CONFRONTING THE STIGMA: BREAKING STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH BARRIERS

by:
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High School, as most people say, is the most enjoyable part of the education system – more fun, less workload, more experimenting and lesser rules. Students start to recognize their interests, passions, as well as realizations that life isn’t all rainbows and cupcakes. However, students are susceptible when facing obstacles both in life and school, such as simultaneous deadlines of reports and projects, betrayal of a friend, family problems, financial instability and many more.

In today’s academic world, students are no exception to stress that sometimes leads to mental health issues. Regardless of their age or grade, their ability to learn, memorize and post good academic performances can be interfered. The worst is that they actually consider ending their own lives just because of situations they can’t manage. According to Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, there is a 25% increase, from 13.8% in 2009 to 17.2% in 2017, on the percentage of high schoolers who reported seriously considering suicide. This is alarming, to both the parents and teachers, knowing the fact that students are not open in such discussions and they often keep these situations to themselves because of reluctance and shame in seeking help. There is still a great stigma attached, even though stress, mental illness is common and can affect anyone.

Stress and mental health should be treated as equally as any illness; students must be well-informed that it is okay to have undergone such and that improvements can still be made. Teachers and parents both have to work hand-in-hand to redeem these students and to prevent others from experiencing these things. According to Burrell (2019), there are some signals in which teachers, as well as parents, will be able to detect students
under stress and having mental health issues. Some of these are academic problems, depression, mood swings, disregard for personal appearance, increased risk-taking and obsession with death. Nevertheless, there are a number of ways to help students with such condition; for the parents, it is better to have close family relationships, involved in their child’s life decisions is a big factor that boosts their confidence and encourages them that they have someone watching their back. Teachers may also be a part of the solution; letting the students know that they can also rely on their teachers for their problems and difficulties in school. These are minimal ways, but have huge impacts on students’ lives. Knowing they have someone is more than enough to keep them going and to combat any stress and mental health issue coming their way.

Lou Holtz (2019), emphasized that it is not the load that breaks them down, it is how they carry it. How students see and accept things is an important matter, and they may not be always open to talk about what they’re going through, but with enough guidance and support from the people they care about, is a key ingredient in battling stress and mental health issue.

References: