



Mental health is just as
important
as physical health

IN Focus

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

According to S A M H A -

"Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act, and helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices."

Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Over the course of your life, if you experience mental health problems, your thinking, mood, and behavior could be affected."

Maintaining good mental health is crucial for every individual, and more so for *school students*, now a rising global concern. Mental health as a *Universal Human Right* was affirmed at the recently held *World Mental Health Day, on 10/10/23*. It recognized the inherent dignity and worth of every person and also advocated the right to mental health and well-being.

There is no single cause for mental illness; a number of factors can contribute to it - adverse childhood experiences, bullying, substance abuse, deficiency / disability, painful relationships, loneliness, biological factors, medical conditions, etc.

As rightly stated by **Dr T R John** (Senior Consultant, Psychiatry), *"Mental health is a fundamental human right, intricately linked to an individual's overall well-being and quality of life. Acknowledging and advocating for mental health as a universal human right is essential to foster a society that is inclusive, empathetic, and supportive of all its members, regardless of their mental health status. By addressing challenges and promoting awareness and accessible services, we can work towards a world where mental health rights are recognized and upheld for everyone."*

“ If you see someone without a smile, give them one of yours.

- Dolly Parton

SO TRUE! YET, FAR FROM
REALITY FOR MANY

“

It's okay to not be okay.

Your struggles do not define you.

Taking care of your mental health is an act of self-love.

You are not alone in your struggles.

You are worthy of happiness and peace of mind.

It's okay to ask for support when you need it.

Your mental health should not be stigmatized.

You are stronger than you realize.

Small steps can lead to big progress in mental health.

Your mental health journey is unique to you.

You are worthy of a life filled with joy and happiness.

*“Every day, in a hundred small ways, our children ask - Do you see me?
Do you hear me? Do you feel me? Their behaviour often reflects our response.”*

— L R Knost

QED Talk

NEP 2020's focus on Importance of **Mental Health** in Schools

DR. SHEKHAR SESHADRI

Senior Professor (Retd.) - Department of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (NIMHANS), Key Contributor to POCSO Act 2012, Advisor - SAMVAD



■ Hello Shekhar! I would like to open this interview with a webinar title of yours - *“To a child you cannot say tomorrow.”* Please tell us more about this.

Children are full of ideas and aspirations. There is a certain immediacy to these ideas and aspirations and the kind of curiosity that they have about things happening around them, what they witness, what they experience. In general, the nature of teacher-student relationship being such, there is a need for confirmation or validation. Children sort of spontaneously tend to gravitate towards adults for this confirmation so to speak. The pace at which certain things are happening (*and if we use this idiocy as a metaphor of that pace*), the idea is - ‘you know if you’re going to ask me to wait.. *there are two new models that are going to come, I don’t have time to wait*’. The kind of frustration that arises particularly where the challenges in parenting (or mentoring by teachers) is concerned, and where adolescents and the kind of thought processes and lifestyle, their proclivities and their approaches are concerned - there is a certain *need for immediacy* and how therefore do you equip parents and teachers with a response repertoire that doesn’t necessarily mean that you that you *give in* to the request / demands, but a *response repertoire that recognizes where this need request or demand comes from*, and then *respond to it with understanding and with respect, and not delegitimize or render it invalid*.

But at a more ideological level, it is about responsivity to that child’s immediate situation, or mood or predicament. And this is where this whole business of *responsive parenting / mentoring* actually comes in. The simplest example of this in a school situation, if you look at the whole distinction between today and tomorrow, isthere is a child in the class and the teacher is walking by. And the child looks at the teacher with enthusiasm and says “Good Morning Miss!”, and the teacher kind of looks casually and walks off. Now, imagine what that does to the child. *Does she not like me? Did I do anything to offend her? Is she angry with me? Will she continue to be angry with me? Oh, God, what do I do now?* You can see how delicate a nuance the psychology of a child is, where the immediacy of immediate responses in some way, constitutes the framework in which I made the statement that *you cannot put things off for tomorrow*, there is a certain framework of immediacy that is required when you respond to children’s needs, their ideas, their experiences, their aspirations, their creativity, their imagination, their output, and that for them, creates this resonance that then builds into what we call as a *vibrant and effective teacher-child or a parent-child relationship*.

To put it then succinctly, it is unfortunate that the culture on which teacher-student and parent-child relationship is based is actually a culture of instruction, expectation, control and obedience. Whereas, *it should actually be a culture of conversations*. And the conversations have to be **NOW** as you’re watching. That’s what I meant when I speak spoke about - *To a child you cannot say tomorrow!*

■ **Mental Health is now a Universal Human Right. What exactly comes under that whole umbrella of mental health - let’s talk about children’s mental health.**

Mental health as a UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHT was actually the tagline for this year’s World Mental Health Day, celebrated on October 10. Let me address the issue of Universal Childhood Mental Health from a school perspective, which will be of particular relevance to you. So, there are what are known as universal interventions that is ‘whole school’ or ‘whole class interventions’, which are essentially what we call ‘life skills’ or ‘social emotional learning’ and there are many kinds of technologies that are available for socio-emotional learning. So there is a **SEAL** from UK (<https://sealcommunity.org/node/356>), there is **CASEL** from the US (<https://casel.org/>) and India itself has the Teacher Foundation in Bangalore, who have a program called **iSELF**, i.e. India Socio Emotional Learning Framework. There is also the **Life Skills Collaborative** giving a whole set of skills and how they are operationally defined, what are related skills and how do they actually work in operation. So whether there is a mental health issue or not, **at the first level, you do a whole class life skills work**, so that when a child is in a situation of predicament or conflict, the skills are already there because they’ve been spoken about, discussed, debated, practiced. So that’s one level. **The second is at the level of concerns that children have** they do not amount to mental health pathology. A child has seen a fight breaking out on the road, or at home, or

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There are wounds that never show on the body, that are deeper and more hurtful than anything that bleeds.

— Laurell K Hamilton

s/he comes to school with a certain concern, or has concerns about identity, about appearance - *do people like me, or do they not like me?* And at **the third level we have children who have learning emotional behavioral or psychiatric problems.** it could be ADHD, it could be LD. How does a teacher recognize this? What kind of *first level response* can a teacher provide? How does a teacher *recognize levels of severity?* And who does the teacher refer to? So what is your referral network? How do we build this ecosystem, in a given city, a given district, in a given *kasba*? How do we create this? So that's what it covers. SAMVAD has created this ecosystem wherein we've built a whole directory called **SAMVAD SETU**, for a given district, that defines -*who you go to, if you've realized that a child has severe PTSD, or a severe emotional problem.* So we've built that ecosystem, that is kind of distributed.

■ **Most schools have 1 Counsellor; and/or 1 Special Educator. Is that really enough for ensuring whole-school mental health? How can institutions cope with the rise in Poor School Performance?**

So, if you take a school itself as an ecosystem, does the school have 1 counselor, 2 counselors, 4 counselors? Does the school have a resource room; does it have a special educator? Now some schools have it, some schools don't? And can one counselor, deal with all the problems of a school space that has say 2237 children?

How do you therefore build *a system where the teacher has a certain recognition of a child with mental health issues?* So either the teacher or the counselor has a calendar by which you do the universal interventions, which is life skills, or social emotional learning, so that goes on for the entire class, the entire school. Then, there are certain children who have concerns, who may come to report to a teacher and *we equip the teacher with skills to build a first level response* (these first level responses are again available in the SAMVAD website). A child that has mild anxiety, not anxiety the disorder, but an anxiety about performance or anxiety about the impending exam - *you equip the teacher, all the teachers,* to handle this. - *to be responsive to a child in a gentle, non-judgmental, caring manner.* So yes, ALL teachers need this. Then, there are a certain group of teachers who are *willing* to get into the school mental health program, to support this 1 counselor or 2 counselors; those who have the bandwidth. This doesn't mean that the other teachers are bad, it just means that some are more approachable. It's okay if you don't have the bandwidth or the time or the inclination - that's okay. But there would be 2-3 teachers, for whom it comes *naturally.* So the Counsellor's hand is strengthened by these people who are willing to come to do this work, once or twice a week, for those group of kids with concerns, and those group of kids who actually have mild levels of diagnosable conditions such as emotional disorders, or conduct problems, or ADHD, or learning issues, for whom that little extra input is given. And then you have the red flags for severity, and a defined referral systems. That's how you build a framework to really deal with the numbers that you might otherwise have to contend with.

■ **Aren't the B.Ed programmes addressing this aspect? Now with the 4 years integrated syllabus, perhaps a revamped programme to enrich education professionals with Children's Rights & Mental Health strategies?**

Not adequately. The NEP 2020 has brought it into focus - you will find at least 30 or 40 places where socio-emotional learning, well-being, and mental health have been alluded to. Other than the NEP, the Ministry of Education, NCERT, and the National Institutes for the training of teachers - are agencies with whom we are in conversations. Also, there is the NCERT **Manodarpan** program, which SAMVAD has actually coordinated and collaborated with extensively, to look at *teacher enablement.* SAMVAD's site itself has a lot of material for teachers, which looks at what the signs and symptoms of some of these conditions are; which could be red flags for them, and how teachers can do simple classroom-based assessment? Where would they refer the child in case they needed to? The collaboration with the teacher and the school counsellor, (who presumably comes from a background with psychiatric social work /clinical psychology, and would have some ideas of the indicators pointing to diagnosable disorders) is important.

What we need to understand is that if you put learning emotional, behavioural and psychiatric problems together, we are talking about something between 10%-20%



of a given class. So if a class has 40 children, there may be perhaps 3-5, who have those kinds of problems; there may be a total of about 8-12 who have concerns & issues and so on, but *all 40 have needs for a universal programme* - that looks at conflict resolution, relationships, emotions, aspirations, dilemmas, self-identity, self-esteem, notions of self-efficacy, all the universal dimensions that we use, when we do whole class or school programs. B Ed programs need this.

■ **You mention that a *core understanding of Childhood & Child Development* are crucial to understanding Child Rights and Child Mental Health. I know it is a *MUST* for Educators , but how can Parents cope?**

The ambiguity or absurdity of this reality in two of the most complex contexts in the human life cycle, *marriage* and *parenting* - that we are all born with natural gifts, is an absurd assumption. We have training and accreditation for everything else in life - to be a doctor to be a specialist, to be a psychologist, but not for marriage, and certainly not for parenting.

After a series of World Space audio posts, a co-author and I, used the post material and wrote a book (more than a decade ago), called *Parenting - the Art and Science of Nurturing*. The book combines various aspects of parenting, including child development on the one hand, on adoption on adolescents, on life skills, on the emerging sexuality of your adolescence, on parenting a child with disability and the challenges that come there, on early childhood and parenting. It covers various dimensions of parenting. But, the challenge to take this to scale really arises from a re-examination of early childhood programs, (which is not to say that the middle years and the adolescence age doesn't come with its own challenges), but I'm looking at one epoch which is early childhood.

At SAMVAD, we have developed material, we have a flip chart for parents and we also have an activity book, which looks at the **five domains of child development**. So physical development, language, emotional development, social development, and cognitive development. And we look at some of the simple ways in which parents can actually carry out the different kinds of activities which are home based, looking at very low cost resources. Both the chart and the activity book are actually available on the website of SAMVAD which is - nimhanschilprotect.in. When we started SAMVAD, especially during COVID, we did a whole series called *Parenting PathShala* (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6M-G4mGr43qOabGga00t0WSozp2ZYcvL>), where we looked at **nine aspects of parenting**, and all our material i.e. both the website as well as the SAMVAD YouTube is essentially *public domain free access*, because we don't believe in copyright; we follow a *copyleft policy*. We tell people use it, adapt it, translate it, send it to anyone - just acknowledge us. No point in developing material and holding on to it. It's intended for dissemination. This is the way that we are essentially floating the idea of responsive parenting not just in the 0-6 age group, but in consonance with any age group which with the NEP is extended to age nine. So we're looking at the 0-2yrs as one age group where we're looking more at stimulation and so on. And then at the 3-6 yrs, and then the 7-9 yrs, where there are different aspects. Some very interesting ideas about child development and parenting in the site - do take a look.



■ **In continuation with this doctor, how can schools actually involve Parents in improving the mental health of children ?**

It needs to be essentially *programatised*. Many a time, school and school systems and school administration feel overwhelmed. Almost like - 'we have a mandate to deliver you know, we can't be getting into speaking to parents'. The idea is not that you're speaking to them every day. But it's about *how you calendar it* . Let me give you a facsimile of how this might sound.

- *Once a year*, you have a major Mela which is like tabling parenting, child well-being, the school's role, perhaps have a reading on childhood,... followed by informative stalls, people to talk to, so that's once a year.
- *Once a quarter*, you have a major in-person or online program that looks at the triangulation between parenting, school and children, with a central focus being - well-being / mental health. This could again be a presentation.
- *Once a month* only, you could have a one hour or a one and a half hour session in school, which could be either a dialogue or discussion facilitated by some expert who you have invited.
- *Once a week*, send them something (don't send them copious amounts). So if there are 52 weeks in a year, you omit the school holidays and you bring it down to say 36 PDF pamphlets, which are very *evocative* , but simple. For example quotes like - "*Never let schools interfere with your education*", by Mark Twain. Or Einstein's "*I was neither very intelligent nor gifted, only very curious*". Or another Mark Twain quote - "*Nothing that grieves can be called literal, in the eternal laws of proportion the loss of a doll for a child and the loss of the crown for the king remains the same magnitude*." Evocative stuff like that - you can start a Twitter / Insta thing which focuses only on children's well being.

So nobody's taxed and one person heads this triangulation program. You have a whole ready calendar - that's the way I would go about it.

READ TO SUCCEED

FOR TEACHERS

School Mental Health : *A handbook for school teachers and counsellors*
- by **Dr Philip John & WHO (India)**

Based on NEP 2020's new focus on 'skills' in children, rather than 'skill deficits', this book is ideal for empowering teachers in school classrooms to become *diagnosticians* and *therapists* for the numerous learning difficulties and hurdles leading to PSP (Poor School Performance). It gives an overview of the varied learning problems with an emphasis on Learning Disability (LD). It highlights the path-breaking and scientific approaches as diagnostic tools to handle PSP. By reading this book teachers can equip themselves with insights for solving many a behavioural puzzle in many of the students & learn about support strategies for emotional and behavioral problems.



FOR STUDENTS

My Strong Mind - *A story about developing mental strength*
- by **Neils Van Hove**

Kate is a sporty and happy girl. She does well at school and has many friends. But like every girl, she sometimes faces difficult situations at home or at school. Kate's story will open the door for children to commence building their own strong mind. This awareness and knowledge will enable children to participate in an open dialogue about the importance of mental strength and how to develop it. This book aspires to educate children and parents about mental toughness. Kate solves her every day problems with a positive attitude and hopefully this book will help young children to do the same.

■ **Some of the challenges related to mental health in schools are connected with lack of Equity. What are your insights on this?**

I once said, children are not an *amorphous mass of humanity*, that when they cross the school gate and come inside, they become equal in motivation, equal in every way - rather than each of them coming from their own unique universe. And therefore, to create that sense, one can use several techniques. Lev Vygotsky, social constructivism & developmental psychologist said - *The classroom is a collaborative community where knowledge is jointly constructed*. So when we work with groups of children and say, "Look, this is the problem at hand, these are some of the texts ... so now work together." Somebody has a good handwriting, has good calligraphy; somebody enables stuff, somebody reads, somebody discusses and they jointly sort of put together the assignment. So, *equity is actually about removing barriers to learning*; it's not so much about enablement and benefits. This idea, I hope, will percolate through the dispensation that is prescribed in NEP 2020; but this prescription needs to be executed & implemented at the basic levels. A part of what SAMVAD is trying to do, is to work with the school systems both at the Central & State levels and even with state, with education boards. I wrote a newspaper middle once - **"Rejoice, it's Examination time!"**. Funny, no one ever thought about exams being something to rejoice about, because there's always a feeling of doom, disaster and finality around it. Whereas, *examinations should actually be a celebration of learning*, and it never is. Outcome, success & result is prioritised over process & effort. I raised a couple of pertinent questions. How come there is the report card from the school to the parents that says - English so and so and, Math so and so in red, and those three dreaded words - "Can do better." *How come the report card from the teacher to the parent does not say* - "...in addition to all this, we'd like to tell you, your child has exceptional organizational ability; or your child is very good with younger children; or your child is a fantastic singer; or your child has great mimicry skills." Likewise, *how come there's no report card from the Parents to the school* saying, "Here's my report card in the last term, my child behaves very funnily with his sister, and I wish that some gender equity stuff could be done at school." With such dialogue there is an iteration between parents and the school.

I have been very significantly informed by '*Deschooling Society*' a book by Austrian author **Ivan Illich**, and of course '*Totto-chan, the Little Girl at the Window*' by **Tetsuko Kuroyanagi**, and **A S Neill's Summerhill School** - which is a concept of schooling where classes are optional, and the longest repeat pushed it to two years after which he said *I'm getting really bored with my freedom*. So these are some of the ways in which equity can actually be brought into the school system. With the Yashpal committee report of 1980s proposing '*learning without burden*' and with Professor Krishna Kumar heading the project, we believed that these sea changes would occur; but somewhere it sort of plateaued off. Now, it has been revived again with the NEP and NCFs, and I would like to believe that we are in a position where with continued dialogue and discussion and persuasion, we may be able to bring in the kind of equity that this is a reference to.

■ **Finally, a few tips for our teachers...**

Stick to a framework of - **intent, content, methodology** and **process**. Your **intent** in a session, let's say is to **address anger**. **Content** is - under what circumstances does anger occur, what is justified and what is not justified and how does anger manifest? What does anger do to me? What do I do to and to anger? How does it resolve? how does it affect relationships? Does it have anything to tell the assistant? **Method** is what you will use - short film clips? Conflict? Roleplay? A listing of situations in which one gets angry? Looking at severity of anger? **Process** is what comes thereafter - a discussion on what is happening; exploration of feelings; could this have been resolved in any other way; justified or not. **Meta-Processes**, allow kids to reflect on it for about one week before the next session. Kids look at situations that have happened around them / to themselves / seen; enriched with discussions to build into it. The triangulation of life-skills, decision making in a context, choosing a response, is completed by the *experiential pedagogies* to consolidate learning. ***



Addressing Mental Health In The Early Years

- Ms Ankita Diwekar Kabra, renowned educationist and co-founder of the Fountainhead School and Fountainhead Preschool chains in Surat

Kabir was born at the beginning of the pandemic. He spent the first 2 years of his life with just his immediate family at home. On limited outings, he saw people in masks and witnessed one family member isolated for a few weeks due to COVID. When the pandemic was over and life returned to normal, Kabir's family was keen to take him around, meet their extended family, and travel. To their dismay, every such outing ended in Kabir crying, sometimes breaking into a fever or throwing up.

The pandemic hit at a time when *Amaira* had just started walking. Her parents were going through a tough time in their relationship at the same time, and now they were stuck at home with each other. As modern parents, they knew that they shouldn't fight in front of their child, but sometimes, they would end up doing so. However, most of the time, Amaira would be in her room with her nanny and an iPad for company. When Amaira started school, they soon received concerns about Amaira not having any social inhibition; she would run out of class to explore and warm up to any stranger. She also faced severe language development delay and struggled with framing words and expressing herself.

Kiara, a happy-go-lucky 9-year-old, witnessed her family going through deep distress when a grandparent was diagnosed with a life-threatening disease. She witnessed her parents stressed out, her grandfather in and out of the hospital and finally passing away, whispered talks, silent tears and hushed voices. After a few months, Kiara started complaining of headaches and stomach aches almost every day. She avoided staying away from home. "She is a different person," her mother shared.

Kabir, *Amaira*, and *Kiara* are just a few examples of the kind of mental health issues that children have faced in recent times. World over and closer to home in India, *there has been a rise in mental health issues like social anxiety, crippling fear, phobias, unexplained aches and pains, and difficulty in sleeping, to list a few*. These issues could lead to delayed developmental milestones for young children and impaired academic achievement for slightly older children, making it challenging for them to excel in school, sports and social interactions. A lot of times, parents and caregivers feel helpless and unable to support the child. Here are some do's and don'ts for parents, schools, and caregivers:



- **Recognise the importance of emotional intelligence and teach it:** The future of work names *emotional intelligence* among the *top 5 skills of the future* - skills that people will need to succeed in the workplaces of the future. Schools would do well to recognise this and start including emotional intelligence in their socio-emotional learning syllabus. A starting point could be helping children *identify and label their emotions appropriately*. For example, there is a difference between feeling disappointed, feeling let down, and feeling miserable. Once a child can name their emotion accurately, they have a tool to understand what they are experiencing and feel more in charge of dealing with it.
- **Normalize feeling "bad":** As a society, we have been conditioned not to allow ourselves to feel bad. We are encouraged to forget it and move on, think positively and often to even stop crying about it. When one is feeling upset about something and is told not to feel upset, it is hardly helpful. *Validating* (I can see that this is upsetting you), *empathizing* (if I were in your place, I would be very upset too), and *listening without advice or judgment* is what children need when they are expressing their emotions.
- **Know when to seek professional help:** Thanks to social media reels, shorts and videos, there is awareness of healthy parenting practices and mental health issues that children may face. However, the risk is that parents may *diagnose their child and "treat" them based on a 15-second tip given by an influencer*. As parents and teachers, one needs to recognize that while we have the best intentions to help the child, we may not be the best person to do so in some situations. Typically, there is a *stigma involved in seeking help from mental health professionals*. Just like a fever that's not getting better and needs medical attention, repeated episodes of anxiety, frequent crying spells or similar symptoms need professional intervention. A psychological counsellor or a psychiatrist may help. There are very effective treatments available, including those not involving medication.

- **Unconditional love, open and trustful communication:** When a child is struggling, having their parents and teachers support them unconditionally is a huge blessing. A child with a parent who understands that their ward needs help and is committed to doing what it takes in terms of counselling, breaking free of old patterns and habits, therapy sessions, medication etc always shows better outcomes than a child with an unconcerned parent.

Also, regular conversations to know what's going on in their lives, what happened at school / home, sharing about an incident that made them happy, sad, angry, and talking about their friends give you a sneak peek into their inner world. Keep this channel of communication open to understand your child.

- **Monitor the content they are taking in:** Children are impressionable beings and pick up emotions from a variety of sources. While I do not recommend constant monitoring, parents must know *what kind of content* their child is being exposed to.

Keep an eye on what your child is watching online or on TV or what games they are playing. Use teaching moments to explain to your child that what they see in films or shows is *not* what happens in real life - excessive drama, violence, people with superpowers, etc. Finally remember, a device should not be a reward or a companion for an unsupervised child or something you give children so that they can finish their meal.

Coming back to *Kabir*, *Amaira* and *Kiara*, their stories do end well. *Kabir's* parents were told that Kabir's idea of a "normal world" was different because of the circumstances post his birth. They were advised to expose him to people gradually and for shorter periods. He has now adjusted to normal life as we knew before the pandemic. *Amaira* is undergoing occupational and sensory integration therapy and is now settling well in her class with some accommodations. *Kiara* shared with her counsellor that she was deeply worried about her mother dying and her phobia is now getting better with regular counselling.

The stories of children like *Kabir*, *Amaira*, and *Kiara* emphasize a crucial and overarching idea: *mental health challenges are not just limited to teenagers, young adults and older people. Children are also susceptible to them.* It is imperative that we recognize and address these challenges on an equal footing with physical health issues. *Early intervention and actively addressing mental health issues* in children will equip them with tools and strategies to help them become well-adjusted individuals. ***

“ *Nothing can dim the light that shines from within.* ”

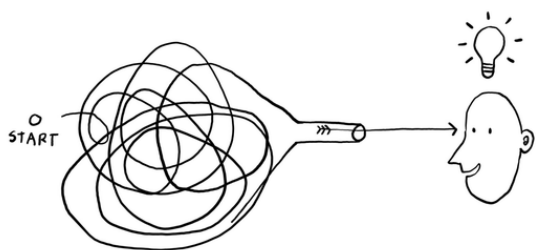


Good mental health is an important part of healthy child development. It helps children build positive social, emotional, behaviour, thinking and communication skills. It also lays the foundation for better mental health and wellbeing later in life. Children with good mental health feel loved, safe and secure in their environments - they feel happy and positive about themselves most of the time; they're kind to themselves during tough times or when things don't go the way they expect them to. This results in their being fearless and feeling OK about trying new or challenging things, they enjoy life, learn well, get along well with family and friends; and can manage sad, worrying or angry feelings and bounce back from tough times.

Mental Health Quotes to think about . . .

- 1) **Roald Dahl** : "If you have good thoughts, they will shine out of your face like sunbeams and you will always look lovely!"
- 2) **Dr Seuss** : "Why fit in when you were born to stand out?"
- 3) **Dumbledore** : "Happiness can always be found, even in the darkest of times, if only one remembers to turn on the light."
- 4) **Charlie Mackesy** : "Tears fall for a reason and they are your strength, not weakness."
- 5) **Buddha** : "You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection."
- 6) **Christopher Robin** : "Promise me you'll always remember: you're braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think."
- 7) **Princess Diana** : "Every one of us needs to show how much we care for each other and, in the process, care for ourselves."
- 8) **Shakespeare** : "We know what we are but know not what we may be."
- 9) **Edward Everett Hale** : "I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do."
- 10) **M K Gandhi** : "Why should those who haven't learnt the science of child-care bring children into the world?"

VISUAL THINKING - Spatial, Imaginative & Creative learning



We are all familiar with the challenges in a classroom to keep students engaged. Restlessness, boredom, doodling, mischief lack of concentration - all clear indicators that students' brains are simply not being stimulated adequately and effectively, to get them excited about learning. Sadly, oftentimes, these are prematurely labeled as *learning disability*, when in reality it is actually a **teaching inadequacy**. And then we wonder - "Why are so many kids struggling in school?"

For years now, formal school education has essentially focussed on developing the **3 Rs** - *reading, writing and arithmetic*. While these certainly are important areas of study that lay the foundation of a lot of critical life skills, **there IS a missing piece** within the context of best teaching practices. The **BIG Visual Void** - a term coined by the founder of IQ Doodle School.

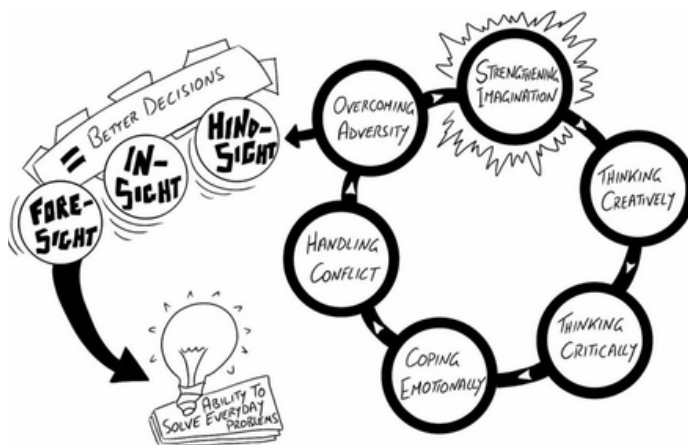


Humans are hardwired to **think "visually"**. Whether it is to remember the spelling of a word, or dream about what they want to be, or think about making a new toy / gadget / inviting cuisine / planning the road route to reach a destination / fashion trends; just about anything and everything! Take a look at the image on the left.

All of us in the education arena must realise that **visual language** and **expressing visually** are a natural part of being human. Understanding **how to use these visual skills**, opens doors to a world of incredible opportunities. In fact, kids can gain a superior advantage when they eventually enter the workforce, if they are taught how to develop their ability to think creatively and solve problems using *visual language skills*.

“ There are two kinds of visual thinkers: *Spatial visualizers and Object visualizers.*”

It thus becomes necessary for school curriculum to **provide a platform that prepares kids for the real world, which can be visually depicted (diag)**. Students must first be trained on how to **strengthen their imagination**. This comes through methods that help stimulate the brain in many different ways. A natural consequence of **strengthened imagination** is the improvement on the child's ability to **think creatively**. This loops back into further stimulating their imaginations. As a result, kids will have acquired the mindset and skills to **work through problems much more effectively**. Now that they can handle problems more effectively, they will be able to **think more critically about their life and circumstances**. With these elements in place, a student is in a better position to **cope with** and **handle everyday emotions**.



With more skills and empowerment, they will be better able to **handle conflict while interacting with others**; and be far more **capable of overcoming the plethora of adversity and problems** that life springs one's way. It is but understandable that overcoming adversity requires imagination, creativity, critical thought, etc. **Visual thinking provides the perfect platform** where all this becomes possible because it **helps bring thoughts to life, thereby allowing kids to develop the necessary hindsight, insight and foresight required to make better, smarter and more creative decisions about everyday struggles**. We are entering the age of *innovation*, and tomorrow's innovators will be the *visual thinkers* of today. Teachers can use images, videos, mental imagery, doodling, self-growth and visual thinking tools, etc., to systematically and gradually lay a solid foundation for a student's future. To know more about VT, do visit: <https://www.edutopia.org/article/using-visual-thinking-strategies-classroom/> ***

JASUDBEN ML SCHOOL
Mumbai

'INTEGRATED CURRICULUM'

20th & 21st Oct. 2023



TEACHER TRAINING

The National Education Policy 2020 and the subsequent guidelines - NCFES & NCFSE, are practical, visionary, progressive, and comprehensive, with a broad scope from early childhood to higher education, professional & vocational education, as well as teacher training. The success of these policies & detailed frameworks will depend entirely on *how effectively schools embrace these guidelines* and make them *functional realities* within the day to day education space.

Jasudben M L School and Bloomingdales are all set to revamp curricular & TL practices, to ensure meaningful, relevant and competency based education, in the Foundational and Preparatory years. Their vision embraces the core principles of the new NEP & NCFs - emphasizing *integration, skills/competencies, & future-based citizenship*.

Towards this goal, they have initiated a series of intensive hands-on workshops (over a year) with **Team QEDRAK**, to design, refine, realign and ready the Academic Plans for a new flavour and experience for students **through AY 24-25** & onward. ***

3rd & 4th Nov. 2023



HUMOUR FOR MENTAL HEALTH

The word **silly** is from a Greek word, *selig*, which means **blest**. When is the last time you blessed your students with *silliness*, leading to the open, free, gurgling sounds of children's laughter! When children engage with adults or peers in a mutually enjoyable activity, it builds connection and the brain architecture for cooperation and learning gets a spark. **Consider these stages in humour development and have some fun:**

- The first audible laugh is at **4 months of age**.
- **Infants and preschoolers** love funny sounds, silly stories, and rhyming words and songs.
- **School-aged children** love silly cartoons, movies, jokebooks, props like slime & strings.
- **Adolescents** like to create humorous movies & music, play practical jokes, exchange inside jokes with friends. (*Remember that practical jokes and inside jokes should not be at the expense of someone else's well-being or dignity.*)

The **December '23** issue is based on the theme - **Importance of Financial Literacy** . Please send your contributions - an effective classroom strategy / class humour / vocab word / a featured article / book titles, etc. related to the theme to - team@qedrak.com



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