

ENHANCING MENTAL HEALTH OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS THROUGH STRESS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Dr. Lekshmi V*

*Assistant Professor, N.S.S. Training College, Ottapalam

Abstract

Education is meant for the all-round development of the individual to equip one with skills for adjustment with social environment and mental health of the individual play a key role in this unique adjustment. Since the teachers are the care givers of future generation, the facilitators of learning experiences and the engineers behind social construction, the mental health of teachers has to be taken care of with seriousness. In this era of continuous change, it is easy to prone to stress and hence to mental health problems. The busy work schedule of teachers makes them under excessive stressful condition. Adopting preventive measures is better than adopting curative measures. Hence it is necessary to equip the prospective teachers with measures of self-care for stress management. Here we discuss some practices to enhance the mental health of prospective teachers through stress management practices. The practices we discuss in the present paper are very easy to administer in the field of teacher education and are very effective in stress management. They are low cost or no cost practices economic in terms of money and effort. Administrative and implementing authorities have to take care in adopting policy measures to enhance the mental health of prospective teachers and the teaching community.

Key words: Mental health, Stress, Stress management

Introduction

Important aim of education is to help the individual to equip with skills necessary for making adjustment with the environment. Mental health is the prominent factor which helps for the effective adjustment with the social world. The condition of psychological maturity is known as mental health. The physical, cognitive, affective, behavioural and social dimensions of a mentally healthy person will interact functionally with one another and with the environment. Mental health makes the individual to be resilient to stress, to respond effectively to challenges, to be productive and fruitful for oneself and for community.

According to World Health Organisation, “Mental health is a state of wellbeing 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 emphasises that mental health is not just the absence of mental disorders. In this era of fast continuous changes, due to busy schedule of life and work prone people towards stress and there to mental health issues.

Why Mental Health of Prospective Teachers Matters?

Education is the process through which continuous development of an individual is ensured. It rebuilds the individual's life experience through active thinking and understanding. The teacher is in the pivot position in the process of education since the teacher is the facilitator

of learning experience. The emotional balance and mental health of teachers play an important role in the making of physically and mentally healthy generation.

Teaching is a profession having 24x7 hours schedule. The teacher has to take care of student matters, has to plan teaching-learning experiences according to learning objectives, has to adopt proper evaluation techniques, has to maintain classroom and school discipline, has to create a democratic climate, has to solve peer group issues, has to address learner diversities and exceptionalities since no two individuals are equal. This heavy schedule will definitely create an excess job stress. The future generation, their development and success are in hands of the teacher and hence the maintenance of mental health of the teacher is very essential.

It is better to get away from mental health problems than to cure it after the occurrence. For this we have to stress-proof the young teachers. In order to generate competent, psychologically healthy teachers we have to train the prospective teachers through stress management practices. If the stress management practices are adopted as a part of curriculum, we can create mentally healthy generation of teachers.

Stress Management Practices

Here we discuss some stress management practices which we can adopt in the field of teacher education.

1. Mental Health Education

Basic information about the concept of mental health, mental health problems and types, signs and symptoms of mental health problems, the importance of mental health, preventive measures of mental health problems etc. should be incorporated in detail as part of the curriculum. This knowledge will help the prospective teachers to provide self-care by avoiding or managing stressful situations according to the demand of circumstances.

2. Flexible Hours

The class hours, break timings, the start time and end time can be made flexible to make prospective teachers competent to tackle the lessons of time management and to cope with their anytime work schedule which is a part of their professional life. In this practice, class can start at 8.30 am on some days instead of usual 9.30 am timing or class can disperse at 5pm instead of 4pm. The lunch break timings also can be changed likewise on some days. This will help the prospective teachers to handle the changes in time schedule of their work in professional life without any stress.

3. Change of Working Space

The classroom rotation can be practiced daily or weekly. This will also help to reduce stress associated with change in work place. Similarly prospective teachers have to be trained to work in quiet as well as less-busy and more-busy working climate also. This will help them to work effectively under any schedule.

4. Role Changes

The prospective teachers should be given enough provisions to play different roles in group activities. They have to work as a good team member, group leader, coordinator, facilitator etc. the key roles, subordinate roles and roles behind the curtain should be trained. This will enable them to cooperate in any working climate; whatever may be their role.

5. Self-Awareness and Self-Management Practices

It is very essential for a person to know his competencies and disabilities and this add to the professional competence. Ample opportunities should be provided for self-awareness through healthy and constructive criticism. Self-reflection, peer evaluation and teacher evaluation etc. will help the prospective teachers in developing self-awareness and self-management.

6. Social Skill Development Practices

Enhanced social skills are an essential quality for a good teacher. The social skills like effective open communication, cooperation, empathy, friendship making, self-discipline etc should be inculcated among prospective teachers through community-oriented activities like conscientization programs, community service programs like cleaning public places, addressing common people, cooperative and collaborative works etc.

7. Job Demand Training

Job stress increases the mental health problems and can be prevented by confirming job requirements. Prospective teachers should be given clear, current and adequately detailed job descriptions and awareness about their responsibilities and social expectations. Moreover, they should be equipped with technological skills to become competent in their professional life in this era of technological advancement.

8. Orientation towards Life Long Learning

Learning enhances self-confidence. It increases knowledge and make us competent. The teachers should have a positive attitude towards lifelong learning since they should be equipped with the latest knowledge. They should keep in touch with novel knowledge and advancements in technologies. The prospective teachers should be encouraged to attend seminars, workshops, additional training programs and to pursue online open courses. These practices will create a positive attitude in prospective teachers towards lifelong learning.

9. Yoga and Meditation

Yoga and meditation make the brain active. These practices stimulate the left prefrontal cortex of the brain which is an area associated with positive emotions. Meditation enhances sensation and attention. These activities release stress and hence provide mental health.

10. Slow Breathing Technique

When we are under excessive stress or tension our heart beat increases. Slow breathing reduces the heart beat and it helps to calm emotions. This help to focus on present and help

to deal with mental conflicts. Slow breathing technique can be easily practiced any time anywhere and is very effective and useful in our day-to-day encounters.

Conclusion

The development and progress of nation is decided in her classrooms. The fortune of the future generation is in the hands of teachers. In this fast-changing world, it is very easy to prone to stress and mental health problems. Once the psychological balance is lost, it is very difficult to regain the state of equilibrium. Hence the prospective teachers should be trained to balance their psychological equilibrium with proper stress management practices. Proper measures should be taken by universities and teacher education institutions to enhance the mental health of prospective teachers through stress management practices. Then only we can generate courageous, determined, calm, hardworking, competent, skilled teachers with self-awareness and self-management to cater the needs of present era.

References

- Baum,A.(1990). Stress, intrusive imagery and chronic distress. *Health Psychology*, 9(6),653-675. Retrieved from <http://psycnet.apa.org>
- Harmon-Jones, E. (2019). *Cognitive Dissonance: Reexamining a Pivotal Theory in Psychology* (2nd ed.). Washington,DC: American Psychological Association
- Siler,B. (2011). Stress Relief: Why crying supports Emotional wellness. Retrieved from <http://www.huffingtonpost.com>
- Taylor,S.E.(2008). *Health Psychology*(6th ed). Retrieved from <http://books.google.co.in>
- World Health Organisation (2004). Promoting mental health: concepts, emerging evidence, practical (summary report). Geneva:World Health Organisation