



SIES School of Learning and Leadership Development (SIESSLLD)

TRAINING NOTE (014/2026-27)

on

**Managing Stress and Mental Wellbeing of Students:
Role of Teachers**

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Backdrop:

In today's fast-changing and highly competitive world, students are facing unprecedented levels of stress. Academic pressure, social expectations, family issues, financial concerns, uncertainty about the future, and the overwhelming influence of social media have created an environment where anxiety, loneliness, burnout, and emotional distress are becoming increasingly common. While parents and mental health professionals have an important role to play, teachers often remain the first adults who notice changes in a student's behaviour and emotional state.

Teachers cannot replace counsellors or psychologists, but they can become compassionate mentors who create emotionally safe learning environments. Their daily interactions with students provide countless opportunities to reduce stress, build resilience, and promote mental well-being. This responsibility extends across both schools and higher educational institutions, where students encounter different but equally significant challenges.

Understanding Student Stress:

Stress is not always harmful. Moderate levels of stress can motivate students to perform better. However, prolonged or excessive stress negatively affects concentration, memory, motivation, physical health, and emotional stability. Students experiencing chronic stress may exhibit absenteeism, declining academic performance, irritability, withdrawal from social interactions, lack of participation, or behavioural problems.

Teachers should remember that every student's experience is unique. Some may be silently struggling with family issues, financial hardship, learning difficulties, discrimination, relationship problems, or mental health conditions that are not immediately visible. Recognising these hidden signals requires empathy rather than judgement.

Creating an Emotionally Safe Classroom:

One of the most effective ways teachers can support mental well-being is by fostering a classroom culture where students feel respected, accepted, and valued.

An emotionally safe classroom encourages students to ask questions without fear of ridicule, express opinions freely, admit mistakes, and seek help when needed. Teachers can cultivate such an atmosphere by

treating every student with dignity, discouraging bullying and discrimination, and engaging in respectful communication.

Simple practices such as greeting students warmly, learning their names, acknowledging their efforts, and celebrating small achievements strengthen students' sense of belonging. Feeling connected to the classroom community itself becomes a protective cover against stress.

Recognising Early Warning Signs:

Teachers spend significant time with students and are therefore well positioned to notice early signs of emotional distress. Sudden changes in attendance, academic performance, mood, personal appearance, participation, or behaviour should not be ignored.

Instead of making assumptions, teachers can initiate private, non-judgemental conversations. Questions like, "I've noticed you've seemed quieter lately. Is everything okay?" often open the door for students to share concerns.

Equally important is knowing when professional intervention is necessary. Persistent sadness, expressions of hopelessness, self-harm, severe anxiety, or suicidal thoughts require immediate referral to trained counsellors, mental health professionals, or appropriate institutional support systems.

Reducing Academic Stress:

While academic rigour remains essential, unnecessary pressure can often be reduced through thoughtful teaching practices.

Teachers can provide clear instructions, realistic deadlines, transparent assessment criteria, and timely feedback. Breaking large assignments into smaller milestones helps students manage workload more effectively. Coordinating major assessments with colleagues can prevent multiple deadlines from overwhelming students simultaneously.

Rather than focusing exclusively on grades, teachers should emphasise learning, improvement, curiosity, and effort. Constructive feedback that highlights strengths alongside areas for improvement encourages growth instead of fear of failure.

In higher education, flexibility becomes particularly important. University students often balance coursework with internships, research, employment, and family responsibilities. Where appropriate, reasonable

accommodations and open communication can significantly reduce unnecessary stress.

Encouraging Healthy Coping Skills:

Teachers can integrate simple well-being practices into daily academic life without compromising instructional time.

Brief mindfulness exercises, stretching breaks, breathing techniques, or short moments of silence before examinations can help students regain focus and reduce anxiety. Discussions about effective study habits, time management, sleep patterns, physical activity, and balanced use of technology also equip students with lifelong coping skills.

Importantly, teachers should normalise conversations about mental health. When students understand that stress is a common human experience rather than a personal weakness, they are more likely to seek help early.

Building Positive Relationships:

Research consistently demonstrates that strong teacher–student relationships improve both academic success and emotional well-being.

Students who know that at least one teacher genuinely cares about them are more likely to remain engaged in learning, overcome setbacks, and seek assistance during difficult times. Active listening, empathy, patience, and encouragement strengthen these relationships.

Positive relationships should also extend to peer interactions. Collaborative learning, group discussions, peer mentoring, and inclusive classroom activities foster social support, reducing feelings of isolation.

Promoting Inclusivity and Respect:

Educational institutions increasingly serve students from diverse cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds. Some students may also have disabilities, chronic illnesses, or different learning needs.

Inclusive teaching practices reduce stress by ensuring that every student feels accepted and capable of succeeding. Teachers should avoid stereotypes, recognise diverse talents, accommodate different learning styles, and maintain sensitivity towards individual circumstances. Students who feel included are more likely to participate confidently and develop a healthy sense of self-worth.

Partnering with Families and Support Services:

Supporting student mental well-being should be a collaborative effort. In schools, regular communication between teachers and parents helps identify concerns early and ensures consistent support both at home and in the classroom. Teachers should be familiar with available support resources so they can confidently guide students towards appropriate professional assistance.

Mental health awareness programmes, workshops, peer support initiatives, and wellness campaigns further reinforce a culture of care across the institution.

Moving Ahead:

Education is not merely about imparting knowledge; it is equally about nurturing healthy, confident, and resilient human beings. Academic excellence and mental well-being are not competing priorities; they complement one another. Students learn best when they feel emotionally secure, respected, and supported.

Teachers may not have solutions to every problem their students face, but their kindness, attentiveness, encouragement, and willingness to listen can profoundly influence a young person's life. A caring teacher may never fully realise the impact of a simple conversation, a word of encouragement, or a gesture of understanding. Yet these everyday acts of compassion often become the foundation upon which students build resilience, confidence, and hope.

As educational institutions prepare students for the future, promoting mental well-being should be recognised not as an optional responsibility but as an essential part of quality education. By creating supportive classrooms, fostering meaningful relationships, and encouraging healthy coping strategies, teachers become not only educators but also invaluable partners in shaping emotionally healthy and resilient generations.

Based on the article authored by Dr A K Sen Gupta, Director, SIESLLD in Free Press Journal (FPJ) on 29th June 2026.