

# TEACHER **TRIBE**.world

AUGUST 2021

A close-up portrait of a smiling woman with dark hair, a bindi, and a nose ring, wearing a red and orange patterned sari. The background is blurred.

## India's Flo Jo

The one and only  
Ashwini Nachappa

The right way to start  
an exercise program

Assessment for  
Learning - A strategy  
and design for  
effective learning

The changing role of a  
21<sup>st</sup> century educator

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# In this edition

05

**Assessment For Learning - A strategy and design for effective learning**

*G. Balasubramanian*

10

**India's Flo Jo**

**The one and only Ashwini Nachappa**

16

**The Changing role of a 21<sup>st</sup> century educator**

*Sanjhee Gianchandani*

14

**Education news**

20

**The right way to start an exercise program**

*Dr. Vivek Baliga*

25

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# Education and Elections - Are they linked?

■ **RASHMI MARIAN FURTADO**  
Senior Editor, TeacherTirbe.world

It may seem strange, that we are discussing the connection between education and elections. Although, it does seem rather apt that we discuss this in August, the month in which India became independent India. Progress or the lack of it, in any country has a direct bearing on elections. Although, what we will discuss in this editorial is what happens after a party wins the elections and how much of an impact it has on the next elections.



To explore the link between education and elections let us decipher the much-discussed happiness curriculum implemented across Delhi.

The happiness curriculum, which was advocated by Dalai Lama, was implemented in many countries resulting in a positive impact. Serious reforms in any field let alone education have not always been a prime agenda for the ruling parties, as significant changes have significant positive or negative impact. The Delhi government implemented happiness curriculum along with entrepreneurship in all the government schools with tremendous positive outcomes. Talking about the educational reforms brought in by the Delhi government the Education Minister, Manish Sisodia made a statement saying, **“This will be the first election in the country where the work being done to improve the quality of education would play an important role.”**



The improvements in the quality of education in the state have been one of the biggest achievements by the government. What's interesting and away from the usual trend, is that after the implementation of happiness curriculum in government schools and witnessing its outcomes, many private schools also adopted this curriculum. There are reports of students stating that they are mindful, at peace and able to focus better after the implementation of happiness curriculum.

The teachers have also acknowledged that the concentration levels of students are way higher. It doesn't stop with this, many other states in the country are today looking at adopting this form of curriculum.

**Be it a government, a person, an institution, or anything else, when there is a visible positive outcome that can sustain progress on a larger scale, the trust factor and belief automatically increases.**

To bring about true change, it's important to bring about reforms at the grassroot level. It's quite evident that the current Delhi government has proved it with this change they brought into education. Be it a government, a person, an institution, or anything else, when there is a visible positive outcome that can sustain progress on a larger scale, the trust factor and belief automatically increases. This is what played out in the last Delhi elections. So, what is the takeaway for us educators from this? One would argue that it was possible to show outcomes in Delhi given the manageable size. It is true that one of our biggest challenges is size and scale in other large states.

In my opinion this is still nothing but good news. When governments realise true positive reforms in education that bring about progress will play in their favour, their approach towards education, teachers, various boards, students, and the future will change. They will most likely, involve more deeply in the field of education, allocate more budgets and invest more resources.




The past year and a half have truly been trying times for everyone, the only way any country can get back on track with progress is by ensuring the government and the citizens work together towards specific goals, education being one of the most important one, also mentioned in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations.

As educators, it's our duty to ensure we continue to bring about positive change in the society through education, no matter the situation. There are teachers in remote areas of our country who walk for miles to teach a bunch of children in a village. We must count our blessings and understand that despite these difficult times, our job is still way easier than those teachers. We owe it those teachers and students who have no other means to educate and be educated. So, with a positive outlook towards the noble profession that all of us have chosen, let's decide to unfailingly stay positive and transfer this positivity into our work every single day.

Let us welcome the perspectives of developmental politics as education grows in prominence.

Yours Positively,



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# Assessment For Learning – A strategy and design for effective learning

■ 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 educational conferences world over. This article has been taken from G. Balasubramanian's official website [balaspeaks.in](http://balaspeaks.in)*



With the New Education Policy in place, there has been a wide-spread discussion in several platforms on assessments – assessment for learning, assessment of learning and assessment as learning. However, the focus has largely been on the former one, as many educators are convinced on the urgent need for assessment for learning, which could help to bring a paradigm shift both in curriculum delivery and pedagogical practices. The excessive focus on performances highlighted through assessment of learning in the existing systems in schools, has focused on a 'factory model' leading to 'cloning' of learning content and experiences. It has side-lined the joy and purpose of learning. The two critical dimensions of learning namely - thinking and creativity 'have been sacrificed to bring learning to a pattern that is bland, non-motivating and competitive.

## IMPACT PREVIEW

- »» The need for 'assessment for learning' (AFL)
- »» Supportive reasons to opt for AFL

With the formal gateways of learning shut because of the covid impact, several new strategies including online learning models have come into play. Teachers have been finding it extremely difficult to engage into meaningful assessment models and practices. Linear patterns of questioning, which are non-contextual, non-specific to the context or geography of the learning universe or to one's learning style, have assumed the role of the jury to reward or punish

the learner with non-authentic strategies. The cancellation of the examinations due to a compelling social need and strategizing the performance of the learner through several of his earlier performances have opened the eyes of many serious thinkers in education, whether 'Assessment for Learning' (AFL) would be a better indicator to provide a more realistic response to the learners' performance.



Picture credits - teachingenglish.org.uk

It is time the school system takes positive, concrete, meaningful steps to train the teachers to understand, appreciate, engage and use assessment for learning. Some important supportive reasons could be:

## **1. AFL helps to understand previous knowledge and competencies to initiate a future course of action**

Any assessment becomes meaningful only when the learner's previous knowledge, understanding and competencies are accessed so that an appropriate design and strategy could be put in place for the future. It gives an insight into one's learning universe in terms of interests, aptitudes and anxieties which are unique to a learner. It would help the teacher to articulate the content load, content dynamics, content diversity and pedagogical tools to meet the foundational inadequacies.

## 2. AFL helps to design both individual and collaborative learning strategies

Learning is both an individual construct and social construct. Hence assessment of learning to find the engagement of the learner in both dimensions could help the learner's growth dynamics and social profile. It will help to understand his collaborative strategies, role as a team-member through participative learning, apart levels of compassion and co-operation in the team. Further, one's ability to grasp the perception of others in the team for co-construction of knowledge and in enabling synthesis of knowledge could be traced. This also reveals the ability of the learner to accommodate the peers in spite of competition to let a fair-play and a level playing field in a team both for learning and assessment.

## 3. AFL helps bridge learning gap

Learning gap is usually referred to as the gap that exists between what the learner could have achieved or is capable of achieving and what one has really achieved. This could be due to several reasons resulting out of constraints of time, difference in geographies, absence of adequate space for learning, limitation of resources, the continuous knowledge explosion, the speed of knowledge, dynamics, increasing irrelevance of knowledge or due to other psychological inadequacies with the learner.

Assessment for learning, will help not only in identifying the learning gaps, but also to ascertain the magnitude and direction of the learning gaps. Understanding the learning gap would help in taking supportive, remedial and scaffolding exercises to bridge the gap. It will help to position the learner appropriately in a learning environment with confidence, as he or she would be conscious of the reasons of such learning gaps, which have so far been beyond their personal knowledge or awareness.

**Assessment for learning, will help not only in identifying the learning gaps, but also to ascertain the magnitude and direction of the learning gaps.**

## 4. AFL facilitates to understand the learning styles

Research have shown that the styles of learning vary from one learner to the other. It will indeed be a great input to the teacher and help them to articulate their content and pedagogy to suit the specic learning styles. The feedback from AFL would help the learner to relate to the content with ease, comfort and speed. This would indeed require the teachers to design assessment tools that would be relevant and appropriate to make observations for the above. As such, AFL data could also help to explain to the parents with greater authenticity to know about the learning prole of their wards.

## 5. AFL is diagnostic and helps remediation

One major objective of AFL is to use it as a diagnostic tool to track the learning of the learner periodically. As such it would be an in-text tool during the learning process. The diagnosis could reveal a fund of information about the learner at a given time as well as on a continuum. This would help in avoiding unauthenticated judgments, erratic observations and those inuenced by exterior considerations rather than those are valid in respect of the individual learner. It could also give an insight into the inuence of non-academic issues impacting the learning behaviour from time to time. Teachers could take remedial steps both short-term and long-term to deal with the feedback based on AFL.



## 6. AFL supports growth-oriented learning curve

Though most learning curves are always growth oriented, the speed of learning, aberrations in learning prole and sudden changes in the learning patterns or the impact of some psychological concerns can be traced from the study of the learning curve. AFL provides an insight into such issues and could help the institution or the teacher/coach/mentor to make appropriate interventions for redressal. Such interventions could help in avoiding some cumulative impacts both on the learning prole of the learner or his psyche.

## 7. AFL could help in positive reinforcement of learning

While most assessments of learning tend to be summative, judgmental and terminal, they do not help in remediation and in positive reinforcement of learning. Such assessments also deprive the opportunity for any chances for re-engineering and corrective strategies. AFL, if handled with the attention it deserves, can certainly

play the role of a positive interventionist to support and build learning. Its ability to create ownership of learning on the part of learners is high.

**While most assessments of learning tend to be summative, judgmental and terminal, they do not help in remediation and in positive reinforcement of learning.**

With the support of technology, AFL can be handled effectively, for data acquisition, data management, data analysis and for establishing credibility of assessment. I wish the system moves fast in bringing about the much-needed transformation in learning facilitation. ■



# India's Flo Jo

## The one and only Ashwini Nachappa

She is popularly known as 'Flo Jo', or 'Florence Griffith Joyner of India'. One of India's best-known sprinters, Ms. Ashwini Nachappa has represented our country in international sporting events like the Asian Games and the Olympics. She is honoured with the Arjuna Award. She is a social worker and most importantly, an educationalist. She is one of the founders of Karaumbiah's Academy for Learning & Sports, better known as KALS located in Coorg, Karnataka. Ms. Ashwini Nachappa is a multiple times National champion and has spent the last 15 years trying to develop Athletics in India. She founded Ashwini's Sports Foundation (ASF) in 2010 to groom talented athletes for the international stage.



Ms. Rashmi Furtado, Sr. Editor at TeacherTribe.world, interviewed Ms. Ashwini Nachappa on nurturing a sporting culture in India and its importance. They discussed the impact of NEP on sports education, a teacher's influence on a student - in academics and sports, and on her journey to one of the best sprinters of India.

- 1. A sportsperson turned educator, you have worn many hats, including acting in a film. As a nation, do you think we do enough to nurture sports talent?**

India has evolved slowly but surely in the sporting front, especially in the last few years, that is the impetus given to sport for elite athletes. At the base and grassroots, much needs to be done. 'Khelo India' is one of the projects of the government trying to create the sporting base. Nurturing

sport talent happens when all children at every school and college play sport and are provided this opportunity and platform to unearth talent in its true sense.

- 2. To focus on your learnings, I recall interviewing Ms. Bachendri Pal and she mentioned that people laughed at her for taking up mountaineering. Did you experience something along the same lines, being a pioneering woman in athletics?**

I was fortunate to have very supportive parents who were not from the sports background. My primary school PE teacher, Mrs. Beatrice Hegde gave me my first spikes recognising my talent in athletics. My senior school PE teacher Mr. Pushpangadan, along with my Principal and teachers were all very supportive and motivating. Back in our days, most of the State and National players emerged from a robust sports program and the fierce competition amongst schools at every sport made a huge difference for me to pursue Athletics.

- 3. You now have a school, known for its special focus on sports. How do you ensure balance between studies and sports is maintained in your school?**

When the right intent is there, everything follows. KALS is an ICSE school upto grade 12 and every child is part of a robust sporting culture, competitions that take place throughout the year, be it swimming, golf, athletics, road races, basketball, hockey, etc. KALS also hosts very professionally managed open tournaments in Hockey and Athletics where participants come from across districts and states.

Physical fitness is a very important aspect of every child's development and the saying "A sound mind is found in a sound body" needs to be back in our education system.

Sports is very much integrated into our curriculum and our faculty, besides being fit themselves, are all aligned to the School's academic and sports vision. While we get cent percent results in academics, our athletes are at the state and national level in Athletics, Shooting and Hockey. Quality time by our teachers is given to our athletes at various levels who train and compete throughout the year.

- 4. Your experience with PT Usha is highlighted in almost every news article about you. What went through your mind at the time as a youngster and how did you overcome that constant comparison?**

All of us must be aware of our strengths, work on it and capitalise on it, be it mental, physical and emotional. I was different from the rest in the field in terms of style, approach and conduct which gave me great confidence. Mental training to a large extent played a crucial role in my achievements.


**Be Human, be Humble  
and always have your  
head on your shoulders  
no matter how much  
success you have had.**

- 5. You qualified for the Olympics and represented our country. How did you feel making it to that pinnacle?**

Representing our country at the Olympics is the dream of every athlete, and the journey in reaching that goal is a culmination of years of hard work and focus. The journey undertaken was tough with many challenges and hurdles to overcome but the journey in itself has been most enjoyable.

- 6. The National Education Policy 2020 has given a lot of importance to sports under holistic development. What is your view on it?**

NEP is a much-needed breakthrough. Implementation is key and there lies the challenge. Physical fitness is a very important aspect of every child's development and the saying "A sound mind is found in a sound body" needs to be back in our education system.

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- A horizontal bar composed of several colored segments: pink, yellow, purple, blue, orange, red, light blue, green, and grey.
- 7. Your journey inspires children in our country, especially girls to work towards their dreams. What message do you have for them?**

Find your Interest, passion will follow. Work hard on every step of the ladder and it will help you reach the top. Success is the by-product of all the hard work dedication and approach to your INTEREST.

- 8. From the Arjuna Award to plenty more, you have many laurels. You have however been one of the most simple and approachable people. Is that something you advise youngsters to pay attention to?**

Yes. In life, being grounded at all points in time is very important. The centre court at Wimbledon has lines from the poem 'If' by Rudyard Kipling. It aptly says, "If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster | And treat those two imposters just the same." Be Human, be Humble and always have your head on your shoulders no matter how much success you have had.

- 9. Finally, there is no great student without a great teacher. What is your message to teachers across India and the world?**

I can only Quote Benjamin Franklin *"Tell me and I forget, Teach me and I remember, Involve me and I learn."*

Without teachers none of the other professions would exist. Continue your Noble profession as YOU are the most IMPORTANT person in the cycle of life of every individual. Be truthful and committed! ■

# Education news

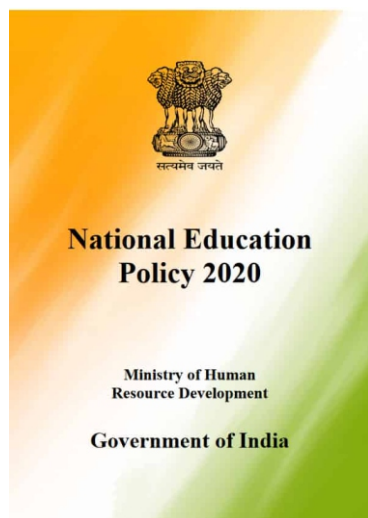
## NEP 2020 to be implemented from the current academic year

The education ministry has advised state institutions, colleges and universities to implement the NEP 2020 from the current academic year (2021-22). This is to pave way for starting interdisciplinary education in educational institutions, setting up education complexes and allowing flexible entry-exit schemes in colleges and universities as part of the first phase.

States like Karnataka, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh (MP) will be implementing the NEP 2020 this academic year, while other states are in the course of setting up committees for the same.

Gujarat has set up a special purpose vehicle called 'Shri KK Shastri Government Colleges', a college complex set up for NEP implementation on an experimental basis. This complex will have 6 colleges, which includes BCA, Law, Arts and Commerce colleges. These colleges are affiliated to Gujarat University and will aid multi disciplinary education.

While Karnataka State Government is setting up unified college management system, Madhya Pradesh is introducing flexible entry-exit and optional courses this academic year. In MP, apart from main subjects, students can choose from various courses, extending to Hindi cinema, wildlife tourism and yoga. Focus on regional languages in technical education has also been implemented.



Picture credits: Edristi

In the meantime, education ministry is setting up live dashboard to investigate the progress in the implementation of NEP. It has identified 181 tasks, which will have to be achieved under NEP 2020. This includes regional language-based education and credit bank system among others.

Source – moneycontrol.com

## Schools in Gujarat reopen for classes 9 & 11

The Government of Gujarat has reopened schools for classes 9 and 11, with COVID-19 safety guidelines in place. The physical classes will not exceed 50% capacity and students attending school will have to have a signed consent form from the parents.

It is mandatory for children attending school to follow strict social distancing inside the campus and their temperatures are tested at the school gates, before entry into the premises.



Apart from these basic guidelines, students are told to carry their own lunch and water bottles to prevent them from sharing, for safety purposes. The schools have also removed breaks apart from recess.

According to the teachers and principals, children are happy to get back to school, after attending online classes for over a year now. Though schools have reopened, the government has not yet made it mandatory for students to attend physical classes.

Source – indiatoday.in

# The changing role of a 21<sup>st</sup> century educator

■ **SANJHEE GIANCHANDANI**  
ELT Editor

*Sanjhee Gianchandani has a Masters' degree in English from Lady Shri Ram College for Women and a CELTA from the University of Cambridge. She has worked as an English language assessment specialist. Her love for publishing brought her to her current job as an ELT editor in the K-8 space. Her articles have been widely published in the educational space in magazines such as The Progressive Teacher, Digital Learning Magazine and Teacher Plus Magazine. She is based out of New Delhi, India.*



A teacher's role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has critically changed from that of being a pedagogue to that of being a facilitator. Teaching in this century is an altogether new phenomenon, more so because the way we learn has been revolutionised. Today, learning happens everywhere, on the go, and can be customised according to one's style and preferences. Thus, teachers need reimagine the very concept of learning. In the words of Alvin Tofer, 'The illiterate of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.' For this they need to cultivate a specific skill set.

»» The first skill that teachers need to be armed with is **adaptability or the ability to mould their teaching** according to the learning needs of the students. This can be done by incorporating strategies to sustain the students' interest, thinking of fresher ways to disseminate content, and also schooling themselves on emerging technologies. 'A teacher needs to be able to formulate, construct, arrange, modify and make sense of information so that it understood as knowledge,' explains teacher



education expert Associate Professor, Joanna Barbousas. 'A teacher who is able to adapt astute decision making to practical things, situations and events is someone who is able to provide opportunities to see things in different ways,' she adds.

»» The teacher needs to **create a learner-centred classroom**. This is in alignment to the needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> century learner. Gone are the days of rote learning and taking down notes from the blackboard.

Students of today should be viewed as 'producers' rather than mere passive listeners, they should be made to own their learning. Consequently, the instruction of the classroom must be altered in a manner that it encompasses students' contributions and choices. Each student has different learning requirements, abilities and goals and the classroom should be a space of reflection for all of these for every student. A dynamic classroom is where teachers are willing to listen to diverse opinions, support knowledge claims with evidence, engage in critical and creative thinking, and participate in open and meaningful dialogue.

**A dynamic classroom is where teachers are willing to listen to diverse opinions, support knowledge claims with evidence, engage in critical and creative thinking, and participate in open and meaningful dialogue.**

»» Woven closely to this is the need for **collaborative learning**. This does not simply refer to projects involving pair work, but also entails teacher-student collaboration. By creating digital resources, presentations and assignments together, educators can build a new sense of confidence in the students and also help classroom activities resemble real-life needs of students. The classroom is arguably a microcosm of humanity and collaborative work can also help bridge the gap between peers by instilling in them the important values of team spirit, empathy, and effective communication. Shared knowledge should be coupled with shared authority. Which means that teachers should value and build upon the culture, language, strategies, knowledge and personal experiences that students bring to the learning space. According to The National Education Association's guide on the 4C's, Preparing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Students for a

Global Society - 'As a result of students working collaboratively, the group can generate more knowledge, making collaboration a key ingredient to student success in today's global society.'

» Teachers must understand that the current cohort of students belongs to the Generation Z and Generation Alpha. These two generations have grown up with unprecedented amounts of technology at their fingertips. They are digital natives and are comfortable using apps and coding as teachers are flipping pages. Consequently, going digital and understanding the perspective of the students who are 'digital natives' is another essential skill that educators must inculcate. Technology must be used strategically to benefit students and to promote independent and autonomous learning and in the process, establish the assets of technology rather than always highlighting its negative impacts.

» Another important aspect in this regard is **building a positive digital footprint**. Educators of today must be in a position to model how to appropriately use social media. Social media, which has upturned everyone's lives in the past few years, has an alarmingly high impact on impressionable minds. Kathy Cook, the director of educational technology for the University of Phoenix College of Education thinks, 'Students are using these technologies in their personal lives, so it makes sense to



leverage them for teaching and learning.' Moreover, maintaining a betting profile on social media can be a good way to impart the same to your students.

»» Also, the focal point in a 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom should be on **project-based learning**. The idea of teaching only using textbooks belongs to the previous century. The students of today must be encouraged to conduct their research, formulate their questions, contact experts and create final projects using the devices already in their hands. Thus, educators need to expand their teaching toolbox, try fresh methods and design newer tasks to teach the existing content. In a time when mental health and wellbeing is one of the biggest challenges facing students of today, a 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher can give students the skills they need both for now and for the future.

»» Finally, teachers must be lifelong learners themselves. Teachers must understand that simply having a degree in teaching is not enough anymore. The 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom has its own set of demands and to full these the teacher needs to be aware of the ever-changing trends in the education industry, know the buzzwords and address different issues head-on. Expanding your professional network by connecting with eminent personalities from your field and having conversations with like-minded individuals is as essential as practising teaching itself.

So, the educators of today need to be curious, flexible and forward thinking in order to give students what they will need fifty years down the line. The role of a teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> century increasingly emphasises mediated learning. It needs to be all about empowering students with transferable skills for employability, growing digital citizenships, critical thinking, and creativity as well as sustainable learning that will hold up to a rapidly changing world and not just be limited to prescribed content that has been chosen for its past relevance. By adopting this approach, teachers will be able to see the change in their classrooms, schools, and in the community at large. ■

**Educators of today need to be curious, exible and forward thinking in order to give students what they will need fty years down the line.**

# The right way to start an exercise program

## ■ DR. VIVEK BALIGA

Cardiologist and Consultant Physician

*Dr. Vivek Baliga B. is a consultant physician and cardiologist, and director of Baliga Diagnostics in Bangalore. He is a keen advocate of patient education and loves to blog about all things health related. Learn more about him at [drvivekbaliga.com](http://drvivekbaliga.com).*



Have you been wondering what the right way to start an exercise program is? Then this guide should get you going! Taking up exercise is one of the best resolutions to make. However, it is the hardest to stick to and achieve.

Why? Because it takes work.

Why exactly are you thinking of taking up an exercise routine? Is it to get fitter? To lose weight? To get yourself rid of that back pain?

Whatever the way, it is essential that it is started in the right way and continued in the right manner. This is because exercise is a 'magic pill' that can reverse heart disease, prevent cancer, control blood pressure and reduce blood sugar levels.



There is a common misconception that exercise has to be performed for hours for us to see any benefit from it. But with exercise, it is quality over

quantity. For example, a walk for 30 minutes at a slow pace will not be as effective at improving your health compared to a 30 minutes walk at a brisk pace.

Here are some simple tips that will guide you about the right way to start an exercise program.

## » Don't be a 'weekend warrior'

Have you heard of Weekend Warrior Syndrome? Let's say you have been leading a sedentary life for quite some time. You decide to start a sport, say football. Your friend invites you out on a weekend to the local park for a game. You play to your heart's content. You probably even score a goal! You feel great! The following day however, you don't.

Your muscles are hurting, you are finding it difficult to walk and your joints are all stiff. You attempted to be a warrior on the field, but ended up in bed with aches and pains instead. This is weekend warrior syndrome.

**Tip:** Your body cannot take the strain of an 'exercise burst' all in one day. You need to build it up gradually over a period of weeks. Start with just a few minutes a day. Increase over a few weeks to 45 minutes a day.

## » Choose the right exercise

Just exercising alone is not enough. You should choose what is right for you. A lot of which exercise you choose depends on what your doctors says, especially if you are older.

- Those who have knee pains should steer away from impact sports such as running, tennis, badminton, etc. These will twist and bend the joints, making the problem even worse. Instead, if you have joint pains, take up swimming. It is light on the joints, great at burning calories and will make you fit in no time.
- Weight training may not be the right thing for you, especially if you are older. Certain heart conditions do not permit breath holding during weightlifting. However, if your doctor gives you all clear, then make sure you combine cardiovascular exercise, yoga and strength training.

- Cardiovascular exercises include brisk walking, running, cycling, swimming, aerobics, zumba, tennis, basketball, badminton... the list goes on.
- Strength training includes push ups, pull ups and lifting of weights.
- Yoga includes various asanas that will enhance flexibility, improve digestion and increase lung capacity.

If you are confused about what exercise you can start, then speak to a certified fitness trainer or even your doctor for that matter.

## »» Get checked out first

These days, running clubs and other sporting associations recommend getting a medical examination done before beginning an exercise program. The right way to start an exercise program is to see your doctor to ensure it is safe to go ahead.

You may be asked to undergo certain preliminary tests first. These may include blood tests, an echocardiogram and a treadmill test.

A blood test can reveal if you have low hemoglobin levels, kidney disease or diabetes. An echocardiogram can determine the structure and function of your heart. A treadmill will determine if you have heart blockages.



A consultation with your doctor will help determine your blood pressure values. Provided these are all okay, it should be fine to start exercising.



## »» Always warm up

When you begin exercise, your muscles might be a little tight and stiff. Warming up can help loosen them. A good warm up is important to prevent injury to the muscles and tendons during exercise.

Warming up is simple – just do some light stretches and a short walk. This will get the blood flowing to your muscles and will prepare your joints for the exercise onslaught.



### Benefits of warming up before exercise

1. Increases the temperature of muscles, preparing them for exercise
2. Increases body temperature, loosening up joints and tendons
3. Alters hormone levels, allowing for increased endurance through energy production
4. Prepares you mentally for exercise
5. Increases joint mobility during the exercise routine

Do not attempt to stretch your muscles too much before you work out. The muscles are too 'cold' before exercise, and this could lead to injury. Stretching of muscles should be done well after your work out. It forms a part of your 'cool down'. As the muscles are warm, the stretching builds strength and reduces injury.

## »» Choose the right diet

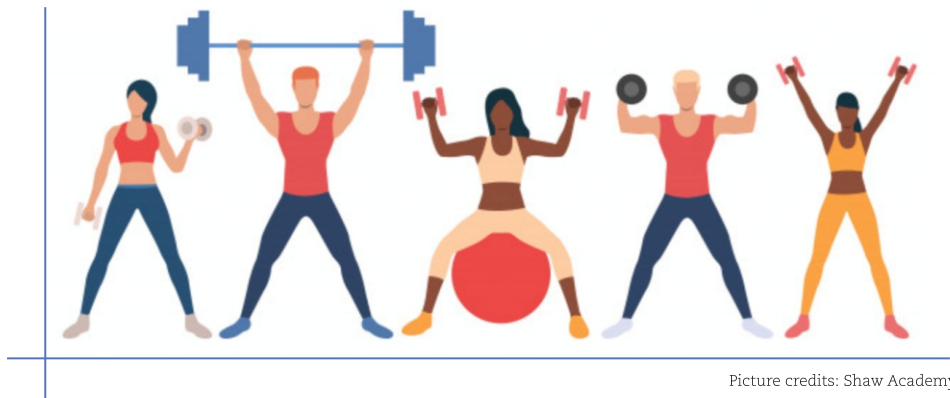
No exercise program is complete without the right diet plan. Follow a health balanced diet. If you keep your calorie intake under control, your exercise program will help you lose weight.

If you increase your calorie and protein intake and are weight training, your exercise will help you gain weight.

Either way, tailor make your diet plan to what you wish to achieve from your exercise routine



## »» How much exercise is good exercise?



Picture credits: Shaw Academy

Currently, the American Heart Association recommends 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity every day for at least 5 days a week. But this is not enough to get fit. It is enough just to maintain health.

In India, medical bodies now recommend exercise at least an hour a day. This should either be brisk walking, running, cycling or swimming (or aerobics, Zumba, etc.). Combine this with strength training and yoga for maximum benefit.

The right way to start an exercise program has just been described. Now get yourself out there and get on your feet! ■

# We Recommend App

## Pocket

The internet is full information - articles, videos and audio files. It takes great effort to find the apt ones and greater effort to save and consume these files. Pocket is an app that takes content that comes our way and helps us create our own space filled with topics that interest us.

An app from Mozilla Corporation, Pocket helps the users save news pieces, articles and videos from any publisher, device or app.



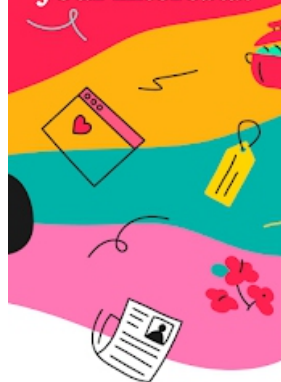
Picture credits - play.google.com

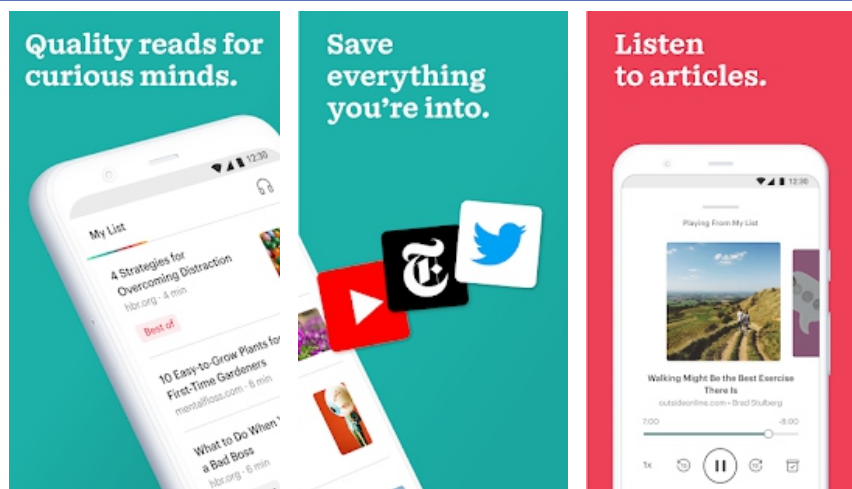
### App features

**Enjoy  
Pocket offline.**



**Nurture  
your interests.**





Picture credits - playgoogle.com

- Pocket has a layout which is customisable, clean and relaxing for the readers eyes. The typography of the app helps reading for longer periods a comfortable experience.
- The app has dark and sepia themes for night reading.
- Pocket has a 'listen' feature which helps in 'eyes-free' and 'hands-free' experience, in turn helping the users multitask.
- Once an article is saved in Pocket, it can be accessed on the phone, laptop or a tab even when the user is offline.
- It displays the estimated reading time, helping the users to plan their work accordingly.
- Users can also save to Pocket with browser extensions for Chrome, Firefox or Safari

Teachers and educators can make use of this app to save interesting articles and teaching resources they come across online. This can be viewed, listened to, or read later during their free time. ■

# Addressing teachers' mental health

■ **VARSHA PRASAD**  
Editor, TeacherTribe.world



*“Technology is just a tool. In terms of getting the kids to work together and motivating them, the teacher is the most important.” - Bill Gates*

Teaching is one of the most rewarding professions. Seeing students succeed and achieve in life is the best gift teachers can ask for. That said, it is a profession which requires a lot of passion and dedication. But what is usually overlooked here is the stress and fatigue that teachers face every day. In the last year and a half, with schools being managed from home, teachers are under great pressure to make sure children learning from their screens do not miss out on anything.

They have been multitasking with managing online teaching and handling work at home, leading to anxiety and stress. It is extremely important to address these issues and find solutions around it for better functioning schools, children and teachers themselves.

## Mental health

A person's cognitive, emotional and behavioural well-being is of utmost importance. This is what defines a person's mental health. Stability in mental health is required for a person to function normally, to make right decisions and to handle stress in right manner.

Cambridge University Press published a study online, to analyse the levels of stress, anxiety and depression of teachers in the north of Spain.

University of the Basque Country, Leioa, Spain conducted a research study on school, to measure the signs shown by teaching staff since the schools closed down due to pandemic. Similar studies have been conducted across the globe by multiple universities and institutions on the effect of lockdown and online classes, on teachers. All the studies showed similar responses – majority of teachers have shown anxiety, depression and stress symptoms.

Uncertainty of their jobs, unpredictability of when the schools will reopen and the pressure of teaching in a new medium has added to this stress. A teacher's mental health becomes important as it directly and indirectly affects the quality of teaching, the students' understanding of the teacher's teaching and the environment in class (both physical and online). With the lockdown and the pandemic adding to the already existing stressors, it is high time we address mental wellbeing as a serious issue and come up with solutions.

## What can the teachers do?

After a conversation with a few teachers recently, I realised how important peers are. Though the schools were closed for children, a teacher told me how happy she was to go to school and conduct classes online, from the school classrooms. She was happy to go to school and meet other teachers, and to talk to them. "I was so happy talking to my colleagues on my first day back in school. Even my biology class went really well that day. I could see the children enjoying the class!" she said. This shows how a teacher's mental state affects classroom teaching – both positively and negatively. The teacher's energy sure reflects on the students and the class.

1. **Talk it out!** - Talking it out, sharing and releasing one's emotions helps relieve stress. Sharing one's feelings and emotions with people we trust can be therapeutic and healing. It can be talking to peers, family members or friends.
2. **Dedicating 'ME' time** - In the hustle bustle of activities, work at home, online classes and assignments, teachers hardly find time for

themselves. It is very important to do things (activities) they enjoy doing, apart from the daily workload. It can be reading a book, watching a movie, drawing or painting.

3. **Listening to music** - Listening to soothing music is believed to be healing and calming to the brain. Teachers can listen to their favourite music while doing their daily chores or dedicate some time to just do this.
4. **Exercise** - Exercise here can be talking a small walk, yoga or breathing exercises. It is proven that after exercising, the blood supply to the brain and the other parts of the body increases, causing the person to be sharper and fresher. Teachers can devote some time of the day for this. It is also advised to consult a doctor first before starting a serious exercise program.
5. Teachers are one of the schools' biggest assets. It is very important for the schools to make sure teachers are taken care of. Like schools have dedicated counsellors for students, there can be one appointed exclusively for teachers. This will become beneficial in the current scenario, where the teachers will have to address the parents and handle the students in class once the schools reopen.

Taking care of mental health is very important and cannot be ignored. Positive emotional and mental states of mind lead to positive teachers and students, and constructive classrooms.

If you have any positive mental health stories to share, do write to me at [varsha@greycaps.com](mailto:varsha@greycaps.com)

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Varsha Prasad is leading TeacherTribe.world initiative from Greycaps Knowledge Tribe, exclusively for teachers, as its Editor. She is also the Editor of TeacherTribe.world magazine. It is created by Greycaps Knowledge Tribe to celebrate the contributions of our teachers. She has played a vital role in creating many products, which ignite the curiosity of children, including the Global Awareness Program, also known as GAP in schools.