

QT

Indian Experience



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‘We must have meaningful daily conversations with our children, lend them a sympathetic ear’

Every child is unique and they need our warm connect and support, stresses Ms Asha Shiju, principal of Brilliant Indian International School, Doha, in an exclusive interview with **Qatar Tribune**

THE COVID-19 period was traumatic and horrific for the entire humanity but especially stressful for the student community across the length and breadth of the globe. The post-Covid world has seen some disturbing stats emerging vis-a-vis the stress levels that the young minds now have to cope up and live with. The onus on parents and schools is so much more now to ensure their wellbeing. **Ms. Asha Shiju**, principal of Brilliant Indian International School, Doha, Qatar, emphasizes the need to provide them (pupils) with an encouraging and happy environment at school and home to help them overcome the mountain of stress they have been facing up to of late.

“Every child is unique and they need our warm connect and support,” stresses Ms Asha, a passionate educator for the past 28 years with teaching experience in India, the UAE and Qatar.

“Like in our school each teacher begins the day with breathing exercises and laughter yoga to support their mental wellbeing. We have encouraging remedial classes for students in a friendly manner, buddy learning techniques, and mentoring programs that help them with time management, work scheduling, and meeting up the deadlines. Our academic and curriculum strategies too are customized up to Grade II,” says the educator who has done her post-graduation in Organic Chemistry and B.Ed (Bachelor of Education) from India, and is a distinguished toastmaster (presently Dist 116 Qatar Gavel coordinator) as well as part of the ICBF (Indian Community Benevolent Forum) counselling house for students.

Qatar Tribune interviewed the principal covering a wide gamut of issues pertaining to school students and their mental wellbeing. Ms Asha, who has done a course in special education and has been part of a volunteering team teaching subjects to special students with learning disabilities, and provided training to underprivileged students and teachers in India, was forthcoming in the interview. Excerpts:

What, according to you, is an ideal ambience for school students?

As a passionate educator, I have always believed that every child is unique and we need to provide an encouraging and happy environment to students at home and school to help them weave their magic. We need to educate them that life is okay even if not perfect the way we would have liked it to be. As educators and parents, we need to help

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Social media, as a matter fact, connects people around the world but I personally feel that stress, anxiety and loneliness have increased because of it. Children are distracted; they are not in the world of reality; cyber bullying has increased; improper sleep and a slew of mental and physical issues have been rising in children. Parents too, who need to be role models, have become social addicts



Ms. Asha Shiju

them [students] cope with the stress and anxiety.

Tell us about some of the innovative techniques being implemented in your school.

The best few techniques that I have adopted in our school is to begin the day with breathing exercises and “laughter yoga” which support students of all ages for their mental wellbeing. Also, we have buddy learning techniques where teachers facilitate peer study environment. Then, remedial classes in encouraging mode have empowered students to perform well. Mentoring program by teachers for students that covers daily revision, preparation and practice notes, flexible assignments, and proper answering techniques have always helped students to up their confidence. Also, continuous mini tests build the self-confidence of learners and help them to cope with anxiety and fear.

As a school, we should celebrate and appreciate the strengths of students, encourage them in voluntary outdoor activities as well as educate them all about the importance of proper sleep, self-affirmation, and healthy food habits.

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As a principal I meet students of each class for talk in my office and listen to their concerns. These little acts boost their morale and help build self-confidence. As educators and schools, we need to have policies that build each child into stronger beings with their strengths and flaws. We need to educate that score (marks) is not equivalent to success in today’s world. Positivity and collaboration are our success mantra

Tell us about some of the common stress challenges that young students end up facing in schools.

As an educator in this field for more than 25 years, the common stress challenges that I have observed young students facing in schools are the examinations, difficulty in organising work, poor sleep and eating habits, peer and personal pressure to do well, and lack of a happy and warm family environment that ultimately impacts their mental health.

How crucial is the role of parents in facing up to this modern-day challenge?

Parents play an important role for their children’s mental wellbeing. Firstly, they [parents] need to have meaningful daily conversations and lend a listening ear to their talks. We as parents should celebrate and appreciate them, encourage them in outdoor activities they prefer, and educate the importance of proper sleep, healthy food habits and self-affirmations. We

need to ensure a proper learning environment at home free from stress.

Has social media added to the stress woes of children?

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Please list out some of the dos and don’ts for parents.

As parents we should set an example ourselves and stay connected with them. We need to be good listeners and have some common routines e.g. having dinner together, going out together for fun activities etc. Also, we need to ensure a safe, warm, and friendly home environment that helps bloom the uniqueness of the child rather than set targets for them. Try to understand them as an individual. Be a positive talker and a pop-up mentor when needed!

We should try to be felt in their lives rather than being heard always. We should never compare them with anyone and always stand by them in their failures. We should not force our choices and expectations on them. We must always ensure that we avoid fights, arguments, rude comments, and verbal and physical abuse.

Is your school taking up this challenge at the policy level?

Yes, as the principal at Brilliant Indian International School, Qatar, we as team with the management approval, have brought in policy and changes to face these challenges. First and foremost, at our school we have a happy learning environment – right from KG1 to Grade VI – where we provide them a range of platforms to celebrate their strengths. We adopt the play way method, laughter yoga, value-based activities like spread a smile, community awareness programs etc. Also, a safe learning environment where they get a platform to speak and never fear. As a principal, I meet students of each class for talk in my office and listen to their concerns.

These little acts boost their morale and help build self-confidence. As educators and schools, we need to have policies that build each child into stronger beings with their strengths and flaws. We need to educate that score (marks) is not equivalent to success in today’s world. Positivity and collaboration are our success mantra.

BSF-Qatar team members interact with workers at Abu Nakhla camp

Our foremost priority will always be to help and support Bihar community members, especially those in need, says BSF-Qatar

MANAGEMENT committee members of Bihar Social Forum-Qatar (BSF-Qatar) visited the Abu Nakhla workers’ camp recently as part of their monthly campaign to reach out to workers hailing from the Bihar province of India.

In a statement issued on the occasion, BSF-Qatar founder Irfan Ansari said, “Our prime and foremost priority will always be to help and support Bihar community members, especially the large number of workers engaged in various projects to develop Qatar. Besides, we also aim to reach out to families from Bihar so that they have a common platform to celebrate their art, culture, festivals, and traditional functions together.”

Led by the organisation’s founder, Ansari, and president Satyendra



Pathak, BSF-Qatar committee members including Dilnawaz Ali, Abdul Rahman and Imam Hussain met with several Bihari workers engaged

in various development works in Qatar.

The BSF-Qatar, Ansari noted, was founded with the aim of help-

ing Bihari expatriates, especially the workers in need. “We encourage Bihari workers to get in touch with BSF-Qatar whenever they need

any kind of help,” he said, adding: “Thousands of workers from Bihar are working in Qatar and we want to assure them that BSF-Qatar will always stand with them in their hour of need.”

BSF-Qatar thanked the Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF) and the Indian Embassy in Qatar for always extending full support in solving the issues of workers from Bihar along with those from all states of India.

BSF-Qatar President Satyendra Pathak said, “The purpose of such visits is to get in touch with workers hailing from Bihar, and know about their issues and needs. We are committed to extending them our full support whenever they need it. We encourage them to contact us whenever they need our support.”

An associate organisation (AO) of the Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF) under the aegis of the Embassy of India in Qatar, the BSF was founded nearly three years ago with the aim of providing help and support to Bihar community members in need, under the guidance and support of ICBF and the Indian Embassy in Qatar.