STRESS IN ADOLESCENCE: CAUSES AND CURE

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ABSTRACT
The life of humans evolves through five stages, namely Birth, Infancy, Childhood, Adolescence and Adulthood. The problem of Stress is implicit in all the stages. But it is explicitly felt and suffered during adolescence and adulthood, as a matter of psychological problem. This article highlights the problem of stress and stress management among the adolescence in the Indian context. The causes of stress and the cues to deal with them are briefly outlined. The need to address adolescent stress management is significant to build a healthy adult life.

Keywords: Stress, Adolescence

INTRODUCTION
In this so called modern, world, and the word “stress” has become common not only among elders but also among youngsters and even among children. A survey by the American Psychology Association in 2014 revealed that teenagers are more stressed than adults, which is quite alarming for parents. Teen stress has become common. But it can be dealt with before it worsens. Stress in adolescence should be dealt with a little patience by parents.

ADOLESCENCE
Adolescence refers to the period of human growth that occurs between childhood and adulthood. Adolescence begins at somewhere around 11 and ends around 20 years. This is the upcoming period of stress and strain. Children undergo transformation from childhood to adolescence in this period. Adolescence period can be broken into three stages: early adolescence, middle adolescence, and late adolescence. Each stage has its own characteristics.

STRESS
Stress is how body responds to a demanding or threatening experience. We feel stressed when we have to deal with an adverse situation. Everyone experiences stress and teenagers are no exception.

Stress can be defined as “a state of psychological and physiological imbalance resulting from the disparity between situational demand and the individual’s ability and motivation to meet those needs”
Dr. Hans Selye, one of the leading authorities on the concept of stress, described stress as “the rate of all wear and tear caused by life.

REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES DURING ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is a period of revolutionary changes. Children during this period experience several changes in their body as well as in their mental process and behavior. Children like to give up many of their habits and tendencies of infancy and childhood and start to introduce new things in their behavior and childhood behavior disappears. This is a stage at which the individual is neither regarded as a child nor as an adult. He tries to behave like an adult and he errs. When he behave like child he is scolded. Adolescence is like a bridge between childhood and adulthood. It becomes a base for his entire future.

PHYSIOLOGICAL CHANGES

Adolescence is one of the most rapid phases of human development. Although the order of many of the changes appears to be universal, their timing and the speed of change vary among and even within individuals

Many biological changes take place during the adolescent years. Most obvious are the physical changes, for example, increases in height, acquisition of muscle mass, the distribution of body fat and the development of secondary sexual characteristics.

NEURODEVELOPMENTAL CHANGES

Important neuronal developments are also taking place during the adolescent years. These developments are linked to hormonal changes but are not always dependent on them. Developments are taking place in the regions of the brain, such as the limbic system, that are responsible for pleasure seeking and reward processing, emotional responses and sleep regulation. At the same time, changes are taking place in the pre-frontal cortex, the area responsible for what are called executive functions: decision-making, organization, impulse control and planning for the future. The changes in the pre-frontal cortex occur later in adolescence than the limbic system changes.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGES

Linked to the hormonal and neurodevelopmental changes that are taking place are psychosocial and emotional changes and increasing cognitive and intellectual capacities. Over the course of the second decade, adolescents develop stronger reasoning skills, logical and moral thinking, and become more capable of abstract thinking and making rational judgments. Also, they are more able to take other people’s perspectives into consideration and often want to do something about the social issues that they encounter in their lives.

This is the period the reproductive organs begin to attain their maturity. Girls mature in their early adolescence, that is, from 11 to 13 years of age while boys mature in their middle adolescence, that is, from 13 to 18. The adolescence period differs from boys to girls. Girls grow fast in the early stage while boys grow fast in the later stage.

CAUSES OF STRESS

ACADEMIC STRESS

The pressure to perform academically better is one of most common cause of teen stress. They often worry about a lot of things like completing school work, project, preparing for exam and choosing for college and so on. Pressure from the parents, school authorities and society to do well is the most important cause for stress. That too when they are in 10th and 12th grade, they are forced to concentrate in studies. There is no relaxation or entertainment. Even the schools don’t have physical education period.
PHYSICAL CHANGES

During this period, the body starts to develop and grow rapidly. The secondary sexual characteristics start to develop. Changes in girls are marked by the start of the menstruation cycle, breast growth, hair growth in the pubic area and the armpits. Girls grow fast in the early period while the boy’s growth is fast and visible in the later period. Hair growth starts in the pubic area armpits chest and the face in boys. This usually starts around the age of 12; by the time the boy reaches 18 years, there is change in their voices. Their vocal cords grow and as a result, the voice pitch changes into a heavier tone.

It is important to keep in mind that though the physical development in adolescence is very rapid, the mental faculties are still in the developmental stage. Adolescence go through some emotional and physical changes which can leave them confused and stressed. The child is unable to keep pace with all the changes occurring in its body. Most times, adolescents distance themselves from their parents and tend to resort to their peer group for answers. It is at this point that the parent need to step forward and be a friend and guide to your child.

SOCIAL STRESS

Social life is paramount for teenagers, and they would like to be accepted by their peers, by being in the popular group. They give importance to friends than family. They would like to dress well. Hero worship starts in this period. They are very conscious about their dress and their appearance. As a result, they spend most of their time in front of the mirror. This makes the parents worry about their children. In addition to this, romantic relationship can also be a cause for stress among the teenagers.

STRESS DUE TO FAMILY PROBLEMS

Anything that affects the family has an impact on the teenagers also. Unreasonable expectations from the parents, sickness of a family member or strained relationship between parents and siblings can cause stress among the teenagers.

FINANCIAL STRESS

Money not only affects the elders but also the teenagers. Studies show that kids from low income families deal with poverty related stress and become troubled teens and adults. The child becomes a victim of delinquent behavior.

TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Dealing with traumatic events like accidents, sickness or death of a close family member or friend, instances of physical or mental abuse can have a very severe impact on children.

DRASTIC CHANGES IN LIFE

Adolescence may not accommodate changes as quick as adults do. Drastic changes like moving to a new school or city adding a new member in the family like step parent, step sibling etc., can make the teenagers stressed.

ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP

Boys and girls in high school often worry about not having a boyfriend or girlfriend and they envy their friends who have love relationships.

POOR SELF-ESTEEM

Teenagers have lots of questions and doubts about the different emotions and physical changes they go through. Hormones have great impact on the emotional balance of the teenagers. While the parents and society set a set of norms of behavior inside and outside home (that is, society) the children find it difficult to follow the norms which create a poor self-esteem in the teenagers.
PEER PRESSURE

Children start to socialize more during adolescence and try to navigate through the complex world of relationship at this stage. The longingness to be accepted by peer motivates them to try new things including drinking, smoking and drug abuse. As adolescence is at a vulnerable age, they try to find an identity.

UNHEALTHY COMPETITION

Competition amongst peers in school is common. Competition is good and healthy as long as it encourages them to perform better and improve their grades. But if it gives rise to negative feelings, like jealousy and resentment, it only adds to current academic stress.

POOR TIME MANAGEMENT

A common complaint that teenagers make is “I don’t have time”. They easily get distracted by technology and media, which eats up most of their time. They mostly spend their time watching T.V, movie and internet by which they get distracted easily and results in poor academic performance.

SIBLING RIVALRY

Difference between siblings is normal, but if it goes up a few notches and turns into war, it can be stressful for both the parties involved. Teenagers develop hatred for their younger siblings who get more attention from parents.

CURING ADOLESCENT STRESS

GOOD NIGHT SLEEP

Between schoolwork, social life and home adolescence get very little time to get proper sleep. Academic pressure makes them to forget sleep. They tend to stay up late at night and get out of house very early. Relaxation is necessary to de-stress. When the body is relaxed the mind also relaxes and rejuvenates. Good night sleep can help the teenagers deal with stress better.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity is one of the best relievers in the teenagers. Running and walking can reduce stress to a great extent. Children can be encouraged to do exercise and take part in sports so that they can keep their body and mind healthy.

HEALTHY DIET

A balanced diet that includes a good intake of fruits, vegetables, dairy and protein food keep the children healthy. When the teen is stressed they tend to eat junk foods. Junk food should be avoided and healthy food should be replaced.

SUPPORT FROM PARENTS

Handling teenagers is a difficult task. Getting angry with them for their behavior is not going to help. Instead parents should support them, encouraging them without criticizing for their cognitive, rational and intellectual thinking.

FOCUS ON POSITIVE

Stress is the result of negative thinking and focusing on it makes things worst. It may not be easy to stay positive, but we can keep remembering them about their strengths.

TALK ABOUT IT

Be friendly with the teenagers and win their confidence, so that when the teenagers face problems they will come to parents for solution instead of sharing that problems with their friends and seeking
solution from the one who is immature. Encourage the children to talk about what is worrying them. It is therapeutic and one of the most effective way of stress relief.

WHAT MAKE THEM HAPPY

Let the teenagers do what they like. It is a great releiver of stress. It could be like listening to music, playing games or watching movies, gardening etc.

STRESS MANAGING STRATEGY

Teenagers can be encouraged to do breathing exercises meditation regularly. To de-stress the stress the following strategies can be followed by the teenagers:

CREATIVE VISUALIZATION

Visual imagery is a powerful tool that can be used to get out of negative thinking that creates stress. Sit in a quiet place in your room. Close your eyes and listen to the sounds around. Try to become mindful. Now picture how the ideal situation would be like. Think about how you would feel and what you would say. Hold that thought for a minute or two – experience it in your mind. Once you open your eyes, you’ll be back in the real world, but with a fresh perspective.

C.O-SHARING

When you and your friends are stressed, you can try this activity. Co-sharing lets you share your feelings and thoughts in a structured way. It also helps you develop your listening skills.

SILENT BALL GAME

This is a game your adolescents can play in a group. Take a lightweight ball, like a Nerf ball that can be thrown easily. The objective of the game is to stay silent when you throw or receive the ball. The person who makes a sound or misses a catch is out. The activity forces the kids to focus on catching the ball, and keeps them from thinking about whatever is bothering them.

FREEZE DANCE

This is a fun activity that a group of teenagers can play to de-stress themselves. Gather the teenagers in a room and play some music. The participants have to dance to the tunes and freeze in whatever position or posture they are in when the music stops.

CONCLUSION

Adolescent stress is not a matter of choice or chance in one’s life. It is a natural phenomenon that everyone undergoes without fail during their teenage life.

Therefore, there is a need on the part of parents, elders and teachers to consciously (but with love and personal care) monitor the behavior of the adolescents. Failure to guide teenage life would lead to serious health and mental problems which will demand costly psychotherapy. “Prevention is better than cure”, is an adage of great significance to mould a healthy adult society.

REFERENCES