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Symposium: Managing Stress in Children

**Parents' Role in Managing Stress in
Children**

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Outline

- Understanding children and adolescents
- Parenting styles and disciplinary practices
- Specific strategies and tactics by parents

What are the sources of stress?

Family

School

Peers

Themselves

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR

- **Behavior is the way children tell us how they are feeling**
- **Children can have a range of feelings in a short space of time and they can have difficulty in understanding what they are feeling**
- **Children's feelings will affect what they do**
- **Children will learn more by what they see us do and how we live our lives than by what we tell them**

WHY IS MY CHILD BEHAVING THIS WAY?

- **Only way to get attention?**
- **Some stress?**
- **Feels left out?**
- **Overwhelmed by changes?**
- **Irritated/frustrated by us?**
- **Feels unfairly treated & wants to punish us?**
- **Parenting style is too strict or too lax?**
- **May be needing more independence?**

WHAT IS MY CHILD FEELING?

- **When your child misbehaves, watch and think about the behavior**
- **Then talk about it**
- **For younger children, try to discover feelings by watching for facial expressions, understanding different cries or thinking about where they were and what was just happening**



EGYPT: FAMILY FACTORS FOR PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN

- Living in an apartment shared with strangers
- High crowding
- Constant fights and quarrels between family members
- Lack of regular relations with relatives and acquaintances
- Income insufficient to meet basic family needs

EGYPT: CHILDREN'S FACTORS FOR PROBLEMS

- Young age
- Disobedience
- Telling lies
- Destroying others belongings
- Acting disrespectfully to parents
- Communicating poorly with parents
- Running away from home
- Poor school achievement

Parenting Styles

IF YOU WANT YOUR CHILD TO BE

- Moderately competent
- Responsible
- Socially withdrawn
- Lack spontaneity
- Girls – dependent on parents, lack achievement motivation
- Boys – more aggressive: low self esteem

THEN YOU NEED TO BE....

- **AUTHORITARIAN**

Rejecting

Unresponsive

Parent centred

Don't allow any opinion other than yours

Put him down often

IF YOU WANT YOUR CHILD TO BE

- Detached
- Emotionally uninvolved
- Uninterested in other children
- Prone to Depression

THEN YOU NEED TO BE

- **NEGLECTING**

No time for the child

Let the child fend for himself

Take no interest in what happens to her at school or with her friends

No love

IF YOU WANT YOUR CHILD TO BE.....

- More positive
- Show more vitality
- Immature in behavior
- Lack of impulse control, social responsibility
- Lack self reliance

THEN YOU NEED TO BE.....

- **INDULGENT**

Undemanding

Not controlling

Give the child everything she wants without reservation

Don't set any limits

IF YOU WANT YOUR CHILD TO BE

- Independent
- Self assertive
- Friendly with peers
- Cooperative with parents
- Responsible

YOU NEED TO BE

- **AUTHORITATIVE**

Accepting

Responsive

Child centred

Build responsibility, allow positive communication

DISCIPLINE FOR DIFFERENT AGES

Babies (0-1 year old)

Gentleness, loving touches and words

Help them to learn to trust and that the world around them is friendly and protective

DISCIPLINE FOR DIFFERENT AGES - 2

Crawlers and toddlers (1-3 years)

Teach with patience and praise

Distract

Avoid battles

Repeat and show skills together

Toddlers do not understand punishment and react with fear or defiance rather than learn

Toddlers - contd

Pick your child up when he won't come

Lift her to safety

Hold her until she stops the undesired activity

**Remember: Give lots of loving when your toddler is
being good**

DISCIPLINE FOR DIFFERENT AGES - 3

Preschoolers (3-5 years)

Stand firm once you've said "No"

Think before you say "No" but be sure you mean it

Consequences need to be short

The easier you make it to please, the more likely your child will try

Preschoolers - contd

Notice and praise when she is doing what you want
**“No” should be a word you use sparingly and with
care**

DISCIPLINE FOR DIFFERENT AGES - 4

Primary school age (7-12)

Children of this age can understand and accept consequences

Let your children share in making some of the rules and consequences

If a rule is broken, the consequence should follow

Primary school age - contd

Time out can be used

Always teach as well

Try to be in step with other parents if possible or your child may have difficulty cooperating

Teach children how to work out ways to solve problems (in age-appropriate language)

GUIDANCE FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

- Use a comprehensive approach
- Take into consideration the parent-child relationship
- Reinforce desired behaviors
- Consequences for negative behavior
- Corporal punishment is of limited effectiveness and has potentially deleterious side effects

AAP, 1998

CONSEQUENCES OF HARSH DISCIPLINE OF YOUNG CHILDREN

- Low birth weight children assessed at 1 and 3 years of age
- Total : 715 children
- Stanford-Binet Scale to measure IQ
- Boys received higher amounts of harsh discipline
- Girls with harsh maternal discipline and low maternal warmth -> IQ 12 points lower than girls with low punishment and high warmth

Snaith, Brooks-Gunn, 1997

Adolescent Issues

Social Media

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Google +
- Others





800 million users, still increasing



Why are people using social networking?

- New tool in communication has changed the way people interact
- Making new friends and locating old friends.
- Online communication
- Many uses and gratifications are met by users (e.g., "keeping in touch with friends").

Raacke J, Bonds-Raacke J

Cyberpsychol Behav. 2008 Apr;11(2):169-74

Role of Parents

- Parental supervision is a key protective factor against adolescent risk-taking behavior
- Unmonitored Internet use may place adolescents at significant risk, such as *cyberbullying, unwanted exposure to pornography, and potentially revealing personal information to sexual predators.*

Puzazon-Zazik M, Park MJ

Am J Mens Health. 2010 Mar;4(1):77-85

The Star, Wednesday October 12, 2011

KUALA LUMPUR: Six out of 10 parents are unaware of their children's online activities, at a time when 90% of the youngsters have experienced some form of threat on the Internet.

The trend revealed by an international security specialist showed that children — facing threats ranging from cyber-bullying, harassment, online pornography, identity theft and online sexual predators — were also spending an average of 19 hours on the Internet each week.

To address this, Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil has announced the drafting of a master strategic plan aimed at giving online protection to an estimated 11.2 million youngsters below 18 years of age.



The Star, Wednesday October 12, 2011

“Only four out of 10 parents are aware of their children’s cyberspace activities. The study shows that children are spending an average of 19 hours a week online whereas their parents think it is only about 11 hours,” she said of the trend highlighted in the Norton Online Family 2010 Report.

“The figure is worrying and it is timely that we seriously look at their protection,” she told reporters after launching the Child Online Protection seminar here yesterday.

A BBC News Technology report, said Shahrizat, had identified Malaysians to be among the heaviest users of social networking, spending an average of nine hours each day.

“A research firm also found Malaysians to have the most number of ‘friends’ on Facebook with an average 233 people, compared to Japanese who only have 29.”

Girl kills self after Facebook post

Reports by MARTIN CARVALHO, RASHITHA A. HAMID, JOSHUA FOONG, K. ASHRAF KAMMED and CINDY TAN

The Star, 9.2.2011

MALACCA: To the horror of her classmates, a troubled teenager died after falling from the second floor of her school – just days after posting in her Facebook wall about wanting to take her own life.

In the 9.15am tragedy, Sally Lee Qian Chun, a Form 5 student, abruptly walked out during the Chemistry lesson in the laboratory on the first floor and went to her classroom a floor above. Witnesses in SMK Seri Kota in Ayer Leleh were shocked to see Lee, 17, sitting precariously on the corridor ledge facing her empty classroom before she fell backwards. She suffered fatal head injuries.



Sally Lee Qian Chun, a Form 5 student

A close relative who refused to be named said Lee's family, from Taman Bukit Katil, Bukit Katil, was puzzled as to why she would want to take her own life. "She seemed happy during Chinese New Year.

"I even saw her on Monday and she looked fine and happy," he said when met at the Malacca Hospital mortuary here yesterday.

Her posting became more troubled last Friday when she wrote that she had planned to take her own life last month.

On Sunday night, at around 11.07pm, Lee lamented on her Facebook of a failed relationship and broken promises while reiterating her desire to take her own life.

Her remarks drew some taunts and dares from her online friends. Some commentators even asked her to go ahead with what she wanted to do.

In her last posting at 3.45pm on Monday, Lee reminded her friends to keep their promises of buying her a teddy bear and coffin. She also told them not to miss her when she was gone and to take care of themselves.

Lee, the eldest and only girl with two younger brothers, was described by teachers as a bright and well-behaved student. Her parents were too distraught to be interviewed.

State MCA chairman Datuk Gan Tian Loo arranged for a meeting at the school for Lee's relatives to meet with several of her classmates.



Deadly plunge: The spot where Sally fell to her death yesterday from the second

floor of her school block in SMK Seri Kota, Malacca

Girl kills self after Facebook post

- MALACCA: To the horror of her classmates, a troubled teenager died after falling from the second floor of her school – just days after posting in her Facebook wall about wanting to take her own life.
- In the 9.15am tragedy, Sally Lee Qian Chun, a Form 5 student, abruptly walked out during the Chemistry lesson in the laboratory on the first floor and went to her classroom a floor above.
- Witnesses in SMK Seri Kota in Ayer Leleh were shocked to see Lee, 17, sitting precariously on the corridor ledge facing her empty classroom before she fell backwards. She suffered fatal head injuries.

- Since Jan 17, she had posted several disturbing comments on her wall, even saying this would be her last Chinese New Year.
- Her posting became more troubled last Friday when she wrote that she had planned to take her own life last month.
- On Sunday night, at around 11.07pm, Lee lamented on her Facebook of a failed relationship and broken promises while reiterating her desire to take her own life.
- Her remarks drew some taunts and dares from her online friends. Some commentators even asked her to go ahead with what she wanted to do.
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Schedules and Activities for Kids

Experts recommend that school age children and teens:

- Sleep for 9 hours (teens) to 10 hours (8-12 year olds) a night
- Exercise for at some time every day, including moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity
- Eat a meal together with family each night
- Limit screen time to no more than one or two hours a day

Limiting Screen Time

- Sport, hobby, or other extracurricular activities
- Set a good example by being active and limiting your own use of screen time
- Turn the TV off
- Avoid using extra screen time as a reward
- Don't use media devices as a babysitter.
- Spend more time with your children: get them off their computer or away from the TV.

- Provide good teachers and a high-performing school, love of reading, coming from a family where education is valued, and exposure to experiences that are culturally and intellectually enriching.

- Parents need to know what their children are doing and provide guidance and support
- Arrange for a variety of activities as much as possible
- Keep communications open by being authoritative rather than authoritarian
- Be willing to seek help

Teen Sexuality

Parents find it difficult to think about it, much less do anything about it

Teen sexuality is part of normal development and teenagers' needs have to be considered

Closely intertwined with physical development, social development and cognitive development.

Absent parent

- N is a 14 year old female teen
- One older sister, 2 younger brothers
- Parents divorced. Mother is in another state.
- Father remarried and transferred to Klang Valley. Stepmother also in another state.
- 2 months before, she got into trouble in school as nude photos of her were found in the handphones of some of the other children; no action taken

Absent parent - 2

- Father went on work trip
- Children on their own
- N went to town with friend from school
- Separated from friend
- Picked up by 3 men who promised to take her home
- But instead raped her, held down

Absent parent - 3

- Filmed by a woman
- Then brought to another house, under the control of another group of men
- Meanwhile, father returned and finding her gone, initiated a search with his friends
- Finally rescued by father's friends
- 3 men detained by police

Absent parent – 4

Children and teens should not be left alone
They need to be supervised

Bad neighbour

- A is a 15 year old female teen
- Lives with her parents and 3 younger siblings in a complex of flats (low cost)
- Every week day, her duty is to escort her siblings from the babysitter's home after she has finished school
- Has been doing this safely for the past 3 – 4 months

Bad neighbour - 2

- April 09, on way back to own flat, met man in his 20's named Mal; started talking to him
- Next day, Mal invited her into his flat; at first she refused but he managed to convince
- Inside, Mal undressed her (against her protests), touched her breasts and then raped her. She had tried to run but he had been too strong for her
- Eventually, allowed to leave but threatened by Mal not to tell anyone

Bad neighbour – 3

- Went home, did not tell her parents
- At school the next day, told her best friend who then told the counselling teacher
- Police report made and parents were informed
- Mal arrested

Bad neighbour – 4

Maintain close relationship with children

Teach them how to avoid risky situations and to be safe

I love my boyfriend

- Z, 16 year old female teen
- Has older sister; mother is a single parent; father abandoned the family 5 years before
- Mother busy with 2 jobs to make ends meet
- Z developed relationship with a 23 year old guitarist with a local band that plays in night spots
- Stopped going to school

I love my boyfriend - 2

- Stayed up late to accompany him; goes for supper after his work finishes
- Could not wake up in time for morning school
- Wanted to be with him in the late mornings and afternoons
- Waiting for his phone calls

I love my boyfriend - 3

- Mother tried all she could to get her to go to school and to drop her BF
- Reasoning, appealing , pleading, scolding, hitting, locking her up in room – no use
- Mother told Z “ I don’t love you anymore”
- Z would apologise, cry, said she would be a good girl, but when BF came, she would go with him

I love my boyfriend - 4

Have time for your children/teens

Let them confide in you

Handling peer pressure

- Teens spend a lot more time with their friends, less time with family
- Help them choose the right friends (similar interests, and views as those you are trying to develop in your children)
- Doing well in school, having respect for others, avoiding drug use, smoking and drinking
- Invite friends home for food
- Treat them as responsible individuals

Managing risk taking behaviours

- Teens practise risk taking behaviour to try to find their own identity and become more independent
- They thus become very vulnerable to experimenting or becoming addicted to using drugs or drinking and to early sexual activity
- Talk to them to reduce their susceptibility to negative influences
- Be a positive influence

Minimise negative influences by developing :

- High self esteem
- High confidence
- Sense of self worth
- Feeling of being needed and loved by family and friends

Questions for parents

- Do you have fights with your teen over how she dresses? Or over how she does her hair? Or over the type of music that she listens to?
- Is it important for you to show your teens that you are the boss? Or that you are always right?

Questions for parents - 2

- Can you ignore some of the less important issues?
- Creating power struggles likely to change teens' attitudes? Or will it cause more problems?
- Are you monitoring what your teens are being exposed to? Internet, TV, movies, video games, books, magazines?

Talk to your children

Remember, talking includes listening

Thank you