

01

PRAYATNA-
An Endeavour in
the Right Direction

*Aruna
Sankaranarayanan*

05

**Need for Professional
Counselling**

G. Balasubramanian

13

Education News

15

**How to be
Generationally
Relevant**

Rashmi Marian Furtado

25

Leisure

Cover Story



09

Toying with Trash
Arvind Gupta

18

**Preventing Diabetes
Heart Disease,
Stroke and Obesity**
Dr. Krishnamurthy

24

**Experts
Speak**

20

Who is a Teacher?
Dr. Ajit Patil



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Window of

Opportunity

RASHMI MARIAN FURTADO | Senior Editor,
TheTeacher.in

Opportunities are known to knock. Much like uninvited, unexpected guests! I believe opportunities are windows that appear on every wall that surrounds us. It is for us to welcome it, work on it, just not observe it or worse, ignore it. As educators, it is our daily responsibility to see an opportunity to do something positive on every possible occasion. While our children learn from us to do the same, we have a duty to ourselves, to give ourselves a chance. Opportunities come in different forms. They can be our guests by knocking on our door or encapsulate us like the air. It is unto us if we want to keep the door shut and wait for the knock or to open the window and let the air in.

Let us pause for moment and ask ourselves, why are opportunities important?

An educator like you or me would have a busy and a tough schedule, every single day. Managing both the professional and personal sides of life consumes most of our time and energy. Hence, it becomes imperative that we make sure we give our talents a chance and make use of every opportunity that is thrown at us. Opportunities help us evolve and grow. It brings new experiences and removes boredom. It can be an imposter and can appear in many forms like a promotion, problem, situation, contest, by accident, as a responsibility, etc. All of these are opportunities that help us learn, grow, express, to be happy and to make a difference.

Taking up a new responsibility, picking up a book to read or adopting a new method to teach, are all opportunities to learn and grow. Taking part in various contests or fostering a hobby will help express better.



Once at a principals' conference, Dr. Kalam calculated the salary of a teacher to be the sum total of the salaries of all the students she or he has taught so far. Borrowing from the same philosophy, if a teacher teaches a class of 40, and visits just three sections a day, she or he gets 120



opportunities every day to make a difference. The sum total of all the students she or he has taught will be the number of opportunities a teacher would have got to make a difference. The simplest definition of success is that it is the sum total of the number of opportunities we say 'yes' to.

Dear fellow teacher, let us resolve, as we march towards another Teacher's Day to not close the shades when a window of opportunity appears. Let us awaken the child in us and write a poem, take part in a contest, make someone happy around us to help us enjoy the profession we have chosen to be in.

Always keep your window of opportunity open!

Yours positively!

Rashmi

A natural writer, teacher and a passionate content creator, Rashmi has authored the Cu and Rio series and created the Keystones program on Values Education from Greycaps. She is one of the founders of TheTeacher.in. She is a sought after speaker at educational conferences, facilitator programs and for motivational talks to students at schools across India. She holds a Master's Degree from the prestigious NIT Suratkal where she also taught before joining Greycaps. Rashmi is also a popular quiz host for schools, colleges and large corporate audiences. She has co-hosted the Tata Crucible quiz and Travel Quest by Thomas Cook.



PRAYATNA- An Endeavour in the Right Direction

ARUNA SANKARANARAYANAN | Founder
and Director of PRAYATNA

PRAYATNA was established in 1998 to provide assessment & remedial support for children with learning difficulties. The centre works with children who struggle to learn in mainstream classrooms.

PRAYATNA caters to the needs of children with conditions like dyslexia, ADHD and mild forms of autism. The centre also helps children with issues of inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity to regulate their behaviour by creating personalised behaviour modifications programs.



Aruna has a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from Harvard University.

What/who inspired you to start PRAYATNA?

I founded PRAYATNA in 1998, when the awareness of learning difficulties was at a very nascent stage in India. Teachers and parents were often not aware of why a child was struggling to learn in mainstream classrooms. Kids were typically sent to tuition classes if they failed to perform well in class. But most tuition classes only taught what was in the school curriculum, without really understanding or analysing why a child was doing poorly in school.

As a student of psychology, I was deeply interested in how findings in cognitive and developmental psychology can be applied to education. My doctoral thesis, for which I collected data in Boston and Bengaluru, was on reading difficulties. I also received a Fellowship from the Echoing Green Foundation in New York, to set up a centre for children with learning difficulties in India. I started PRAYATNA in Bangalore, as a supportive space for children whose needs were not being met in traditional classrooms.



Please tell us more about PRAYATNA and about what it does.

PRAYATNA was started with the main aim of providing remedial instruction for children with learning difficulties. In addition to assessing children and conducting remedial classes for enhancing literacy and numeracy skills, PRAYATNA has branched out in related directions. We have developed and published attractive and effective teaching aids that can be used by parents and teachers. PRAYATNA also offers a one-month course on learning difficulties that includes an intensive practicum. We also offer programs for developing children's social and communication skills, study skills and oral language proficiency in English. The centre also conducts workshops for teachers and parents on a variety of topics related to education and parenting. We also help schools in setting up resource rooms.

What according to you, are the important things that teachers and parents should know about learning disabilities?

All kids, especially those with learning difficulties, need a nurturing and supportive environment, both at home and at school. While parents and teachers should show empathy for a child's difficulties, they should avoid viewing the child solely through the lens of his or her disability. When a kid has a learning difficulty, we should not let that define the whole child. Instead, we should work on developing their strengths while providing intervention for their areas of difficulty. Further, we as adults, have to model resilience if we want our kids to become confident and optimistic human beings. Instead of bemoaning the fact that a child has a difficulty, we should try and support the child in every possible way so that they too can realise their dreams.

When a kid has a learning difficulty, we should not let that define the whole child.

How similar or different are the teaching methodologies at PRAYATNA, as compared to mainstream schools? Kindly elaborate.

At PRAYATNA, we start from where the child is at, regardless of his or her age or grade level. After assessing a child, we work on academic skills that need to be enhanced. Instruction is typically one-on-one, and the teacher-student ratio does not exceed 1:2. We use a variety of attractive teaching aids, which have been developed in-house, to help children acquire literacy and numeracy skills. We try to follow a play-way method where kids play games that target specific academic skills. Our teachers are also sensitive to the children's interests and other needs. For example, if a child

All children, including those with learning disorders, are capable of learning.

has a short attention span and poor sitting tolerance, the teacher may use behaviour modification strategies to gradually increase the child's ability to focus. Or, if a child is fond of horses, we may devise reading and spelling activities around the child's interest. We are very flexible and try to adapt to the child. In addition to working on their academic skills, we try to foster a growth mindset so that all children believe that they are capable of achieving their dreams.

Are there instances where parents have been in a state of denial, that their child is different? Kindly elaborate.

All children are unique and different. At PRAYATNA, we avoid labelling children as we want the focus to be on the child and not on the clinical label. While most parents are supportive and want to help their kid, a small minority do not recognise the need for specialised intervention. But once a kid starts showing progress, most parents are quite accepting.



How important is parent involvement in the child's learning and education at PRAYATNA?

Parental involvement varies depending on the child and the parents. While we take care of a child's academic skills, it helps if parents read to their child, play word games and most importantly, acknowledge the progress that a child is making. Some parents get more involved and even do our one-month course so that they can support their child's learning at home.

We should give children the space to form their own goals and dreams.

How is the child's progress assessed? Are there examinations or tests?

At PRAYATNA, we assess the child when he or she first enrolls. But I would like to emphasise that assessment is not synonymous with testing. Our approach is very holistic and involves obtaining a child's complete history and profile from the parents. We also give a questionnaire to get feedback from the school teacher. Children are assessed by a trained and compassionate examiner who also makes observations regarding various facets of the child, ranging from socio-emotional skills to oral language proficiency to attention span. The initial assessment allows us to draw up a targeted intervention plan. Subsequently, the child is re-assessed either after a few months or at the most a year, in order to gauge the child's progress.

What are some of the challenges that you have faced? What helped you overcome it?

Time is a major constraint for kids these

days. As kids come to us only after school hours for remedial classes, we have limited time slots available, to

accommodate all kids. We try to schedule kids so that every child gets the attention that he or she needs.

What has been your most rewarding experience so far?

Every day is a rewarding experience in its own way. To see kids make small steps of progress is very gratifying. When a sullen and awkward child blossoms into a cheerful and confident one, the teachers feel really rewarded. And when parents and school teachers also recognise and acknowledge the progress that the kids have made, we feel doubly satisfied.

What is your message for teachers and parents?

First, all children, including those with learning disorders, are capable of learning. We, as adults, have to have what psychologist Carol Dweck calls a 'growth mindset' if we want kids to imbibe the same. Abilities and talents are not fixed in stone, and with the right kind of intervention, all children are capable of realising their potential. Second, we should give children the space to form their own goals and dreams instead of foisting our aspirations, however well-meaning they may be, on them. ■

NEED FOR EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING SYSTEMS IN SCHOOLS

G. BALASUBRAMANIAN

G. Balasubramanian is a doyen of school education in India. He has held several positions of leadership at CBSE, including Director Academics. He was the brain behind the introduction of several innovations at CBSE which included frontline curriculum, Communicative Approach to Language Teaching, Information Technology, Alternatives to Homework, etc. He is also an author, poet and a sought-after speaker at education conferences world over.



The increasing incidents of depression, suicides and other aggressive behavioural patterns among school students calls for an immediate attention from system managers. The case for appointment of school counsellors as a necessary part of the organisational structure can no longer be considered as an option.

Some major issues that lead to behavioural challenges among the students today are:

1

Parental pressure on performance

The magnitude and direction of the learning curve of the students is being pre-defined by the parents based on their personal preferences, ambitions and expectations for the investments made by them. In most cases, the individual learner's interests and aptitudes are neither verified nor taken note of. Investments to support extended learning, further learning and competition management in learning, set further goals for higher trajectories in performance. Desire for 'all-in-one' package from schools by the parents puts extraordinary pressure on the mind and the psyche of the learner, depriving their natural course of growth. It is therefore important for schools to provide adequate personal and social counselling to both parents and students.

2

Pressure from peers

Peer pressure is one of the major causes of stress among students in schools. Unwarranted and unhealthy competition with others, both in terms of academic performance and social status, forces unethical approaches to problems. This may be due to innocence or lack of adequate knowledge of the consequences of the actions. Demonstration of heroism, false imagery or abusive uses of tools and appliances are on the increase. Corrective methods to ensure that the learners have the skills of self-esteem, self-analysis and ability to accept the realities have to be taken by the schools. School counsellors have a great opportunity and challenge in handling such situations, which is a significant contribution to nation building.

3

Achievement syndrome

Urge to perform and achieve is a natural human tendency. But, when this assumes a gigantic proportion, disproportionate to the competencies and leads to failure, there is a sense of self-pity. Increasing number of incidents of suicides due to self-pity, inability to accept failure and self-contempt among school children needs to be addressed. Timely counselling in schools can possibly avoid many of these incidents. Professional approach to counselling is necessary, though every teacher can offer some basic counselling.

4

Adolescent issues

Thanks to increasing social and cultural osmosis, there is evidence of increasing adolescent pressure among school students. The 'start-up' age of adolescence has come down to an all-time low, and the methods of expression of adolescent intents and urges have manifested innumerable forms. With fast pace and all-inclusive technological appliances handy, such communications need to be mentored, monitored and restrained/regulated wherever necessary. The school heads are finding it increasingly challenging. The issue needs to be dealt by the counsellors with diplomacy.

5

Bullying in schools

Bullying has long been a challenge to the school heads, as it has several manifestations. Physical, emotional, social, racial, economical and intellectual bullying are present in almost all educational institutions in one form or the other. It assumes the seriousness only when it reaches the boiling point. It is important for schools to have a system to find out and 'nip the evil in the bud'. School counsellors can play a significant role in handling these cases with the sensitivity required.

The legal handle to deal with serious cases under POCSA is indeed a step in the right direction, but it appears that its provisions are too drastic with high end punitive recommendations. Wisdom and diplomacy are needed to understand the cases which are sometimes born out of innocence or misunderstanding. Nevertheless, a well-groomed counsellor of the school can really help and facilitate in interpreting and managing such cases.

Though provisions exist for appointment of a regular professional school counsellor, over ninety percent of schools do not have this position filled in. This includes government and government aided schools too.

I think the stakeholders of the system at all levels, need to consider this issue with the seriousness it deserves. ■

Words used by the Millennials

Teachers, here are a few trending words, the millennials use. Guess what? They are listed on the Oxford English Dictionary too!

1. Duh – This word is commonly used to reply or react to someone’s stupid or foolish comment. It is sarcastically saying, ‘obviously!’.

Example: Kid 1 – “Did you go to the new pizza parlour down the road?”

Kid 2 – “Duh! Who hasn’t?”

2. Binge-watch – Watching multiple episodes of a TV programme, one after the other, is popularly called ‘binge-watching’.

Example – “I binge-watched all the Harry Potter movies over the weekend.”

3. Hangry – When you are angry because you are hungry, you become ‘hangry’. It implies becoming irritable because of hunger.

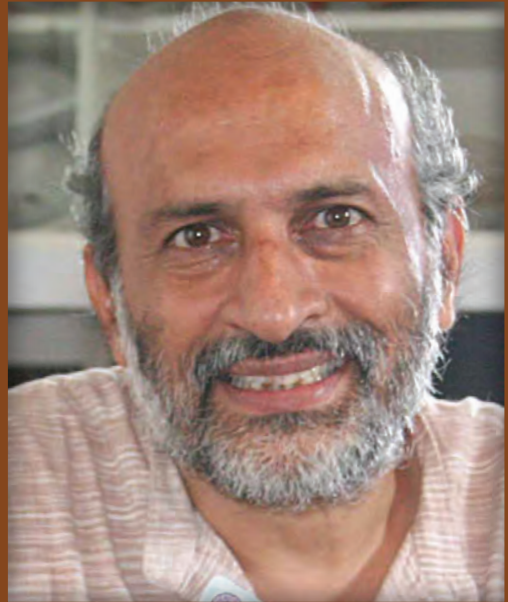
Example – “She was so hangry that she refused to do her homework.”

4. Me time – This term refers to the time a person dedicates, exclusively for himself/herself. It means spending time on oneself relaxing, to de-stress.

Example – “After a tiring week at school, Miss Neena badly wanted some ‘me time’.”



Toying With Trash



ARVIND GUPTA | Toy Inventor

Arvind Gupta is an IIT Kanpur graduate, who is a popular toy inventor. He has developed many useful, low-cost teaching aids, made of ordinary, everyday things and recycled material. He has received many national and international awards. He is also the recipient of the Padma Shri award for 2018.

Congratulations on receiving the Padma Shri! Your efforts have touched the lives of many children and has made science learning fun. Who/what inspired you to get into the field of science and later, become an educator?

In the early 1970s a lecture by Dr. Anil Sadgopal on the Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme (HSTP) inspired me. The HSTP group was trying to revitalise the learning of science in village schools using low-cost fun activities. Later, I took a leave from Tata Motors and spent six months with the HSTP. Those six months opened up an entirely new world for me.

The very first month I designed the Matchstick-Valve Tube Mecanno. This gave me a lot of pleasure. I realised for the first time that I could use my background to create something meaningful and help many children and teachers.

In the early 1970s there was also a global political ferment - the Vietnam War; Civil Rights movement and the Naxalite movement. Many Scientists still remembered the Second World War and swore not to participate in war research. Many people were searching for a meaningful role for themselves.

From being an IIT graduate working in Telco to deciding to take science to students, how was the transition? How did it all begin?

The Tata Motors training for a Graduate Engineer Trainee is a dream. You learn things which you have never learnt in the IIT. For instance, for a month you do gas welding and electric welding. Another month you run the Lathe and Shaper. It taught you hard core skills. As a tinkerer, I was thrilled with the training. But much larger questions about mass poverty and education lurked in the mind. The small stint with the HSTP helped me realise that I could use my learning to benefit many. At that time there were very few inspiring books on education. The whole educational scenario was pretty bleak. We tried to make books like Divaswapna, Tottochan, Teacher, Summerhill, How Children Fail, Lives of Children, Danger! School, Letter to a teacher available to teachers through translations. Only when teachers read about exciting and adventurous experiments in education will their imaginations begin to soar.

Most of your toys are made of everyday items and garbage. What inspired you to turn trash into toys?

The HSTP experience was LEARNING BY DOING. Children experimented with simple, readily available material and tried to understand the laws of science. Many of our traditional toys are often made from scrap – throw away paper, cardboard, wire, etc. All dynamic toys incorporate principles of science. So, children could learn science intuitively in play. These toys don't cost much money, are handmade, so even the poorest children could afford them. Today we live in a consumerist society where Buy and Throw are the new norms. Children could make 50 toys from old tetra paks (Frooti, Appy packs). They could do over a 100 fascinating experiments with old plastic water bottles. Children could fold newspapers and make a dozen caps which they could wear.

What according to you are the challenges that teachers face in





making science simple for children?

Most teachers still adhere to the chalk and talk system. They come from a tradition where they themselves have never experienced the joy of making models. Any activity in the classroom which involves cutting and sticking is messy and abhorrent to teachers, because it also entails more work on their part.

There are other challenges too. Schools pay scant attention to simple conceptual science models. Only a burning candle can light another. Teacher Training Colleges are like extinguished candles. They have failed to light the spark.

You have written and translated many books, due to which content has become accessible to many children/learners across the country. Please tell us about it.

I was on the advisory board of the National Book Trust for several years. It

enabled me to see the poverty of material, the lack of good children's books in Hindi. So, I have translated books on Science, Math, Education, Environment and great children's books from all over the world and uploaded them on the web. I have translated over 400 books and it is very satisfying to produce good reading material for children in the Hindi belt. There are 500-million Hindi speaking people and very little worth reading. All these books are freely accessible on the internet.

What is your opinion on the current education scenario? Do you think children have become more curriculum-bound?

The educational scenario in the country is bleak – especially the schools run by the government, where most of the poor children go. The middle class and government bureaucrats have washed their hands off these schools. They have set up elite private schools for their own children and have no stake in the

government schools. Starved of political will and funds these schools have gone from bad to worse. Justice Agarwal of the Allahabad High Court gave a landmark judgment a few years ago. The judgment said that – Government servants get their salary, accommodation and all other benefits from the government. The only way to improve government schools and the Public Health System is to make it mandatory for all government servants to send their children to government schools and to avail the service of government hospitals when they are sick. Then these services will improve very fast. But given today's polity such a judgment would be impossible to administer. There would be no political will to implement it.

Rote learning is killing children's creativity. How can children become more creative and, experiment and learn from things around them?

I think the root of rote learning is our premier exams like IITJEE and NEET. There are no marks in these national tests for practical exams. So, the emphasis throughout the school years is on mugging and reproducing. This dulls the senses. The coaching institutes make children conform to tricks of cracking the exams and further kill creativity. Abroad admission to any college of higher learning is based on the performance during the school years, the projects the child has done. Often less than half the total weightage is placed on the entrance test result. This is a more holistic way evaluating a child's potential. All children love activities, but

the overwhelming emphasis on rote learning dissuades them from tinkering and learning through projects.

What would you like to be remembered as – an inventor, a science expert or a teacher?

As a child I wanted to become a primary school teacher. But I soon realised that being a good teacher in a good school will not make much change to the overall educational system. Firstly, I tried to make the best books on Education, Peace, Environment, Science, Math and great children's books available from my website (www.arvindguptatoys.com). Anyone truly interested in education could download them for free. Everyday 12,000 books are downloaded. This just shows the hunger for good books in our people! Our videos Toys from Trash have been viewed over 68 million times! I would like to be known as a teacher who freely shared the best educational resources with the world and touched a few lives.

What is your message for children?

You have only one life. Live your own dream – never the dream of your parents or teachers. Never live the stale dream of a corporation. Live your own dream. Even if you fail living your dream, it's OK.

What is your message for all the teachers/educators of the country?

Teach less but expose them to the whole world. Give children space to explore and discover their innate potential. Children learn a great deal without being taught. Adults seldom understand this. ■

EDUCATION NEWS

Delhi schools launch 'Happiness Curriculum'

The Delhi government has introduced 'happiness curriculum' for schools across Delhi.

Launched in July 2018 by Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso, this initiative aims to teach topics such as meditation, moral teachings and mental exercises to help serve the society with happiness.



like self-awareness, empathy, stress management and anxiety management.

The happiness class will be for a duration of 45 minutes and will begin with a 5-minute meditation session.

The curriculum which will cover around 8 lakh students has been designed and

Students from nursery to Class 8 will not only be introduced to the curriculum, but will also learn values and skills

prepared by a team of 40 teachers and volunteers over a period of 6 months.

National Digital Library launched

The Union Human Resource Development Minister, Prakash Javadekar, launched the digital initiative programme called the 'National Digital Library of India', on the occasion of National Reading Day.

The National Digital Library of India (NDLI) is a project which was backed by the National Mission of Education through the Information and Communication Technology. The objective of the NDLI is to make

educational resources available online to the citizens of the country, to encourage and inspire them to develop the habit of learning. NDLI is said to have been developed by IIT Kharagpur.



NDLI is a Single Window Platform which collects and combines metadata from premier educational institutions from

both India and abroad. It currently has a digital repository of e-books, articles, videos, lectures, simulation and fiction and several kinds of learning materials.

National Digital Library can be accessed anytime by people with internet access. The HRD Minister stated that the initiative was built to enable the rise of Digital India and was sure that anyone who accesses this information will greatly contribute to the government's 'Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat'.

NDLI's collected learning material is available in over 200 languages, while close to 30 lakh users have registered on

the NDLI portal. The massive library covers fields such as arts, music, dance, culture, technology, cartography and e-scripts.

Apart from being available on the website, the material is also available on mobile app for both iPhone and Android users. The users can search for content using parameters such as the subject matter, content type and source. The app is currently available in English, Hindi and Bengali languages.

NDLI can be accessed through www.ndl.gov.in.

New York and Virginia introduce Mental Health education in schools

Schools in New York and Virginia will now be required to provide mental health education to its students. While Virginia plans to introduce it in the ninth and tenth grade, along with physical education and health, New York will be introducing it across all levels in the school. A law stating the same has been passed to tackle depression and psychological issues.

Recent shootings in schools and the suicides of known personalities have highlighted the importance of mental

health and has shed light on the issue.

According to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the

suicide rate has increased by almost 30% since 1999 in the United States and is reported to be one of the major causes of death among people aged 15-24 years in the country.



Psychological problems and mental disorders have become common in today's world. Increase in anxiety and depression among the youth is not limited only to the USA but is widespread throughout the globe. ■

How to be Generationally Relevant?

RASHMI MARIAN FURTADO | Senior Editor,
TheTeacher.in

Generational differences have existed throughout the history. The rapid cultural change during the modern era has increased the generational gap. Whether we involve ourselves in educating the youth, or in a leadership role, a quality outcome depends on how well we understand them.



The youth of today is the future of the nation. Hence, the significance to bridge the generation gap and to be generationally relevant becomes paramount. The students of the present generation are intellectual, well-informed, always connected and have access to a wide range of downloadable information. They have grown up with technology as opposed to the older generation, which is usually resistant to change. Situations like these create a rift between a student and a teacher. It is very important for a teacher to understand the importance of being generationally relevant, to bridge the gap and connect with the students.

Their outlook, worldview and perspective are fundamentally different and until the teachers try to understand them, they will end up being confused and in conflict. Teachers not being generationally relevant makes them unapproachable and the students tend to become secretive. The lesser the age difference between a student and a teacher, the better they connect.

Why does age play such an important role in a teacher being relevant? This is because students find a lot of mutual interests and can have an open discussion. Being able to voice out their thoughts without being judged is very important to the students.

The teachers need to bridge the gap so as to resolve the conflict, work better and assist the students to optimise their capabilities. The never-ending advancements in technology will play a major role in students being tech savvy. It is one of the important factors that make the students hip and the teachers irrelevant. The teachers of today need to understand that the students tread alongside technology. They can be called the wired generation.

Here are some interesting facts of the present generation –

- They find love through Facebook and are dumped via texts and wall posts.
- They watch television shows, but not necessarily on the television.
- A very small percentage defines success as having lots of money.
- They have earned and used virtual currency.
- The entrepreneurial culture is increasing.
- They stay in touch on social networks.

It is evident that this generation is using technology in a way that is smarter, more involved and beneficial in keeping them updated all the time. The students can source any information they need, from the internet. All the facts stated above may not hold true with regard to the school students, but they will have all of the traits when they grow up.

Teachers also believe that the students today are different from those in the past. There is a huge difference in the

mindset and value system of the students then and now. The students of today have had a say in how things go since they were five. They express themselves and expect to be heard. They demand authenticity. They do not believe in anything without adequate proof. They want to do things that matter. It is very important for them to find meaning in what they do. Words that describe their world are immediacy and convenience. Where the teachers may call it impatience, students think of it as speed. The students have access to knowledge on their fingertips. This luxury makes the presence of teachers in their life pointless. Therefore, the need for a teacher to be generationally relevant is escalating.

If knowledge is the key to enlightenment, then perception and imagination are windows to engagement and relevance. A lot can be analysed about the present generation, but if we cannot

“If knowledge is the key to enlightenment, then perception and imagination are windows, to engagement and relevance.”

translate that into meaning or substance, we will continue to miss opportunities to build lasting relationships. The teachers already know that the students of today are different from those in the past. The approach towards them also has to be different. The traditional approach cannot be used. The initial step of being relevant is the decision of being relevant. The teachers should first understand the habits, hobbies and mindset of the students. The teaching methodologies have to be altered accordingly. Effective teaching tools and classroom engagement techniques should be used. Sometimes not engaging classes can also prove to be an efficient tool.


“Altering some of the methods, for teachers, may mean moving out of their comfort zone.”

Altering some of the methods, for teachers, may mean moving out of their comfort zone. But connecting with students will require the teacher to leave his or her comfort zone and explore the world of students. Being updated with the current gadgets, not being stringent with regard to rules and regulations, having a conversation with the students about topics that they enjoy and also conducting certain knowledge enhancing games in the class are some of the simple tools that can be used.

A teacher's communication style may be regarded as structured, today's students need freedom. A teacher may stress on learning, the students like to experience. The quality and the communication style of a teacher should be credible. The students do not expect the teachers to embrace their lifestyle. They only seek understanding and respect. The more spontaneous and interactive the teachers are in the classroom, the less intimidated, and more open the students will be. What the teachers communicate has to fall within their area of interest. The style, as well as the content of the message must be relevant to a generation, who are visually educated and entertained. There is no point in giving music to a friend on a CD if he or she only uses iPods. Similarly, the teachers must research in the most appropriate format for the students they are reaching.

Once teachers have a grasp of the characteristics, communication styles, and social attitudes of the students, they will be well equipped to effectively impact this generation in a positive way.

The students of today are hopeful. They have a bounty of ideas on how to improve the world. A teacher should be able to help the students to optimise their capabilities. If we are compelled to label this generation, we should call them HOPE. ■



PREVENTING DIABETES, HEART DISEASE, STROKE AND OBESITY

Dr. KRISHNAMURTHY

Dr. M. R. Krishnamurthy is a primary care physician with 42 years of experience. After completing his MBBS, he has worked in the U.K. and Canada.

In this article, I would like to combine prevention of diabetes, heart disease, stroke and obesity, as they all go hand in hand.

A generation ago, apart from stroke, other issues like obesity, diabetes and heart diseases were not quite common. This was because people were physically active (taking a bus or cycle to offices and schools, or plain walking). The food

they ate was mostly homemade, using simple ingredients. This has changed drastically now. People eat out more often, which gives more calories than homemade food. Added to this is the packaged food in the form of bakery goods, chips, cookies, burgers, pizzas, etc. A combination of high calorie food on a regular basis with less physical activity is a good recipe for weight gain. We all have diabetes genes in us which is waiting to

express itself as soon as we gain weight. The exception to this is type 1 diabetes in children.

High blood pressure which can lead to heart attacks and heart failure, kidney disease, blindness and stroke, often occurs along with diabetes in the same patient. Smoking increases the risk of all these complications.

Unfortunately, all the dairy we get in our cities, apart from organic milk, contains hormones injected into the cattle, to produce more milk. This causes early puberty in girls, cysts in the ovaries causing menstrual irregularities, and later, difficulties in conceiving. So, milk and milk products like cheese and paneer should be used sparingly. Buttermilk is fine, as most of the fat is removed.

Salt restriction to prevent high blood pressure is controversial and in a tropical country like ours where we lose salt in sweat, it may not be important except when specifically advised by a doctor. In fact, if you take up any physical activity, you may need more salt, as just water is not enough to quench your thirst. You can get muscle cramps if you don't add salt to whatever you are drinking.

Maintaining an ideal weight is essential in preventing both diabetes and high blood pressure. In my earlier article on nutrition, I have given a few hints on managing weight issues. A frequently used method to determine if you are overweight is to measure your height and waist circumference (the widest part of the tummy). The latter should be half



of your height. For example, if you are 5'6" tall, your waist should not be more than 33 inches. This is easier to keep track of instead of BMI.

So, to summarize, to prevent diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and obesity:

- ♥ Maintain ideal weight.
- ♥ Do not smoke or use tobacco products of any kind.
- ♥ Consume alcohol in moderation (60 ml of spirits for males and 30 ml for females max per day). If you are not drinking, don't start and if you already are, cut down to minimum.
- ♥ Get some physical activity (walk, skip rope, cycle, swim, etc.)
- ♥ Install a pedometer on your cell phone or get a fitbit and, get 10,000 steps every day.
- ♥ Eat out only during special occasions and try to avoid fried food, anything that looks too oily, milk-based sweets, pastries, milk shakes, ice creams, fruit juices with added sugar.
- ♥ Don't forget to consume fruits and vegetables (250 grams of each, every day for the rest of your life). ■


**Until next time,
Dr. Krish**

Who is a TEACHER?



Dr. AJIT PATIL | Management Professional

Dr. Ajit Patil is a Professor of Marketing & Retailing, and Management in Mumbai, India. He also pursues career as a Management Writer, Corporate Trainer, and Business Development Consultant.



I have seen that some teachers are not clear about their role. It is important to know 'who a teacher is' and what he or she stands for. What is the role of a teacher? Having taught management students for nearly 20 years, I have developed some understanding of the role of a teacher.

"A teacher is an inquisitive learner who develops a passion for some subject and starts acquiring domain knowledge which then transcends the public domain. Brimming with knowledge, teachers develop eagerness to share this acquired knowledge wrapped in their wisdom with those who are eager to acquire it, but with lesser time and effort."

An inquisitive learner and a good teacher is a good student. Initially, teachers' focus is on learning things for themselves. The learning is unstructured and exploratory in nature. As time passes, they become organised and the learning process gets structured. Scholarship develops an eye for details and a holistic attitude in teachers. They realise the importance of looking at things in totality and understand the incremental value added by every minute detail.

They lose tolerance for lack of details. Some students start looking at them as 'tough teachers', but in reality, they become teachers committed to excellence. Expanding horizons, great teachers also get connected to the academic and professional community which is devoted to the domain area. Sharing out-grows the classroom. The teachers become writers and speakers. As the visibility improves, their network expands. Great teachers make their network available to their students.

“ Good teachers focus on one subject rather than trying to be jack of everything. Such focus gives them their identity. ”

Great teachers have a great sense of piggybacking. They know very well the stages of the career when they need to piggyback their students. They understand the areas which need piggybacking.

Good teachers focus on one subject rather than trying to be jack of everything. Such focus gives them their identity.

Most of the good teachers have a mono-focus. For them, depth is more important than the span. They choose their domain area and stick to it for life. Some of the teachers go on sharpening their focus with time, rather than diluting it. Power comes to them by deep diving into the sea of knowledge.

I realised that a teacher goes through different phases during the teaching journey. In the early stages of the career, they dispense knowledge, the focus is on sharing knowledge. Their need to share knowledge drives the teaching style. As they progress to the next level, they identify the important life skills required to be developed by students. Skill development of students becomes the agenda of the teacher. Skills are required to be practised for perfection and students need longer support from teachers. The longevity of association brings familiarity and development of a bond between a teacher and a student.

As teachers grow in their career, they develop a teaching philosophy. They focus more on developing right attitudes, perspectives and thoughts for their students.

As they mature academically, they realise the importance of developing the right attitude. The realisation comes from their own life experiences and through the experiences with their students.



They get to know what worked for their students and what didn't. They also see the results of their efforts. They realise that those students who had right attitude and perspective make it big in their lives. The emotional bond between teachers and students bring out the best in both. The process of knowledge transfer, skill development and attitude building develops emotional bonding between them. A good teacher understands the learning pattern of students and develops teaching styles accordingly.

Their teaching tools and techniques are radically different than others. Their students love the unique style. Good teachers lighten the academic burden but fill the minds of students.

Smart teachers identify the learning motives of their students. They do not grossly generalise those motives, but develop teaching methods to accommodate most of them. Today, students want to know the application of the subject in solving problems and developing life skills. The challenge for teachers is to identify such areas in the curriculum, highlight it and enhance it with teaching style, tools and techniques.

Entertainment enhances interest and increases the span of attention.

“Good teachers lighten the academic burden but fill the minds of students.”

The major challenge for teachers today is

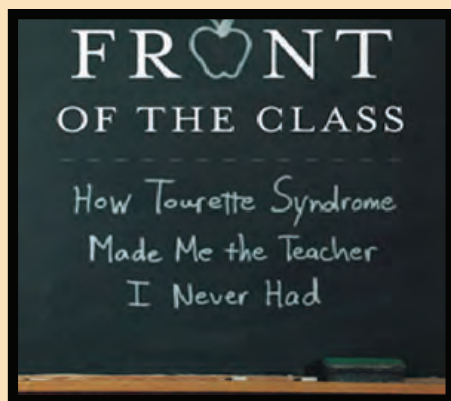
maintaining students' interest and increasing the span of attention. My experience is that the passion of the teacher in the subject, depth of knowledge and holistic approach, combined with an entertaining teaching style should deliver the results.

If students like the teacher, then they like the subject too. I have understood that students are looking for three things- filtered domain knowledge which is concentrated and useful in work-life, highly knowledgeable but approachable, friendly teacher who can be consulted for their difficulties and problems, and entertaining delivery style which keeps them engaged in an hour-long discussion.

In a nutshell, students expect teachers with a research mind, friendly and approachable personality, entertaining delivery style, excellent classroom management skills, focus on application and guidance for examination. ■

we RECOMMEND

Front of the Class



The Bollywood film, *Hichki*, featuring Rani Mukerji, made viewers aware of the neurological disorder called Tourette Syndrome (TS). The disorder is characterised by repetitive, involuntary movements and vocalisations called 'tics'. A lesser-known counterpart on the same theme, is the Hollywood movie 'Front of the Class', directed by Peter Werner. Released in 2008, this movie is based on a novel by the same name, which was written by Brad Cohen.

'Front of the Class' is the story of author Brad Cohen's experiences in living with TS, from childhood through adulthood. As a child, Brad is

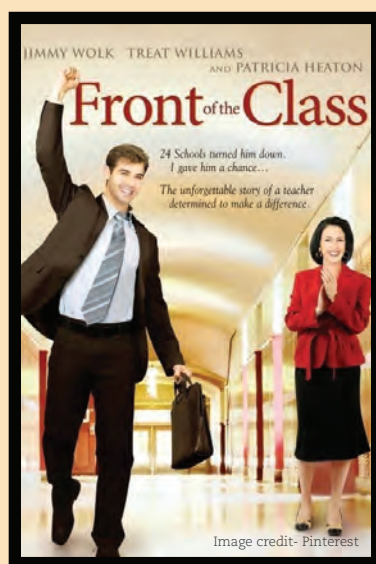
ridiculed, beaten, mocked, and shunned. With a 'never give up' attitude he is able to overcome the difficulties in life and achieve his dream of becoming a teacher.

The film especially throws light on the lack of awareness on the subject in his growing years, even among those in the medical profession.

Brad grows up being held at fault by his teachers for disturbing the class with his 'odd noises'. His parents are also suggested various 'cures' and reasons for his tics. Finally, his mother brings a ray of hope into his life on learning about TS and convincing his doctors that it cannot be cured.

As Brad grows up, he is encouraged to become 'the teacher he never had'. After being rejected by several schools due to his tics, he is finally accepted as a teacher. He works with passion and determination and also goes on to win the 'Teacher of the Year' award.

This film comes as a breath of fresh air, providing viewers with a unique perspective- the life of a teacher with a disorder. *Front of the Class* is a must-watch that should be on every teacher's list. ■



Sudeeptha Grama is a Counselling Psychologist and the founder of 'The CoffeeShop Counsellor'.



How do you recommend we introduce 'good touch, bad touch' to the primary school children?

This is a difficult conversation but one that needs to be had. To begin with, do not treat the subject as taboo and controversial – this could lead to your student not telling you about any inappropriate incidents out of fear or embarrassment. When having this chat with children, start by talking to them about their body and private parts. Introduce the 'Undergarment Rule' – nobody is allowed to touch these private areas unless the parent or caregiver is cleaning them or giving them a bath. Make the distinction between a pleasant feeling they get when being hugged by a parent, 'a good touch' versus an unpleasant feeling, pain, discomfort or being touched by someone and then told to keep it a secret, or a 'bad touch'. This conversation does require a lot of preparation and often needs the parents to be sensitised to the matter as well. There are several, easily available online resources and videos available to help in having this conversation in a healthy, clear and open manner and I suggest you also consult with the school counsellor, if possible, before proceeding to have this conversation.

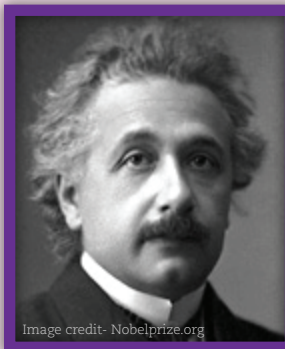


Image credit- Nobelprize.org

Mindful Matters

Einstein, known for his groundbreaking ideas, was an epitome of genius. From having speech difficulty as a child, to becoming a music-lover, stories of Einstein have always been shared among people to highlight his modest upbringing and his love for science.

According to one popular story, Einstein and his driver were on their way to a lecture hall when Einstein stated that he was unwell and asked the driver to take his place. The driver gladly agreed to deliver the lecture himself, as he had heard it numerous times before.

Einstein and his driver changed their clothes and swapped their roles. Upon reaching the campus, the driver was welcomed by everyone. He made his way to the podium to deliver the lecture, while Einstein sat among the audience. After finishing the lecture, the driver asked people to put forth their questions, not expecting any. He was appalled when a man from the audience stood up and asked a question on the theory of relativity. The driver thought over the question, looked at the real Einstein sitting among the audience and said, "This is such an easy question that I would like to invite my driver on stage to answer it."

Rote learning is easy, but presence of mind is what makes a person smart. Having attended many lectures, the driver found it easy to recall it without understanding it. But when posed with a tricky question, he had the thoughtfulness to deflect it without making it seem obvious. It is important for everyone to be prudent and aware of what is happening around them. This can be done by using simple techniques like listening, observing, and balancing the emotions, just like the driver!

LEISURE

Here are some words related to a school. Find them in the word grid, using the clues given below. (Difficulty Level – Easy)



U	N	I	F	O	R	M	T	R	E
J	H	D	I	M	P	M	A	M	G
X	L	T	K	F	S	M	B	K	F
W	J	G	O	V	R	H	L	M	L
V	N	K	R	C	F	A	E	I	N
S	L	Y	H	I	H	M	C	G	M
Q	P	L	N	C	G	N	V	O	Y
C	H	A	I	R	E	V	E	D	E
E	N	U	X	P	L	Q	P	U	I
S	T	U	D	E	N	T	S	Z	K

1. A soft, white object made from limestone, which is used to write on a black board.
2. An object with a back and four legs, which is used to sit on.
3. The 'pupils' of the class.
4. A thin stick of graphite, used to write or draw.
5. A piece of furniture with a flat top and four legs, that is used by teachers in class to keep books and bag.
6. A distinctive clothing worn by all the children, to school.

Answers:

1. CHALK	U	N	I	F	O	R	M	T	R	E
2. CHAIR	J	H	D	I	M	P	M	A	M	G
3. STUDENTS	X	L	T	K	F	S	M	B	K	F
4. PENCIL	W	J	G	O	V	R	H	L	M	L
5. TABLE	V	N	K	R	C	F	A	E	I	N
6. UNIFORM	S	L	Y	H	I	H	M	C	G	M