

On the Receiving End of Stress

Dear Editor,

I am writing to raise concerns about the problems that the majority of students in Hong Kong are facing.

This year, I am in Secondary 1 and my elder sister in
5 Secondary 3. Yesterday, she came home with her eyes swollen, apparently from crying, and told us that she would have to retake her History test. Although we do not go to the same school, it seems that we are encountering similar problems in our school life. I believe
10 we are not the only ones. Most students in Hong Kong are under tremendous stress from various sources.

First of all, most secondary school students have to study more than ten subjects. A wide range of topics is covered in each subject. After almost eight hours of class
15 every day, we still have a flood of assignments to do and, very often, after-school supplementary tutorial classes to attend. We are definitely overloaded. Sometimes, I feel like I am biting off more than I can chew.

Apart from dealing with academic issues, we also feel
20 obliged to live up to parents' and teachers' expectations.

Let's Think!

1. Are you stressed?
2. How do you solve the difficulties you face in your studies?



More to Take Away

There are 506 secondary day schools in Hong Kong. Since 1978, the government has allocated funds to provide free education to children. Now, the government offers 12 years of free primary and secondary education to all children through public sector schools.

Although we are already as busy as bees, sometimes we are reproached for not working hard enough or for getting grades that fall short of their expectations. Many parents seem to care more about whether their children excel academically than whether they are happy. This is what disheartens and
25 frustrates us most.

Each of us responds differently to difficulties. Some are more optimistic and therefore able to handle them better, while some, as I know, feel overburdened and show signs of depression, especially when they are still adapting to their new life in secondary school.

30 There are a few feasible measures, in my humble opinion, that may be taken to make stress less of an ordeal to students. For example, the schools may reduce the amount of homework or extend the submission deadlines. They may also offer extra assistance to those who fall behind academically. Parents should also speak to their children about their school life more often, try to step into their shoes and
35 encourage them to develop a more balanced lifestyle.

Before I went to secondary school, I had imagined that my life there would be wonderful—meeting different people while learning new skills. Yet, what I now experience every day is totally different from what I
40 once imagined: cramming takes up most of my life. I, as a student, do see that it is not a problem for which the teachers or parents should be held entirely accountable. All I wish, however, is that our hardship and effort can be sympathised and, most importantly, appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

45 Jessie Lam

~460 words

STEAM

Many stress relieving apps are available on smartphones and tablets. Some of them help people relax via music or animations; others provide tools for meditation or playful games to give vent to anger and stress.

Looking into Grammar

‘Whether’ is used to report questions or to express doubts. However, a clause instead of a question is used after it.

✗ I don’t know whether should I do it?

✓ I don’t know whether I should do it (or not).

? Underline TWO clauses in which ‘whether’ is used in paragraph 4.

Part A Multiple Choice Questions

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the letter to the editor. Choose the best answer by blackening the appropriate circle.



1. In line 18, Jessie said 'I am biting off more than I can chew' because she _____.

- A. has too much to deal with
- B. is forced to finish meals quickly
- C. fails to make time for sleep
- D. has an overly tight timetable

2. Read line 27. The word 'them' refers to _____.

- A. parents
- B. classmates
- C. expectations
- D. difficulties

3. According to Jessie, what can schools do to relieve students' stress?

- A. provide students who fail their exams with academic support
- B. give students more time to finish their assignments
- C. cancel unnecessary homework
- D. all of the above

4. In line 30, the word 'feasible' means _____.

- A. effective
- B. strong
- C. workable
- D. necessary

4 Think about which adjective best describes the nature of the measures suggested.



5. Jessie once thought she would _____ in secondary school.

- A. attend different school clubs to learn different skills
- B. respond to difficulties in an optimistic way
- C. quickly adapt to the new surroundings
- D. talk to her teachers and parents whenever she needs support

5 What did Jessie expect from her secondary school?

6. Which of the following is NOT true?

- A. Every Hong Kong student has problems in learning.
- B. Most students in secondary schools in Hong Kong study more than 10 subjects.
- C. One of the sources of stress is parents' expectations.
- D. Jessie thinks that sympathy and understanding from parents and teachers are the most important.

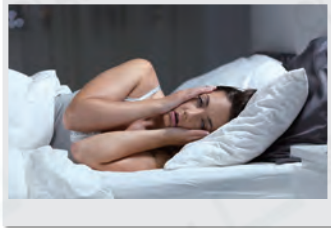
Self-evaluation Checklist (✓/✗)

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. I understood most of the information provided in the passage. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I guessed the meaning of unknown words or phrases correctly. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I managed to answer questions by drawing inferences. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I identified and understood the writer's / characters' feelings. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I could identify and summarise the main idea of the passage. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. The two reading strategies taught in this module enabled me to read more effectively. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

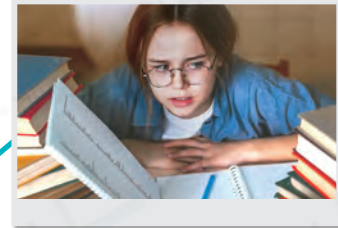
Part C Vocabulary Bank

Label the photos in the mind map below with the words and phrases about some stressors and their solutions from the word box.

academic failure heavy workload regular exercise
 self-cultivation sleeplessness mental-health counselling
 peer pressure rewarding social life



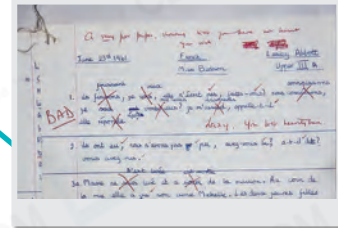
1.



2.



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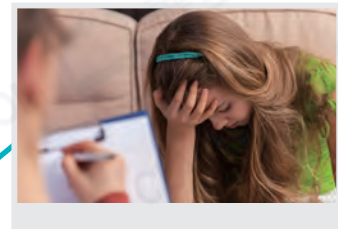
4.

Causes

Stress felt by students



5.

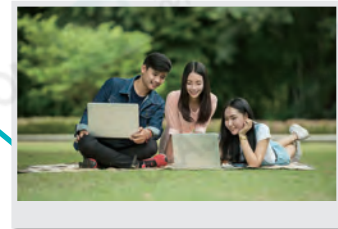


6.

Solutions



7.



8.

Part D Cloze Passage

Complete the journal entry below with the appropriate words and phrases introduced on the previous page.

6th February, 20XX

It has almost become a matter of daily occurrence to have sad-looking students coming to my office to complain about their stressful school life. Although I can comfort them to a certain extent by providing them with (1) _____, it still concerns me greatly to see them being so constantly anxious. Most of their worries come from (2) _____: they feel heartbroken to be laughed at when they score low in exams; they feel helpless to be bullied merely because they are reserved; above all, they are desperate for others' acceptance. On the other hand, they also complain about their (3) _____. It makes them stay up all night almost every day for their homework and studies. What a way of life that has made them victims of (4) _____!

As a school counsellor, I understand deeply that accepting (5) _____ is not easy for a student. All I could do is to advise them to join group activities and extra-curricular classes after school to meet and make friends with different people. This would allow them to have a (6) _____. In terms of stress relief, I tend to recommend to them (7) _____ and activities like reading, drawing and meditating, which can be seen as means of (8) _____.

Word Craft

British

counsellor (Refer to P.25.)
travelling
jewellery
controlling

American

counselor
traveling
jewelry
*controlling

* **American English** tends not to repeat the letter 'l', except when it follows a vowel that makes a stressed syllable.

Let's Discuss!

1. Suggest some ways to de-stress.
2. Of all the suggestions, which one do you find the most therapeutic?