

ENRICHING HAPPINESS CURRICULUM AT SCHOOLS: DESIGNING ACTIVITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF HAPPINESS

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Our new National policy of education promulgates emotional and social well being of young learners. In today's times when stress can easily creep into one's life, it becomes imperative that one is equipped with all approaches and strategies to deal effectively with stress and be happy. Schools have times and often introduced life skill education to train learners in coping mechanisms during adverse circumstances. Recently, Government of Delhi has introduced happiness curriculum in directorate of education schools in Delhi. The thrust being play way strategies blended with creative forms of expression. Having thoroughly researched the curriculum, the author suggests the following strategies to enrich the happiness curriculum and to equip the stakeholders with requisite tools and strategies in this direction

I. STRATEGIES AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL

- Schools can help students to learn about peace and love through documentaries of the peace makers such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King and others
- Schools can conduct workshops and lectures on developing life skills and communication skills from time to time.
- Workshops on anger management, especially for adolescents, should be organized by the schools.
- Martial arts or physical sports activities may be helpful for aggressive youngsters to release their unruly behavior.
- Students should be given responsibilities and make accountable for their work. This will channelize their energy, instill in them a sense of belongingness and make them creative and confident.
- Students should be strictly discouraged to carry mobile phones in Schools. Mobile phones are often misused to promote undesirable activities.
- Students should be counseled from early stages for constructive use of internet as it is often seen that students misuse internet by uploading pictures and videos of teachers and peers.
- Attendance records should be carefully maintained so as to identify the students who are absenting regularly. The same should be cross checked with parents. It is often seen that students bunk classes

for going to movies and malls. This is seen as one of the source of violent and irresponsible behavior among learners.

- Students should be counseled to respect teachers and elders as it is often seen that students make fun of teachers in front of peer group.
- The school curriculum (including time table) should be such so as to strengthen positive behavior and energy among learners.
- Teachers should help students to distinguish the difference between reel life and real life so that they do not imitate the violence and crimes shown in movies and video games.
- Each school should have an active peace club. The activities that can be undertaken by the peace club are described below:

Spiritual upliftment and peace clubs in schools

Besides developing moral and social values in students, an important task at hand is to uplift the spiritual level of our learners. Peace clubs can take care of this at schools. These clubs can work on the below mentioned areas by conducting workshops, organizing talks and practicing well known techniques for a calmer and happier life. The activities can be done as part of morning assemblies, SUPW sessions, work experience etc. The students need practice in the following *values* so as to be productive and joyful citizens.

1. Be honest to yourself. Only then can you spread cheer and joy around you.
2. Remove your inner conflicts and be peaceful. This can be done by spending some time each day on prayer, meditation and yoga.
3. Love your fellow students and others around you. Do not carry a feeling of hatred.
4. Recall the power of gentleness. Hurting others' feeling and causing harm to anyone leads to self destruction
5. Do not boast of your success. At times people are jealous of your success. Real joy is in self realizing the feeling of attainment
6. Do not be happy at other peoples' failure .Your happiness is in your success, not in the failure of others.
7. Listen to others point of view patiently and respect their views .This is also a way to restrain your ego.
8. Whenever possible help others. Selfishness is one of the worst traits of life.
9. Anger destroys rational thought. Device ways to control your anger.
10. Spend quality time with your family, this is your biggest stress buster.

Besides the above activities, the schools can integrate teaching -learning processes at school with arts and aesthetics, and also with SUPW activities. Also integration of physical education with school subjects can make school education joyous and meaningful. Further, inclusion of yoga and meditation can be quite helpful.

II. ROLE OF TEACHERS IN DEALING WITH THE HAPPINESS CURRICULUM AT SCHOOLS

Teachers should act as role models for students. They need to exhibit the values that they desire to see in their students as values are caught not taught.

Teacher role in the Happiness curriculum

Teachers can meaningfully contribute in the happiness programmers in the following way:

1. Develop school-wide guidelines and strategies and post them throughout the school in form of catchy slogans and posters.
2. Form friendship groups for children who are prone to emotional turmoil.
3. Hold regular class meetings to discuss happiness strategies among students.
4. Develop school-wide reinforcement programs to reward students showing improvement.
5. Incorporate the message of the anti- bullying program into school and other community activities in which children are involved.
6. Get older peers to serve as monitors for happiness and to intervene when they don't see it taking place

Usually, bullying and victimization are seen as two big areas of intervention at school level as this issue can lead to wanted stress among learners.

III. ROLE OF THE PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

No program is successful without the involvement of parents and community, where the learner spends majority of her time. Schools can arrange regular parent teacher meetings to sensitize elders about the need to stay happy and healthy. Well trained and motivated teachers can arrange programs for parents and other members of the community to create awareness and impart knowledge about the subject. It is actually a step to create a society which is well trained not only in keeping stress at bay but also to embrace happiness in the true sense. It is very important to send a message that life is full of ups and downs and that neither joy nor sorrows are permanent. It is also essential to prove that only in a happy state of mind everyone can progress and work to the best of his or her potential.

Parents' role in the Happiness curriculum

- Parent's role in ushering happiness is very important. They can give examples of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, (Jr) and Nelson Mandela etc, discussing their philosophies in the family deliberations.
- Parents should play an active role in restricting the access to meaningless and violent video and mobile games in the family especially among children and adolescents.
- Parents should check any act of aggression or violence by any family member at home. A serene and calm atmosphere at home will have a soothing influence on the child
- Parents should not condone their ward's mistakes and not overlook changes in their behavior. Corrective measures taken on the right time can be quite useful to handle various issues.
- Parents should motivate their wards to share their school experiences with them. They should regularly attend parent – teacher meetings and share information about the child with the teacher. This way they can come to know of the child's behavior and progress at school.
- Now a days many movies and television programs use foul mouthed language and immense violence. Parents need to keep a check on this. They need to council their children regularly about desirable values and virtues.

IV. THE FIVE A's FOR STUDENTS TO IMPROVE COPING SKILLS AND SELF ESTEEM

The students should practice the following five A's for self discovery and anger management so as to improve coping skills and self esteem thus staying happy:

1. **AWARENESS** of rights, duties and responsibilities with compassionate understanding of rights of others.
2. **ACCEPTANCE** of diversity in the physical, social, economic and religious context.
3. **ATTITUDE** towards treating your own dignity and respecting the equal rights of others.
4. **ADOPTION** of new ideas, values and changing lifestyle with sound judgment and selectiveness.
5. **APPRECIATION** of the gifts of nature, people's struggle for survival and cultural heritage and above all appreciating the values of good healthy personal relationship, friendship and kindness which may encourage peace in the society and in the community.

With these strategies the students can go a long way in their journey happily and responsibly. They can be agents of change not only to their surroundings but also be sensitive to needs of the environment and hence make this planet a better place to live

CONCLUSION

Research has proved that one can be more creative, think and work better if she is happy. Therefore in today's time it is essential to ward off stress and embrace happiness. After a lot of deliberations various schools in our country as well as other schools across the globe have introduced happiness curriculum from a very early stage. The responsibility of the school administration, teachers, parents and community has been highlighted in this article. The role of peace clubs, eco clubs, gardening clubs, yoga and meditation clubs etc in the schools is undisputable. The need for schools to conduct plantation drives, rallies in the community, field visits, enrichment programs, cultural exchange programs and myriad of other activities can provide support in this direction. The happiness curriculum encompasses all stakeholders. Thus happiness curriculum is not only for the young learner but for all those who want to be happy and healthy.

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