

DELHI PUBLIC SCHOOL, GURGAON
MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND CARE WEBINAR
BY-MS. ALKA BAKAYA

Healing takes time, asking for help is a courageous step.
Conversations lead to solutions.

Delhi Public School, Sector-45, Gurgaon organized a two-day Mental Health Awareness and Care Webinar on 14th and 15th September, for the teachers of class VI and consecutively on 16th and 17th September 2020 for the teachers of class VII.

With the intention to equip the teachers with ways and strategies to reduce stress at work and achieve mental wellbeing, this workshop was conducted for the teachers of Class VI and VII. Ms. Alka Bakaya, with her profound knowledge and experience, engaged the teachers in enriching sessions and several thought-provoking activities.

On day 1, the session began with a clapping exercise as an ice breaker, followed by a detailed discussion about the objectives of the workshop. Everyone agreed that a solution to any problem can be found easily if we openly discuss and ask for help. In the present scenario the challenges faced by the teachers, parents and students were discussed, followed by accounting the situations leading to anxiety and stress. Problems like learning gaps, work life balance, conflicts, financial crunch, expectations and responsibilities, were identified as the causes of mental distress.

Ms. Bakaya helped the participants to identify the symptoms indicating mental distress. She explained in detail how to keep a tab on any undesirable change in behaviour, attitude, mood, sleep patterns or physical health, to check stress levels. She said that if the symptoms persist for more than two weeks without any change, they can be related to mental distress which can further manifest in the form of chronic pain, irritable bowel, skin ailments or weight loss or gain. A feeling cloud was made to identify different emotions like guilt, frustration, confusion and anxiety that create mental strain. A suggestion was made to change the phrase 'I should', which denotes compulsion, to 'I can', which implies the ability to do the work and consequently helps in reducing stress. She suggested some grounding exercises and ways to identify the real cause of stress and to handle frustration and confusion.

The root cause of stress among all the stake holders was deliberated upon and different ways to decipher the root cause of the persisting problem from the comments or complaints was explained. Based on Bloom's Taxonomy, a 'Development Rubric' was introduced as the 'big solution' for all these issues.

Day 1 concluded with the use of ISE Feedback Tool which focused on a sandwich approach for giving feedback. According to this, any feedback if started with a positive statement, followed by specific observations and explanation about the impact of the behaviour, would help in better understanding and lead to positive change. An interesting group activity was also conducted to practice the use of this feedback tool to bring about constructive change in the life of all the stakeholders.

Day 2 began with a laughter exercise, followed by self-esteem exercise for all the participants. Teachers pointed out their own positive attributes. Ms. Bakaya suggested that self-care can divert several issues. Formulating boundaries, taking breaks, occasionally rewarding oneself and taking out some time to mindfully be with oneself can help anyone to be more productive, positive and happy.

Further, the past objectives were discussed in wake of the current scenario. The change in imparting education post COVID-19 was discussed. Ms. Bakaya elaborated upon the use of a rubric to assess the understanding levels of students. A group activity was also conducted to practice the use of the rubric through a given topic from the curriculum. Teachers participated and put forth the points based on the discussion. The ways and means to objectively design the 'Developmental Rubric' for a better learning experience was discussed in detail. To conclude, several techniques to positively engage students in the current scenario were discussed, to decrease stress among students and achieve higher Emotional Quotient. Teachers were equipped to create a safe space for the students during online classes, to accelerate learning with a more engaging, interesting, and positive approach.

The workshop's objective to provide tools and enablers to reduce stress level in all stake holders i.e. teachers, parents and students, was achieved. A mental health and awareness booklet was also forwarded to all the participants as a ready reckoner to resolve any future issues related to self or student care.

It was an informative session. The Dean Student Welfare Ms. Sapna Dhawan and Headmistress, Middle School, Ms. Shalini Arora, appreciated Ms. Alka Bakaya for the engaging and interactive sessions that are really going to be helpful for the members of the faculty.

