

A former bullyee who had to switch schools to escape bullying, Damien Antony knows where he is coming from. He also knows where he is going to, as he is a man with a mission. He has been associated with students for eons, through his work as a tutor and also through publishing and distributing academic books. Damien got to know the pulse of students - what exactly hits and what misses.

Through his extensive interaction with the students, he realised there was a huge gap in the current education system and he set out to author 'Winners Factory - A Motivational Guide for Students', which he hopes would mould the minds and hearts of the little scholars.

In the following interview, he discusses his motivation behind the book and his hopes for a better world.

Interview

Damien Antony



What was the motivation behind the book?



While the 'Winners Factory' is meant for students of any and all streams, the primary focus is on nascent students, as the early years are extremely crucial. This is when parents and teachers really need help, especially in light of the changing methodology in student training and the new demands of the curriculum. That said, there are cues, clues and a lot of healthy, practical information in the book, for senior students too.

Through my interaction with the students, as well as watching my own school-going children, I got to know their troubles and struggles. While, in the past, I tried to personally reach out to children, I soon realized that I can reach out to more children through the print medium.

The book is my brainchild, my personal contribution for a better educational system, a better India and eventually, a better world.



Can you describe what is in the book and what makes it different from the other motivational guides in the market?



I believe in holistic development of

children. Unfortunately, the present educational system has students swamped with schoolwork and they are forced to focus solely on academics. I consider this a very dangerous situation and bearing this aspect in mind, I have included chapters on the development of the students' intellectual, mental, emotional and physical spheres.

I staunchly believe that at the end of the day, we should produce not just degree holders, but strong personalities who are ready to live their lives the best way they can.

? You believe there is a gap, between where the children presently are, and where you envisage them to be. How can one close this gap?

✓ I believe dreams are the answer to this question. The key is to discover the dreams that have potential and put in every effort to turn those dreams to

tangible trophies in life. So I envisage those who are set and determined to chase their dreams. My book is just a guide in this process, as it is up to each one of the students to determine what they would or would not achieve.

? You claim to be a survivor of bullying, which is rampant these days. Can you offer any practical tips to children who might be bullied?

✓ Yes, I am a survivor of bullying. In fact, I ran away from my first school because of bullying. In the second school that I went to, I had a good rapport with the teachers, who were tremendously encouraging and this was defining. Gradually, I flourished in my second school and began to excel in my studies and extracurricular activities. This gave me confidence, after which I realised that bullies could not affect me and that I am not limited to what they say I am.

As for practical tips, I would suggest:

1. Establish a good relationship with the teachers and confide in your parents if you are bullied. Most likely, if the bullies know that you are close to authoritative adults, they will back off.
2. You should exercise judgment. While this may not sound easy in the face of bullying, a student should know that you are worth much, much more than the bullies would like you to believe. Have faith and confidence in yourself and know that you are not really what others think you are, but what you set out to become! You should know what to take in and what to ignore.
3. When it comes to ragging, a student should also know that you are legally protected.
4. It is advisable to move around in groups, so as to deter bullies.

? Time is all important. But how practical is it for children to manage theirs, given they bare-



ly get a breather between their academic classes and all the extracurricular activities and coaching?



It is true that students these days live a choca-blocked schedule. However, this only calls for a greater demand for time management, as the day only has a fixed number of hours. Planning and prioritising are the key and so it is important to remember not to major the minor and minor the major.

Also, it's not just the major activities that count, but also the little activities

set in the curriculum.

Second is the atmosphere in which one prepares for the exams - the diet, planning the Study-leave, revision, etc. Both these are explored in-depth in my book.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Our educational system focuses solely on making breadwinners out of our children. They fail to train them to live a sound life in this challenging world. Often, parents are too busy to invest time in their children's life. So, many children spend many unproductive hours, and eventually, their

WINNERS FACTORY
A MOTIVATIONAL GUIDE FOR STUDENTS
DAMIEN ANTONY
ENGLISH EDITION
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that steal one's time. For instance, I always recommend buying clear cello tape with a cutting dispenser. Imagine a student trying to wrap a present using tape and just a pair of scissors. He would spend endless time fiddling with the tape and the scissors, searching for the start of the tape after almost every single time he cuts a piece out.



The exam period is looming large on the horizon. Based on your principles, how can the students face them better?



I recommend a two-way approach to tackle exams. First, discover one's natural learning method and use it to comprehend and retain the information

life, in front of the TV and playing computer games, ruining their health and creativity. Internet and media influences are also significant.

In order to bring about a change, we should focus on changing the present value system. The training should be tweaked so as to make children not mere bread 'winners', but winners in whatever they set out to do.

Our kids are part of the legacy we leave behind when we bid farewell to this world. So parents need to be more educated about the necessity of investing their time into the lives of their children. Once this culture is inculcated, it is highly and surely probable that major issues will dwindle, sooner or later. ◆