

FOR ALL GCC STUDENTS

CLASS X & XII

Helpline providing instant solutions to stressed students

This innovative counseling through the medium of a telephone 'helpline' is an outreach programme that is carefully designed, keeping in mind the heterogeneity of student's population and their wide geographical spread

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School hotline in United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been acting like an effective solution for scores of stressed students and parents, who are in the need of immediate counseling from some trained staff or are facing the tricky situation of any kind of emotional or physical stress.

Besides, students are also advised about the current syllabi, examination pattern and above all about plethora of career options after completing school studies. It should be noted that this responsible work of answering the phone at the helpline has not been assigned to any inexperienced staff but a school principal professor M Abubaker, who comes with a rich experience of over 25 years, is doing this duty.

So far over 300 calls have been answered by professor Abubaker and he is also maintaining the archives of questions asked by curious callers, to take the appropriate remarks and feedback to the higher authorities.

"Starting this hotline is an innovative idea of the CBSE and it provides psychological counseling services to students at the time of preparation and as well as during the course of examinations to overcome exam related stress and anxiety," said professor Abubaker.

This innovative annual counseling through the medium of a helpline is an outreach programme that is carefully designed keeping the heterogeneity of student's population and geographical spread. Currently multiple modes of communication such as telephonic counseling, question answers columns in newspapers and online counseling through CBSE website are used to reach out to more and more examinees during this phase.

"This year CBSE provided 59 counselors all over and out of this 10 are located in Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Japan, UAE and Kuwait. These counselors deal with the queries related to psychological stress, emotional strains questions related to students' study habits, timetable preparation, selection of subjects and marking scheme of the examination. They also answer various inquiring questions regarding examination pattern of classes X and XII, CCE, OTBA (open text based assessment), ASL (assessment of speaking and listening skill), PSA (problem solving assessment) and proficiency test," stated Abubaker.

"We the counselors sincerely listen to the problems faced by the students and answer the queries systematically to make them prepare well for the examination and give them a hope and a solution for effectively overcoming the stress. We want them to remain relaxed and happy while preparing the examination and eventually to come out with flying colours in their examination," he pointed out.

This helpline is specifically dedicated to students of class X and XII and as per the authorities, so far maximum calls have been received from students of class XII.

"But even I am getting calls from the parents of smaller classes also. Any calls that I am getting is very important because it has to be addressed properly for the sake of the future of the student community," he said.

Abubaker, who is also the treasurer, council of CBSE affiliated schools in the Gulf, is single-handedly handling the helpline for the whole UAE and he always make it a point to answer the call while taking out time from his busy schedule. He is doing this duty by not considering it any burden but he is doing this very happily and considers himself lucky that he has got a chance to guide young minds.

"God has provided me this opportunity to serve the student community a helping hand and I find it easy to address all of their concerns in respect to stress. I always do it very sincerely. I ask them to contact me in case of any further doubts and I also do write their queries for my future reference," said Abubaker, who is the principal of 'Scholars Indian School' at Ras Al Khaimah, UAE.

"Students from any part of the world could call us. Our numbers are listed in the CBSE website and counseling section. Not only that but also all major newspapers published the numbers at regular intervals," he maintained.

Abubaker has been selected for this task on the basis of his vast experience



in the field of education and in the wake of his services rendered to the student community in the past years.

TOUGH PHYSICS EXAM DRAWS MANY CALLS:

Parents said that this year's class 12th Physics exam was very tough and it came as a shocker for many students as well as their parents. It led to many calls on the helpline, requesting to making a presentation before the higher authorities, expressing their concern about the exam.

COMMON REACTIONS TO EXAMINATION RELATED STRESS:

As per the experts, there are many studies-related signs of stress among students. These have been zeroed upon after a thorough evaluation of various case studies in the past. Professor Abubaker said that these stresses could be related to three areas; physical, psychological and behavioural; and it is necessary to identify them and to deal with them immediately to ensure that a student does well in studies.

PHYSICAL SIGNS OF STRESS:

- Sleep disturbances
- Changes in appetite
- Cold and other respiratory infections
- Backache and cervical ache
- Lethargy
- Fast and shallow breathing
- Allergies
- Muscle tension
- Frequent urge to pass urine

PSYCHOLOGICAL OR EMOTIONAL SIGNS OF STRESS:

- Anxiety or fearfulness
- Withdrawn or restless
- Low self esteem
- Depression or sadness
- Increased inclination or risk of self-harm
- Irritability
- Frustration and aggression
- Inability to concentrate
- Unable to relax

BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS OF STRESS:

- Alcohol abuse
- Smoking, use of tobacco and other related drugs
- Abuse of over the counter medications (OTC), for example anti-anxiety, anti-depressant or sleeping pills
- Eating disorders
- Relationship issues or easily succumbing to peer pressure

DOS & DON'TS FOR PARENTS:

- Experts have also suggested some dos and don'ts for parents, who are the only guides at home for students and they obviously have a lot of influence on students.
- Spend light moments with your child,



UAE helpline is 050 579 4542

FIRST PHASE OF HOTLINE TO COMPLETE ON APRIL 17:

- First phase of this annual hotline was from February 1, 2014 to April 17, 2014. The second phase will start once the results are announced. So far over 300 calls have been answered at this helpline and it is very high as compared to last year's number of call. In 2013, there were around 190 calls.

- There are more than 145 CBSE schools in GCC and in UAE this number is 65. More than 400000 students are studying in these schools.

say at the dinner table. To keep home atmosphere light and humored and to ensure that your child is eating well and is getting adequate rest.

- Focus on child's nutrition. Feed him/her lots of green salads, juices, vitamins and protein rich food. Give him space and frequent breaks to relax. Provide guidance when it comes to child's social interactions.
- Spend time chatting with your child everyday. Boost child's confidence if he/she is to face or has faced a tough paper. Help the child in maintaining his confidence especially when he seems discouraged by his dropping marks or grades.
- Help the child to develop self-discipline, self-direction, self-confidence and a sense of achievement. Humor relieves tension so try to be light and humorous with the child.
- Do not nag your child. Don't shower your kid with over-attention and don't compare him or her with others. Also don't let friends or relatives nag him.
- Don't set any strict rules; let your child prepare and follow his/her own routine with your guidance. Remem-

ber, he is not a machine that can study for 4-5 hours at a stretch.

- Be a good listener. If child is too nervous, immediately meet a counselor and don't pass on your anxiety on the child. Always take stock of his difficulties and look for solutions together. Don't forget to tell him/her that examination is not the end of the world.
- Don't set very high achievement goals for your children and never mix academic issues with family conflicts. Parents should never harp on previous failures or results and do not compare him or her with others.

MOST COMMON QUESTION FROM STUDENTS?

- **I am not able to complete my syllabus in time. What should I do?**

The foremost thing to look upon is time management. Always remember that the most important thing is to take out time, list out the areas you don't understand. It could be possible that you are putting most of your time on the chapters that do not carry many marks. Try to prioritize your chapters.

- **What if I forgot something while writing my paper?**

If you forget something then put a little effort to remember it, may be for a minute. But if it doesn't come up in your mind, then better leave the space for that answer and move ahead in attempting your paper. After completing your paper, you can come up again on the incomplete answers and can try to remember some point.

- **My handwriting speed is very slow and because of that I am not able to complete my paper. Can something be done for me?**

If you feel your speed is slow. My first suggestion would be attempt question paper in reverse order so that maximum marks questions get attempted. The other thing that you can do is present your answer through venn diagram, cause and effect map or table form.



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— ABUBAKER, The treasurer, council of CBSE affiliated schools in the Gulf

- **Does mugging the facts ensure good result?**

No mugging the facts does not always ensure good results. You should be clear about the concepts, should not be having doubts about the things that need to be remembered. If you know the meaning of the answer, you can attempt the question by answering it in your own language.

- **Do I need to write whatever I am learning?**

When you read a chapter, making notes about it helps you understanding the chapter. Moreover writing answers after learning it, decreases the chance of forgetting it easily. You will also become much more confident about your preparations.

- **I don't have any fixed time for my studies. Is it alright?**

Fixing time for studies help in gaining attention and concentration. It is better to have fixed place and time for study with moderate flexibility. Goals support direction.

- How can I inculcate positive attitude towards future when I am feeling so scared?

- Don't keep on thinking just about the future.
- Believe in yourself.
- Try to put your best effort.
- Learn from your previous papers and work more on you weak areas.

Interestingly, parents seem more nervous than their children. They are more worried about the marking scheme, examination systems and concerned about their children's studies and timetable.

"We the counselors sincerely listen to the problems faced by the students and answer the queries systematically to make them prepare well for the examination and give them a hope and a solution for effectively"

MOST COMMON QUESTIONS FROM PARENTS:

- **Can you advise on me some pre-board parenting tips?**

- Encourage sleep patterns and some form of regular exercises.
- Providing a healthy, positive and empathetic emotional environment is crucial, but most parents often forget this.
- Highlight your child's strengths. Encourage a dialogue to move ahead from past failures.

- Don't blacklist activities that your child enjoys, like watching TV, playing games or sketching.
- Don't panic when they announce just before the examination that they don't remember anything. Reassure them, even if you think they could be right. You can say something like this - 'Just do your best. We know you are giving it your best shot.'

- **Whenever I ask my daughter/son about his preparation, he gets angry. Should I stop asking him?**

Every time you ask your child about his preparation, it makes him feel stressed and thus, increases his anxiety level. As a parent, you feel tense about his preparation, but when you ask it, you transfer tension to him. Help your child to practice deep breathing exercises and meditations for 15 minutes daily. Auto suggestion is also effective that will help a child attain mental relaxation.

- **My daughter/son wants to study with his friend. Will it help him or it is just a waste of time?**

Every child is different. If your child feels that he is able to study better in a group, then it's all right for him. Some students do prepare well by studying in groups, as they are able to discuss their doubt and feel encouraged to study better.

- **I am having nightmares about my child's result. Should I discuss my anxiety with my child?**

I agree that as a parent you must be having anxiety about your child's performance in the examinations, but you should not transfer this to your child. As this will overstrain his mental capacity.

- **Since both of us are working, do you think that one of us should be at home always particularly for this month when my child is preparing for board examinations.**

I would not suggest you to be at home all the time especially at the time when your child is preparing. Though your intention is not wrong but the message that could be conveyed to the child could be wrong. Child my feel, his parents don't trust him and moreover your presence would again put more pressure on him.

- **My child sleeps only 2-3 hours in a day. Is this harming his health and his preparation?**

Yes, it does harm to health and his preparation as well. If one sleeps less for a day or two, body copes up by taking more sleep over next two days. If continued for long then the body gets into what is known as sleep deprivation syndrome because it accumulates so many hours of sleep debt. Then finally one get symptoms of feeling tired and sleepy, headaches, body aches, poor digestion, inability to concentrate, irritability and short temper.