brief, our knowledge was never compared or tested, especially against each other and without any stress, crazy hours of hard work or coaching, our economics teacher ensured that the mammoth we were soon going to meet could be slain with our bare

“

This may be the first step in ensuring that students are confident and learning is fun. The trouble today is that parents and teachers want their child to run the rat race, little realizing they are only creating the best rat.

“  
Competitive exams are based on IQ patterns but without other kinds of intelligence such as cultural, social, etc. students are doomed to fail such exams because they would only know what they have mugged up, whereas competitive exams ask a little about everything. If we truly want our students to succeed, we should follow the advice of William Martin in his poem titled ‘Do Not Ask Your Children to Strive’.

hands. It is this kind of teaching that needs to be encouraged, consciously practiced, and adopted within the school curriculum. Students today have enough and more pressure from outside the walls of their homes and schools. Society today has made them more ambitious than ever and therefore the role of teachers and educators needs to shift from mere instructions providers to mentors who are given a chance to engage with students on a personal level and guide, listen, advise, not only with respect to the course curriculum but with respect to life in general.

This may be the first step in ensuring that students are confident and learning is fun. The trouble today is that parents and teachers want their child to run the rat race, little realizing they are only creating the best rat. Parents want to be proud of their children and expect teachers to ensure they get their share of pride. Schools and teachers are, therefore, under pressure to deliver on those expectations. The real damage due to these great expectations is the child who is left with little time to be herself or himself. The child does not have the time to be a brother, a sister, a friend, a cousin, a person who likes videogames or tv or music or sports. The child is always just a student running from school to tuitions and from tuitions to coaching classes, and then we wonder why are students more depressed?

As people responsible for the future of children is it not incumbent on us to ensure that they succeed without sacrificing their childhood. That their success stories are not built over depression, stress, and insecurities. It is time teachers understood that they no longer need to motivate students to be successful.

Peer pressure and social media are enough for that. Teachers today need to be a friend and guide who mentor, inspire, and understand the pressure the students are under. If our students are not confident about themselves, no matter what we teach, they will always feel it is too much for them. Even coaching centers can only develop skill sets, or at best polish them, but real education should mean the ability to speak one's mind, learn things apart from the syllabus, and be more alive to things happening around the students.

Competitive exams are based on IQ patterns but without other kinds of intelligence such as cultural, social, etc. students are doomed to fail such exams because they would only know what they have mugged up, whereas competitive exams ask a little about everything. If we truly want our students to succeed, we should follow the advice of William Martin in his poem titled ‘Do Not Ask Your Children to Strive’.

*“Do not ask your children  
to strive for extraordinary lives.  
Such striving may seem admirable,  
but it is the way of foolishness.  
Help them instead to find the wonder  
and the marvel of an ordinary life.  
Show them the joy of tasting  
tomatoes, apples and pears.  
Show them how to cry  
when pets and people die.  
Show them the infinite pleasure  
in the touch of a hand  
and make the ordinary come alive for them.  
the extraordinary will take care of itself.”* ■

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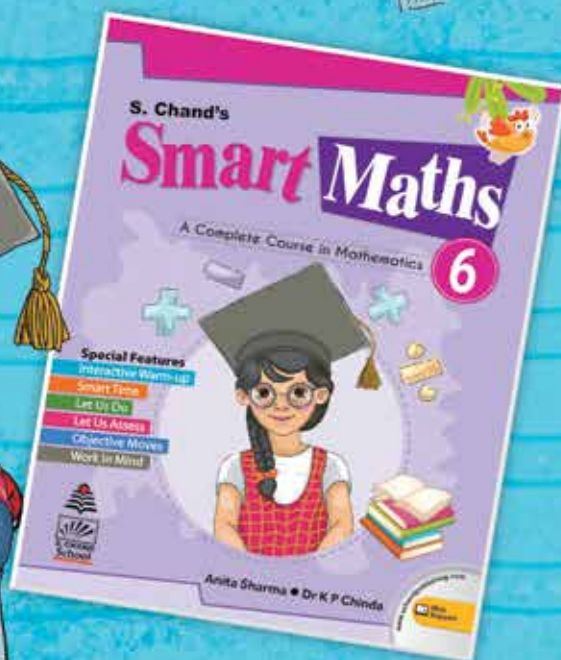
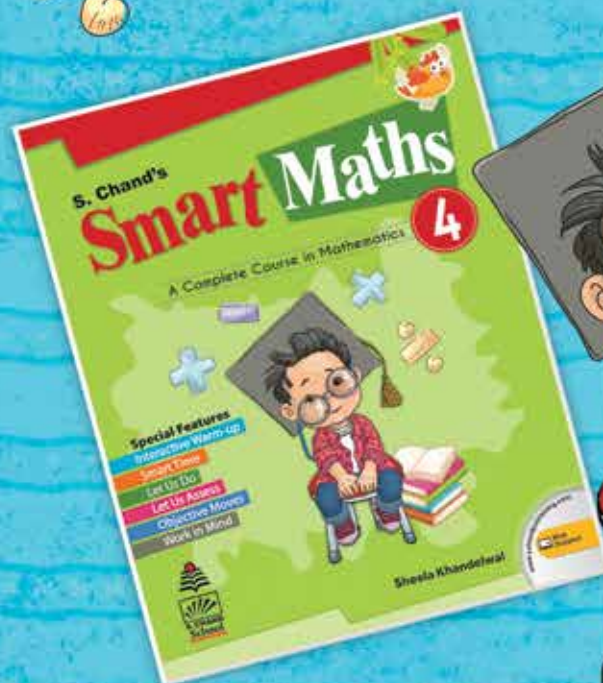
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*Having over two decades of experience in early childhood education, Faridah Bawani is an educationist and the founder of Chrysalect Education Solutions. Chrysalect is an organization that offers innovative, effective and research based products and services that promote authentic learning opportunities relevant for 21st century learners. Faridah has studied in Canada, Pakistan as well as in India and is qualified as an 'International Teacher Educator' which equips her to provide professional development to teachers, trainers and principals. She holds two post graduation diplomas one in Early Childhood Education from New Zealand Tertiary College as well one in Education Management from SNDT University Mumbai. Faridah also has a Certification in 'Using Multiple Intelligences as a Tool to Help Students Learn' From Harvard Graduate School of Education- USA. She has been on the National Board of ITREB India heading the Preschool department for seven years. She is also the Territory Head of the Early Childhood Association India.*

# IS A STRONG SOCIAL EMOTIONAL BASE THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH **MATH, LITERACY AND SCIENCE LEARNING IS BUILT?**

Children spend a considerable amount of their time in school, so to ignore their social-emotional learning needs during their time spent in classrooms would be a waste of precious learning opportunity. Schools are also places where children have a majority of their social interactions and challenges, thus the possibility and opportunities for personal growth and learning are high.

► **By Faridah Bawani**

## **"Mama I'm not good enough!"**

I had changed my older daughter's school in kindergarten because I wanted an I.B. education for her. When Anaya was in grade one, we were once practicing for elocution and even after repeated revisions Anaya was forgetting some lines. In her frustration of being unable to remember the poem she suddenly blurted out 'Mama you know na... I am not as intelligent as the other children in my class! Let's just forget the poem it's ok if I don't participate. It's not compulsory'

As a mother to hear my six year old being so articulate about a belief and disempowering self talk about herself made me question, how had things come about to be like this? Yes Anaya did show signs of mild dyslexia as a child and therefore when the teacher would correct her or point out her mistakes surely it was for Anaya's benefit. Of course her class teacher did not wake up every morning thinking, 'Today I am going to demine my children, ensure they are reprimanded for their own good.' And yet children are soo perceptive that they seem to almost breadth in the subtle messages we unknowing send our children. These messages or self talk or perceptions about one's self in my mind are the corner stones of what makes up a person. So if children are receiving messages that in turn are shaping pretty much what they think about themselves or even how they interact with others can we be consciously attuned to how we are responsible in shaping our children's minds? Can we intentionally make an effort to teach skills that are beyond the academic purview but enhance children's ability to succeed in school as well as in life?

I am in no terms implying that we glorify every small action of our children, and use praise as a tool to gain compliance. Because then we would be running the risk of oscillating between two extreme ends of a pendulum. Coming back to Anaya's story, today Anaya is in grade 9, has shifted schools, shines academically, but more importantly Anaya believes she can achieve, that she is good enough, her grades don't define her and she is capable.

What I am suggesting is can we be responsible for creating environments



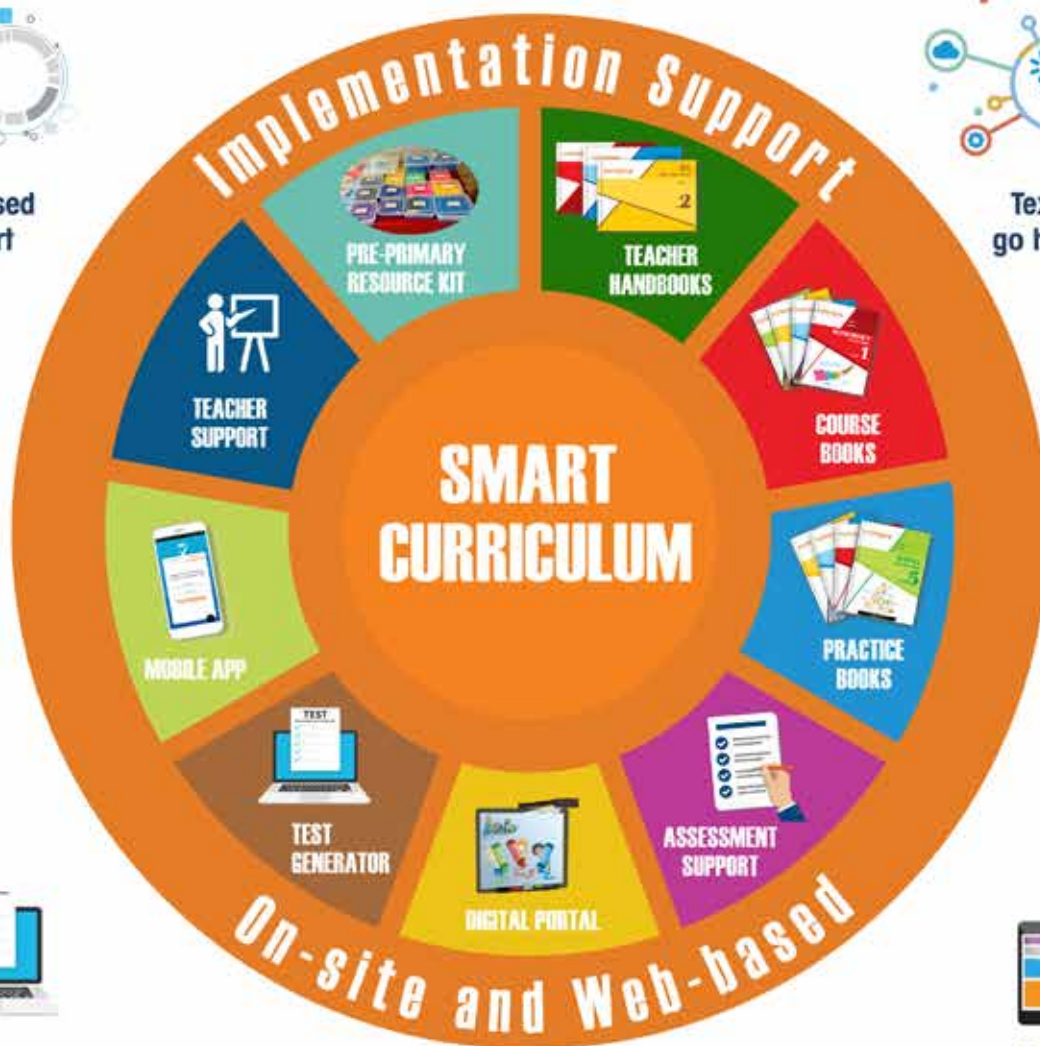
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According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), an organization that works toward integrated social-emotional learning for preschool through high school, “social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.” SEL can be seamlessly integrated into our school’s culture and curriculum.



that are safe, positive and empowering, as I believe these are the foundations on which the pillars of math literacy and other academic learning are built. A strong social emotional base is the key to assist children to withstand the stresses they face in this increasingly complex world.

### So what is Social Emotional Learning? (SEL)

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), an organization that works toward integrated social-emotional learning for preschool through high school, “social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions,

set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.” SEL can be seamlessly integrated into our school’s culture and curriculum.

Social-emotional learning can be divided into five components

#### 1. Self-awareness

Self awareness is being able to recognize

needs and emotions, understand and even articulate one’s feelings as well as recognize how they translate into our behaviours. It can include being aware of stress, negative emotions, one’s abilities and weaknesses.

#### 2. Self-management

Self-management is the ability to regulate one’s emotions and behaviours. This can include managing emotions like anger, stress, excitement, self-motivation to name a few.

#### 3. Social awareness

Social awareness is about seeing things from other people’s perspective, being able to empathize with others and having a willingness to understand and respect the diversity in a group/ society.

#### 4. Relationship skills

This is about creating and maintaining healthy relationships through cooperation, communication, active listening and conflict resolution.

#### 5. Responsible decision-making

Responsible decision-making is about thinking about the consequences of personal behaviour. It includes making appropriate, healthy choices and having a moral compass the guides decisions.



## Why is SEL so Important and why do schools need to take ownership to teach SEL ?

A study conducted by Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley in 2015 revealed that children who receive social-emotional interventions early and throughout their schooling years show remarkable and measurable benefits later on in life. Research cannot be overlooked that development of SEL skills in kindergarten leads to the higher likelihood of obtaining a college degree, adult employment, and lessens one's chance of substance abuse or getting into trouble with the law as an adult .

Children spend a considerable amount of their time in school, so to ignore their social-emotional learning needs during their time spent in classrooms would be a waste of precious learning opportunity. Schools are also places where children have a majority of their social interactions and challenges, thus the possibility and opportunities for personal growth and learning are high. Of course, schools have been providing more than academic learning for a long time but more often than not the non academic skills are given lip service. Research suggests that by providing consistent, SEL programs, children can benefit in multiple ways. Thus can we as an educational community, in our school look at providing emotional intelligence interventions, much like we teach academic subjects as emotional intelligence can also be taught.

### SEL in Early Childhood Classrooms –Perspective and Activities for the early childhood educator

When children feel a big emotion like anger, anxiety, excitement the prefrontal cortex which is the rational part of the brain takes a break and we're left to deal with just the emotional brain or the amygdala.

When a child's brain is hijacked by the amygdala a chemical chain reaction of sorts takes place. Adrenaline, cortisol and other hormones are produced which can trigger a fight or flight response. In these circumstances asking a child to complete an assignment or task may not be met with compliance. And what you may perceive as oppositional behaviour may actually be stress and anxiety. As teachers how do we address this? To get the rational brain or prefrontal cortex back on track,

we need to sooth the amygdale. Let's look at a few activities that promote social emotional learning.

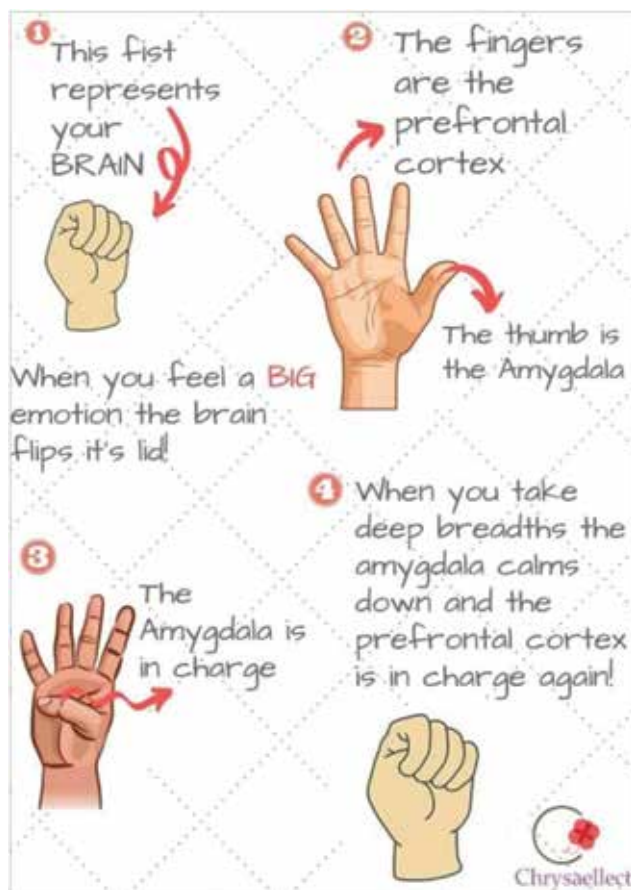
#### Activity: Belly has a Balloon

Strong emotions or an amygdala hijack can trigger shallow breathing. You can prevent or stop an amygdala hijack by taking deep breaths, slowing down, and trying to focus your thoughts. This allows your prefrontal cortex to regain control again.

In this breathing activity it is required to fill our bellies with our breath. You should feel the diaphragm expand and contract. Ask children to pretend they have a big balloon inside their belly and they need to take a deep breath to fill it up, and deflate the balloon when they exhale. Demonstrate and practice how to take deep breaths and exhale. Encourage kids to put to their hands on their bellies to feel it expand. Repeat several times.

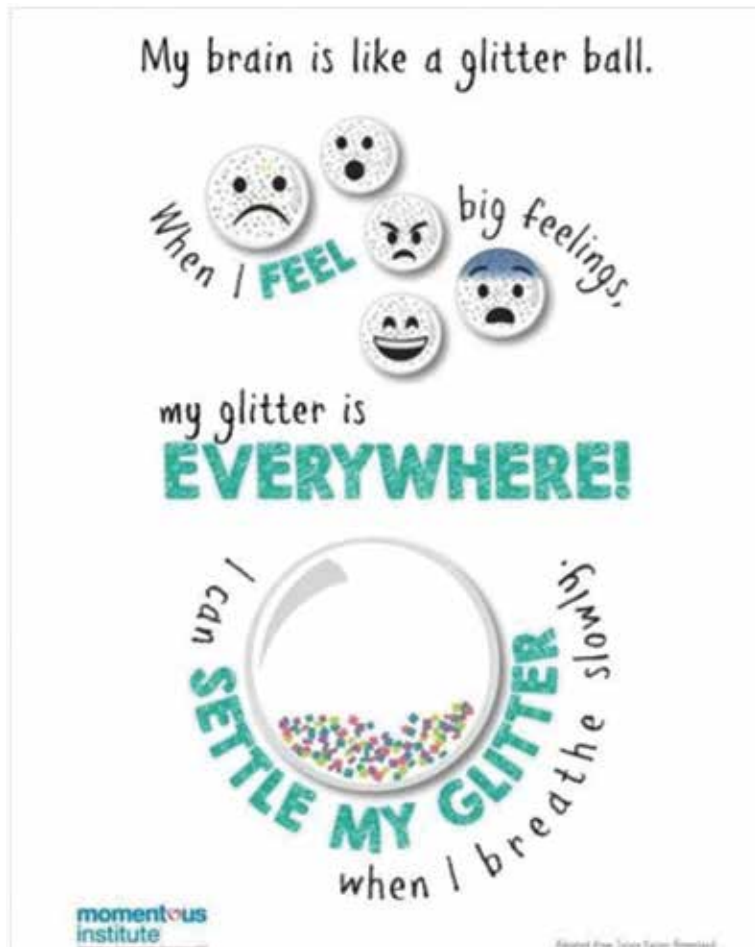
#### Activity: Bubble Breathing

For this activity ask children to inhale deeply filling their bellies with air and exhale really slowly as if pretending to blow bubbles while they do so. This activity helps children become more conscious and intentional about breathing out slowly. (It's pretty hard to blow bubbles



Perspective : Let's work with the Brain

Self awareness is being able to recognize needs and emotions, understand and even articulate one's feelings as well as recognize how they translate into our behaviours. It can include being aware of stress, negative emotions, one's abilities and weaknesses.



when you are breathing forcefully out.). If you are outdoors you could conduct this activity with real bubble solution.

### Activity: Starfish and Storms

Through this activity children get an opportunity to notice how much energy they're feeling inside. This leads to self-awareness and can help children build a skill called self-regulation. Self-regulation is about managing your internal energy. It helps children manage their emotions and their body movements during tough situations.

For this activity make a picture of a

thermometer. Paste a picture of a starfish at the bottom and a picture of a storm at the top of the thermometer. Ask the children if they feel calm and peaceful like a starfish or charged up like a storm. You could also give them an example of a glitter ball when children are over energized, for example when you have big emotions your glitter is everywhere but you can settle your glitter by breathing slowly. Conduct this activity at different times of the day and encourage children to describe their energy levels.

### Activity: Owl Eyes

This activity encourages children to practice observation skills to notice what's going on around them. They pick up on social cues and look at ways to get their needs met as well as be respectful of others. When children are at a free choice time or at the playground tell them to look around like an owl slowly and intently in an exaggerated fashion. You could even ask them to make their hands into imaginary binoculars. Let them take turns sharing details about

what you see: "All the easels are occupied." "There is plenty of space in the puzzle and block corner."

Encourage the children to connect their observations with choosing how to behave. For example, when the easels are occupied, the child could decide to go and play with the blocks first.

Remember to introduce and first conduct these activities with children when they are calm and relaxed. It's of limited use to try to introduce activities when children are already having a meltdown as the brain is not receptive to new learning at this point.



When children feel a big emotion like anger, anxiety, excitement the prefrontal cortex which is the rational part of the brain takes a break and we're left to deal with just the emotional brain or the amygdala.







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An Integrated Semester Series

Classes 1 to 5



The books are child-friendly, with explanations given in age-appropriate language, along with ample examples, interesting activities and attractive illustrations. Each subject is presented in a way that will appeal to learners and facilitators, with Activity-Based Learning being the focus for all core subjects. The exercises are designed to enhance skills of application and analysis while developing multiple intelligences.

**HUES: An Integrated Semester Series** is an innovative approach to learning for young learners. The series, which is meant for Classes 1 to 5, offers activity-based courses for all subjects, that is, English and Maths (for Classes 1 to 5); EVS (for Classes 1, 2); General Knowledge (for Classes 1 to 5); as well as Science and SST (for Classes 3 to 5).

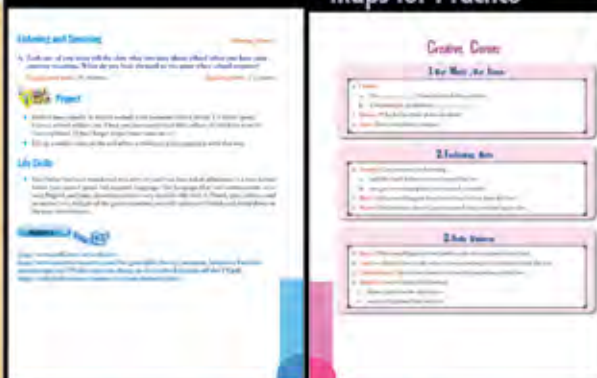
The series offers well-graded, age-appropriate content mapped to the NCERT syllabus and the National Curriculum Framework, thus taking care of all the learning needs of young learners.

All subjects are packaged in 2 semester books for each class in such a way that the learner has to carry only one textbook to school every day. Each textbook is designed in such a manner that it contains the course content for each subject in a graded fashion. The child progresses from one book to the next having acquired all the concepts in all the subjects that she/he requires.

In the digital content available to the facilitator, innovative and pedagogically sound media resources are seamlessly integrated with the content in the textbooks. These include audio recordings for auditory learners, animations for visual learners, and interactive activities and concept-based games for kinaesthetic learners, thus embracing the Visual-Auditory-Kinaesthetic (VAK) approach.

## Special Features

Projects and Creative Corner  
Values and Life Skills  
Tips to Save the Earth  
Maps for Practice



## Teacher's Resources





# HELP OUR KIDS CROSS THE FINISH LINE WITH FINESSE



As a founding member of Sportz Village Academies (formerly KOOH Sports), Puneet Mehra's entrepreneurial stint early on in his career, equipped him with knowledge about startups and gave him an intrinsic understanding of various business models. In his role as COO of Sportz Village Academies; designing a winning strategy and overseeing the execution and implementation of mandates, is Puneet's top priority. His strength is in delivering the highest ROI, banking on the combined efforts of a robust team and across each platform. Puneet's operating strategy has actively contributed to the overall growth and revenue of the business, leading the organization to its goal, while setting the standards for continuous growth through innovation in sports. As a strategically focused executive, he elicits top performance through relationships, mentoring, recognition and training. As a professional cricketer, Puneet has represented teams in various divisions and continues to devote time to the sport.

In today's digital world, far too many children are affected by psychosocial and health problems that adversely affect their learning and behaviour in school and day to day life. The alarming episodes of depression, reclusiveness, panic attacks, anxiety and lashing out among school children, require our urgent and expanded intervention.

► By Puneet Mehra


In today's digital world, far too many children are affected by psychosocial and health problems that adversely affect their learning and behaviour in school and day to day life. The alarming episodes of depression, reclusiveness, panic attacks, anxiety and lashing out among school children, require our urgent and expanded intervention.

Many of the past contributors on this forum, have put forward strong statistics and theories on our perilous system and presented countermeasures – the time to implement these countermeasures, is now. The first step on the path to *leading* the change, is to acknowledge and accept the issue. Mental health/mental fatigue are no more prevalent here, than elsewhere in the world. We as parents and educators need to be held accountable, for our inability to identify the classic signs and symptoms. Our children bear this burden – their inability to clearly communicate their fears, leads to their poor performance at school and social settings. These problems only intensify, as children further internalize the self-destructive effects.

*"In order for man to succeed in life, God provided him with two means, education and physical activity. Not separately, one for the soul and the other for the body, but for the two together. With these means, man can attain perfection." -Plato*







Wise words, but let us not put the pressure on our kids to be perfect. Let us instead empower them to be fundamentally happy, healthy and strong children both morally and physically. Schools are secondary domains for our kids to thrive in. They are environments for our children to socialize, develop and grow. An emphasis on physical health education has existed for years, and continues to grow as a part of our school curriculum. I will take this opportunity however, to elaborate more on promoting physical competencies through sports in schools – this has known to help enhance resilience to high-risk behaviours and psychological problems in our children and youth.

### **Sports are not just for professional athletes and social media influencers**

Children who participate in physical activities such as sports, for at least one hour daily, experience positive mental and physical health benefits. Physical activity is known to trigger the release

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“In order for man to succeed in life, God provided him with two means, education and physical activity. Not separately, one for the soul and the other for the body, but for the two together. With these means, man can attain perfection.”  
-Plato



of endorphins in the brain, chemicals that boost mood and help relieve and prevent depression, according to the Mayo Clinic. In fact, the University of Florida reports that kids who participate in sports are less likely to develop depression, than kids who do not.

Exercise is also known to alleviate anxiety and boost self-esteem. Improved levels of self-esteem and self-confidence immensely aid in improving mood, attention and mental health. Participating in sports provides opportunities for children to develop friendships, to learn to lose and win gracefully, to practice taking turns, to set goals, to follow rules and manage time, to take on leadership roles when required, to play as a team, to practice conflict management and resolution. Physical activity through sports are known for all the above and garner an enriching learning experience that extends beyond what can be taught in the classroom or at home.

“Good health supports successful learning. Successful learners support health. Education and health are inseparable.” (World Health Organization)

### **The educational and mental benefits of sports are holistic**

- Physical activity has been proven to be the best outlet to release stress and negative energy and boost metabolism.
- Organized sports help develop cognitive and agility skills through physical exercise. Just like performing and visual arts, sports can also boast of the development of a child's brain and dexterity through interaction and participation.

- A correlation has been found between physical activity (especially through sports) and a noticeable improvement in a child's listening and learning skills in the classroom. Children develop laser focus concentration skills through the structured regime of sports culture.
- Teamwork is by far the strongest skillset our kids can develop through sports – they learn to work as a team for one common greater goal...to win.
- Sports teach our youth to make mature decisions by taking onus and accountability. The lessons they learn as a team on the playground, is what they carry with them as strong individuals out in the world and for life.
- Increased levels of confidence and self-worth/self-esteem. Interacting with a team means being able to see each other's strengths and to develop a sense of understanding and empathy to weaknesses. Team mates help build each other up – they help work on their weaknesses and hone their strengths.
- Confidence to stand up to bullying. Sports are the best open platform to teach children how to be inclusive, patient, tolerant and understanding. Kids learn to be assertive, to adjust, to recognize right from wrong, to voice their opinion and to stand up to injustice, especially when they have the collective guidance and support of their team members.
- From a social standpoint, sports are a powerful tool that brings people together and creates a sense of community. They develop connections that bond together people from all walks of life both adults and children,



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**Lakhmir Singh's**

# SCIENCE

**For ICSE**

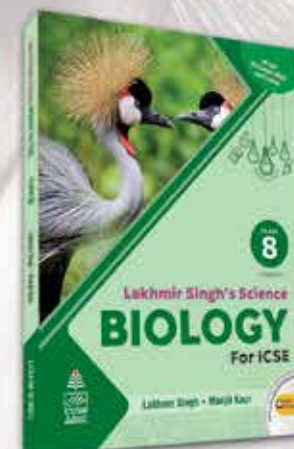
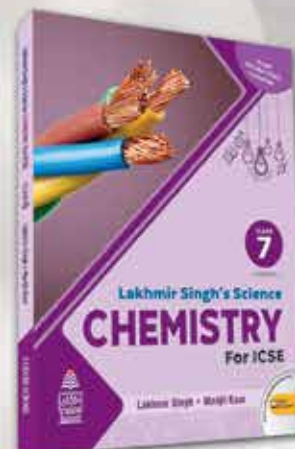
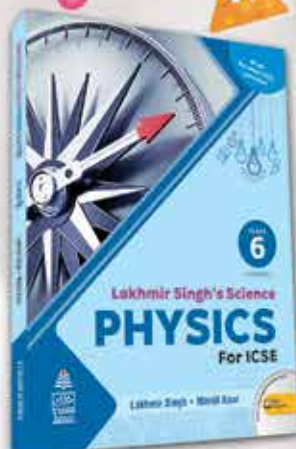


**S. CHAND**  
PUBLISHING

**Lakhmir Singh's Science** for ICSE is a series of books for Classes 1 to 8 that follows the latest curriculum. The main goal that this series aspires to accomplish is to help students understand difficult scientific concepts in a simple manner and in an easy language.

The concepts have been explained in detail and the scientific phenomena and principles are followed up with logical reasoning, wherever possible. The application of scientific concepts have been integrated with daily life examples in plenty.

**Lakhmir Singh  
Manjit Kaur**



## Digital Offerings

**E-book**

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**Interactive Exercises**

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extending the circle of support and network.

As educators and parents we need to leave a lasting legacy for our children. Setting a clear mandate to UNBURDEN our kids from the pressures of society and daily life. We need to nurture their childhood and help them to enjoy both school and play.

As a sportsman and educator, I welcome the opportunity to work side by side with teachers, to eradicate the stigma attached to mental health. Encouraging more physical


activity through sports and exercise is a great place to start. The inherent qualities and skills they develop through team sports, sticks with them for life.


Lastly, we need to help our children learn to “de-digitalize” in this fast paced modern world. They need to be encouraged to put away all electronic devices and get out on the playing field and participate in the action and not just live in the shadows of what they see on the internet and TV. Not all games have to be about competition - but rather to enjoy. ■

# Gateway to Computer Studies

For Classes I to 8

Based on Windows 7 with  
MS Office 2010 Version

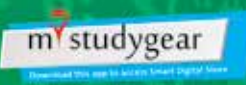





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**Key Features**



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**Support Material**

**About the Series**

Gateway to Computer Studies, a computer science series for grades 1 to 8, which offers all that a student is required to know about computer science. The series is based on the latest curriculum by the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE) and is scientifically graded to suit the requirements of the students of each grade. The series is based on Windows 7 and MS Office 2010.

**Print**

- Teacher's Manual (lesson plans, answer key, worksheets, model test paper)

**Digital**

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  - ❖ Dictionary/Translation
  - ❖ Teacher's Manual
- myStudygear App





## For Classes 1 to 8

by

Abha Sahgal

(Former Principal, Sanskriti School, New Delhi,  
Founder Principal DPS Sharjah)

### About the Series

**Skypath - An Integrated Multi-skill Course** is a set of 8 main coursebooks, 8 workbooks and 8 literature readers from classes 1 to 8. The series lays emphasis on making learners communicate effectively and learn the correct usage of the English language.

### USPs

- A well-graded series with ample focus on speaking and communication
- Special emphasis laid on life skills and values, through an integrated approach

### Support Material

- ❖ Teacher's Manual (lesson plans, answer key, worksheets)
- ❖ Digital Assets

**SPECIAL**  
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