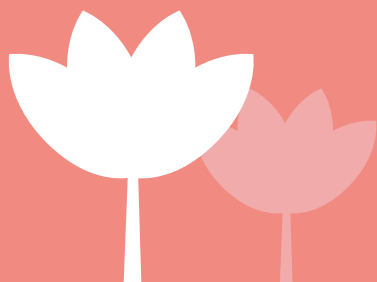


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INTRODUCTION





**TAKE A MINUTE TO LOOK AT THESE TWO IMAGES.
WHAT DO YOU SEE? WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?**

The picture on the left is a broken pot. In the picture on the right, you can see that the pieces have been joined with a seam of polish and precious metal, and this increases the value of the pot.

This is Kintsugi, a 400 year old Japanese art form of joining broken pottery pieces with gold. As you can see the result is a beautiful and a stronger work of art that has a higher value.

**Kintsugi teaches us an important life lesson:
Each broken piece is an important part of
the pot, and rather than be discarded or
disguised, Kintsugi prefers to highlight the
scars.**

THE MESSAGE

Every broken part reflects the flaws and imperfections in our lives. The polish and precious metal that join the scars, indicates our resilience with which we can create an even more unique, stronger, and beautiful piece of art.





UNDERSTANDING ASPECTS OF MENTAL HEALTH

Health comprises our physical as well as mental state of well-being.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Being healthy isn't an absence of sickness. It means we ensure good practices (like eating right, sleeping well, being active, etc.) to keep ourselves fit, so that our body can cope with any illness that it encounters.

MENTAL HEALTH

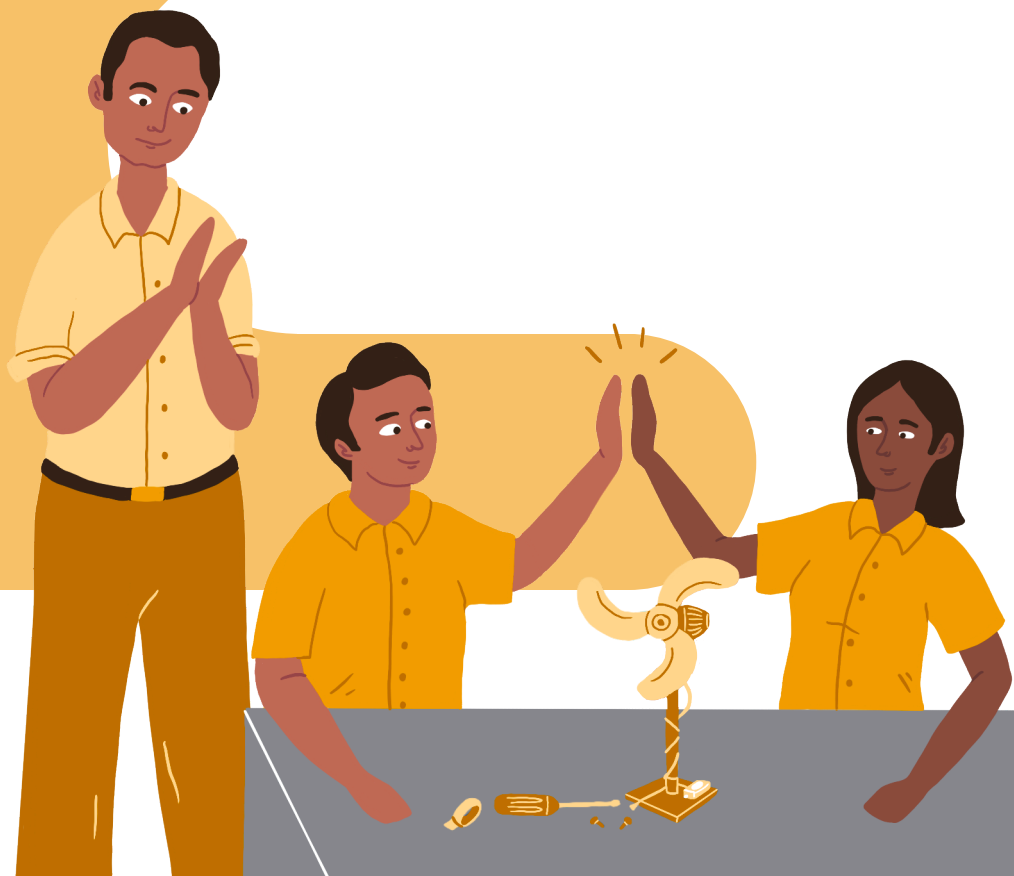
In the same manner, being mentally healthy isn't a lack of worry and stress. Feeling worried, sad or fearful is normal. When we are mentally healthy, we can handle challenges better, we are able to express emotions objectively and with sensitivity, and make decisions without wondering whether they are right or wrong. This means we can face challenges and stresses in our daily life without letting our feelings overwhelm us.

Mental health is "a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community." (defined by WHO)

According to the World Health Organization, in many geographic regions, families and schools are the strongest social institutions in a child's life. Schools have an unprecedented opportunity to improve the lives of young people. Many children do not show significant behavioral or academic difficulties because of successful coping skills and the support they receive.

The study says, "Academic failure and social rejection often have lasting consequences because the failure to learn in school limits a person's chances to succeed in the future, growth and hormonal changes, as well as the changes to relationships that young people experience with parents and society."

Other stresses are more individual, involving pressures to advance in school, peer pressures, family migration like in the recent pandemic when many families shifted to their hometowns, school changes, parental fighting and divorce, or pressure to engage in substance abuse. Natural catastrophes like the COVID-19 pandemic and severe or chronic physical illnesses and hospitalizations may also cause significant stresses.



CHANGES DURING ADOLESCENCE

As an educator, who interacts with students most of their waking hours, you would have observed that students between the ages of 12 and 18, are going through physical, emotional and social changes that demonstrate that they are on the way to becoming adults.

While you are tackling the ups and downs in your life, it is important for you to be aware of the challenges that your students may be going through. Between the ages of 12 and 18 years, children experience many different physical, mental and emotional changes. In addition, the pandemic, closure of schools, and online learning have brought about insecurity, fears about their future, inability to interact with friends and family, physical and mental stresses.

PHYSICAL CHANGES

Puberty is a period of rapid physical maturation involving hormonal and bodily changes that occur primarily during early adolescence. From growth spurts to questions about the future and career aspirations, your adolescent has a lot to navigate through.

Changes in their physical stature could lead to a period of confusion. They are trying to establish their identity,



and in the process, they could develop body image issues, can become excessively conscious of their appearance, what sets them apart from their peers or the perceived norm, or they could even be confused about their sexuality.

SOCIAL CHANGES

Adolescents may work towards understanding themselves better in terms of what their preferences are, and what defines them. This is referred to as their temperament and is characterized by experimentation; this is the first time they may be trying things outside their comfort zone.

Behaviorally, they tend to be more impulsive, prone to taking risks, and believing in a level of invincibility about themselves. The tendency to avoid feeling left out of a group, could be the driving factor for most common behavior patterns amongst adolescents.

All these changes may make adolescents feel more worried than usual. They may have a hard time with seemingly simple tasks like going to school, focusing on a subject that is difficult for them to understand or participating in a physical activity like a sport.

EMOTIONAL CHANGES

An adolescent's brain is learning to express emotions like an adult's, and therefore their moods may seem unpredictable. A display of strong feelings and intense emotions could lead to conflicts.

Adolescents take time to understand other people's emotions, and could misread the body language of others. Their decision-making skills are developing and often, they may act without thinking of the consequences.

Adolescents feel self-conscious about their physical appearance and could compare themselves with friends and peers.



WHAT IS STRESS?

The word stress is quite often used in a negative sense. But stress isn't always bad and is a normal part of life. Stress is the body's reaction to any change that it experiences, which requires an adjustment or response. The body reacts to these changes with physical, mental, and emotional responses.

Stressful situations can affect each one of us differently. While some of us cope easily, others may find it more difficult.

There are two kinds of stress – eustress (positive stress) and distress (negative stress).





EUSTRESS (POSITIVE STRESS)

Situations such as this pandemic when you worry about You can experience stress from your environment, your body or your thoughts. Eustress helps you stay focused, energetic, and alert. It may help your student meet deadlines, sharpen their concentration while competing, prepare for exams, or compel them to study for an exam when they would prefer to watch TV. As their teacher you are also under pressure, and could be under positive stress, which may help you to motivate your students.

Both good and difficult situations that we face in our everyday lives cause us some amount of fear and worry that can serve as a motivating factor to help us perform tasks better.

DISTRESS (NEGATIVE STRESS)

When the stress becomes overwhelming for you/your student to handle, causes excessive anxiety, and gets in the way of a normal routine, it can damage one's overall health. Some examples of such situations are, the death of a loved one, loss of a job, bullying and harassment at school/ work. This may affect moods, ability to work and one's relationships. In such situations, it is common to feel overwhelmed.

There are many coping methods that can be used to deal with stressful situations. Some methods are listed towards the end of this book under the 'Managing Mental Health' section.

LEARNING ABOUT ANXIETY

Both good and difficult situations that we face in our everyday lives cause us some amount of fear and worry. Like stress, this fear could serve as a motivating factor to perform tasks better. For instance, your students, while preparing for an exam, may experience the fear of getting bad grades, but this may motivate them to spend more time studying.

Anxiety is that feeling of fear, worry, or nervousness you experience when you are about to do something challenging. Everybody experiences anxiety across different situations, and it is a normal experience.

Situations may range from writing an assignment or meeting new people to dealing with traffic and deadlines; all these can cause some amount of anxiety.

However, when the anxiety becomes a constant part of daily life, and the fear overshadows most other emotions you or your student experience, it is a sign of distress and you may need to seek help from somebody.

Someone who experiences excessive anxiety may have physical symptoms like headaches, body pains not caused by other bodily ailments, or difficulty in sleeping. They may experience intense worry about seemingly simple situations like attending school or working on an assignment, or a panic attack – **shortness of breath, trembling hands and feet, chills/cold/heat sensations despite no change in weather, sweating, nausea, dizziness, possible crying spells. They may feel restless and may show edginess or nervousness in their behavior.**

In such situations, it would be beneficial to seek professional help in addition to seeking support from family and friends.

IDENTIFYING DEPRESSION

Feeling low or upset is a very natural part of our range of emotions, which we may experience at different points in our lives.

For an adolescent, ups and downs are both natural and pronounced as they go through the transition from being a child to growing into a young adult. Their identity, academic performance, relationship with friends and family, could be different in this phase and that could cause them to feel alone, not heard or not understood.

That does not necessarily mean that they have a serious mental illness. However it can still be helpful to support them.

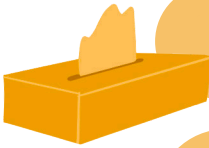
Depression is not just a feeling of sadness or low mood. It is a genuine mental health concern that can be triggered by several causes.

Depression is an illness and can be experienced very differently by different people. The word depression or "being depressed" is often used in everyday conversation, when one experiences sadness or is upset with an outcome that is not in one's favor.

While sadness can be brief, depression will persist for at least two weeks or more. When depression persists, it may become a serious health condition and hamper an individual's ability to function in many areas of life, including work and relationships. It is important to reach out and seek professional support at the earliest.



Some common symptoms are :



A low mood.

Changes in appetite and/or sleep patterns.



Loss of interest or pleasure in things around you.



Tiredness or persistent loss of energy.



Thoughts of self-harm or suicide.



Loss of confidence.

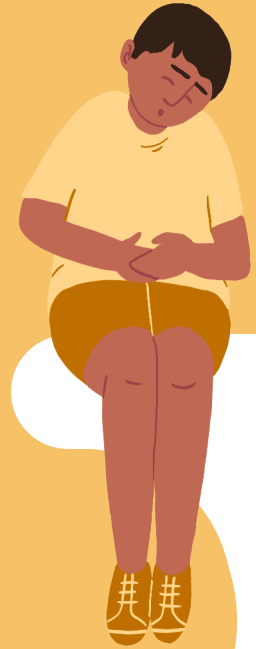
Feelings of frustration.



THESE COULD TRANSLATE TO EXPERIENCES LIKE:

- Not wanting to get out of bed.
- Sleeping for extremely long hours or not getting enough sleep as one regularly would.
- Constant headaches/stomach aches.
- A pit-ish or hollow feeling in the stomach.
- Avoiding eating or overeating.
- Dodging social situations/attending school.
- Lack of energy, and not wanting to do things that he/she liked doing before.
- Irritability – snapping at people often, trying to start fights without reason.
- Feeling that life is not worth living.

Many of us are uncomfortable using the term 'depression' because of the fear it will associate us with a serious mental illness or a sense of personal failure. This comes from a strong stigma attached to the illness itself and is the wrong notion to hold on to.



**Experiencing depression isn't anyone's fault.
It is a result of the environment and an
individual's body chemistry, not something
that is willingly experienced.**

HANDLING BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING

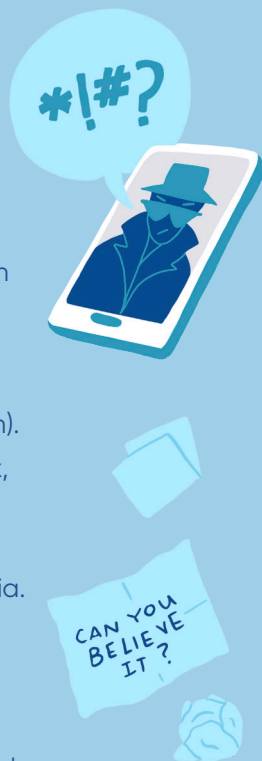
Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort. Bullying happens in many different forms and can happen anywhere. It can take the form of physical contact, abusive words or more subtle actions and may take place at school, at home, or an apartment complex.

Cyberbullying happens on the internet/online via text messages, emails, videos or on social media platforms.

COMMON EXAMPLES OF BULLYING

- Teasing someone, calling them names, giving nasty looks or making rude gestures.
- Spreading rumors or lies about someone (online or in person).
- Hurting someone physically by pushing, hitting, slapping, ganging up on or restraining them.
- Excluding someone from a group (online or in person).
- Harassing someone because of their race, color, sex, religion, gender, or a disability.
- Sharing embarrassing photos of someone online.
- Posting mean things about someone on social media.
- Stalking someone online with texts or instant messages, or in person by intimidating them or following them.

For the victim, being bullied can be an incredibly stressful experience that may have a serious and long-term impact on their life. Bullying can also take a toll on the bullies themselves.



HERE ARE SOME COMMON SIGNS TO WATCH OUT FOR IF YOUR STUDENT IS BEING BULLIED:

- Reluctance to attend school/ online classes.
- Complaints of ill health/ aches and pains that are not related to other illnesses.
- Irritable and withdrawn more than usual.
- Secretive, avoids contact more than usual.
- Has injuries that they try to hide.
- Is more cautious, scared than usual.

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR STUDENTS?

- In school or online, ensure that your students feel safe.
- Keep an open line of communication with your students.
- Reinforce the idea that they are safe and secure, and this can go a long way in keeping the lines of communication open. This will open a first level conversation.
- Tell your students that you are willing to listen without judgment or getting overwhelmed.
- It's important to address any concerns that student brings up.

There is a very thin line between teasing and bullying. However, a basic indicator would be the level of discomfort a person feels, irrespective of the intentions of the person teasing.



MANAGING MENTAL HEALTH



BUILDING RESILIENCE IN YOUR STUDENTS THROUGH SUPPORTIVE MENTORING

Most teacher-student relationships are largely expressed as fulfilling and consistent over time. However, conflicts during the adolescence stage may occur. For teachers, this stage could be a dilemma, as well as frustrating, if the adolescent is not communicative, being defiant, not completing assignments, answering in monosyllables, or wanting to spend more time outside of class.

While a lot of the changes and worries that adolescents face is normal during this phase in their lives, not feeling heard or supported through this phase may lead to ineffective coping mechanisms that impact how they view themselves and the world. The added pressure and feelings of isolation may be intensified leading to increased stress or the development of a clinical illness.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Remember to have compassion and empathy:** Adolescence is already a tough time. Ensure that you are not adding more stress to an already difficult period by placing high expectations on their performance and participation in class.
- **Recognize the child's effort:** Remind them that it is not only about results and emphasize that exam periods are all about putting in the required amounts of hard work.
- **Reassure** them that bad grades are not the most important defining factor for their future.



- **Reinforce the importance of regular sleeping and eating patterns:** Sacrificing sleep, and meal times may allow for more time to study, but both sleep and food are necessary to nourish their brain and allow for it to work at its best capacity.
- **Give your students the option of approaching you in case of any doubt or clarification:** Sometimes, just hearing them out will give them a chance to work the problem out verbally. In other cases, a change of perspective may help your adolescent student find the solution as required.
- **Be their emotional support during this stressful journey:** Let your students know that you are a safe space for them to emote, vent out and even cry, should the need arise.

As we move ahead in a world that is talking about the new normal, you and your students are adapting to changes. The marks in gold on the broken pot in Kintsugi, that you saw earlier in this book, resemble the resilience to the challenges of the pandemic. Your student can build this resilience with your support, besides help from parents, close friends, and mental health professionals if required.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

It is also exceedingly important to take care of your own mental health by building resilience with support from your spouse, family and colleagues etc. Here are some tips to care for your own mental health



- **Stay hydrated:** Studies have indicated that dehydration is linked to heightened anxiety, panic, and other issues such as forgetfulness.
- **Take breaks:** It is important to take breaks every 1-1.5 hours, even when it is for just 10-15 minutes. Step away from the screen and take a walk around your home or in your room. Play with your pet, if you have one, or chat with your family. Too much screen time could hurt your eyes. So, close your eyes for a few minutes. Turn off your screens a couple of hours before bedtime.



- **Eat regularly:** Eat regular meals and avoid stress-eating. Most people tend to binge on less healthy foods during the exam season. This could lead to sudden weight gain, exhaustion and a lowered attention span.



- **Limit intake of caffeine:** It is important to limit the intake of caffeine. Perhaps it would help to look into other means of staying awake such as drinking water and exercising.
- **Decluttering:** Removing all unnecessary items from your personal space may help make your environment more peaceful. This in turn can help declutter your mind allowing for greater concentration.
- **Get adequate sleep:** It is necessary to get 7-9 hours of sleep for optimal mental health. Poor sleep (in both quality and quantity) is associated with physical problems such as a weakened immune system and mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. When you improve your 'sleep hygiene', you will not only see an improvement in your moods, but you will also notice that you have higher levels of energy and motivation.
- **Stay in touch:** Even though you may not see your family or friends regularly, make an effort to keep in touch with them.
- **Stick to a routine:** In uncertain times like this pandemic, even though you don't have to be in school on time, keep a routine like waking up at a fixed time, taking care of personal hygiene – this will help you to maintain physical and mental wellness.

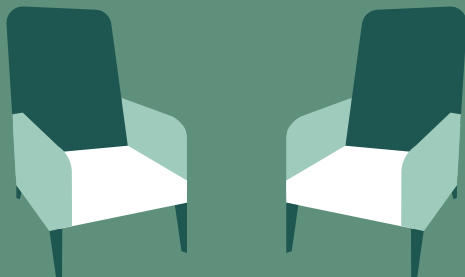




- **Breathing exercises:** Simple breathing exercises, meditation, and yoga have been proven to help deal with stress and anxiety and helps to ensure well-being.
- **Avoid tobacco, alcohol, and other substances:** While you may think that these give you comfort and strength to deal with your emotions, especially during adversity, they do not.
- **Physical exercise:** Exercise establishes a strong connection between your mind and body. It relieves tension and stress, boosts physical and mental energy, and enhances well-being through the release of endorphins. It improves your physical health and your physique, and even adds years to your life. You will feel more energetic throughout the day, sleep better at night, be able to concentrate better, and feel more relaxed and positive.



SEEKING HELP



WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP?

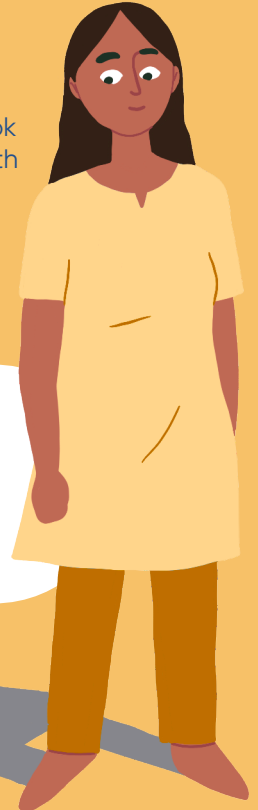
When you feel sick or sprain your ankle, you usually know when to see a doctor. However, when it comes to mental health, we are often reluctant because of the stigma attached to mental illness in our country. Most of us may not have the right information we need to decide for ourselves, our students, friends, or family.

HERE ARE STEPS TO HELP YOU MAKE THAT DECISION:

- Recognize the symptoms that you or your student are not feeling okay – anxious, fear, sad, irritable, stressed.
- Talk to your colleagues, spouse, friend, or a relative.
- If the symptoms persist, do reach out to the school counselor/ family doctor /general physician.
- You may be then directed to a counsellor, psychologist, or psychiatrist.

It is important to recognize that it is much better to look for this extra help early on. In fact, it is a sign of strength rather than weakness to ask for help from a doctor or other sources of help, even for reassurance.

HELP IS
AVAILABLE!



WHOM SHOULD YOU TALK TO?

When you are physically hurt or develop a fever, you usually know what needs to be done and whether you need to see a general physician or a specialist. When it comes to mental health however, we are confused about whom to approach for help. When we talk of mental health professionals, psychologists, psychiatrists and counsellors are the first ones that come to mind. It is important to know the work that each does so that you can make an informed decision about the type of support you, your students, or your loved ones require. Let's help you to understand the difference. Psychiatrists, psychologists, and counsellors are trained to think of mental health as part of health and so take an all-round view of mind and body.

A PSYCHIATRIST is a medical doctor, with a post-graduate medical degree in Psychiatry, who specializes in preventing, diagnosing, and treating mental illness in various ways including talk therapy and medicines. Psychiatrists often work in a team with other health and mental health professionals; they usually aim to provide person-centred care and to work in partnership with the person seeking help and his or her family where that is appropriate. They can prescribe medication if needed, and are attached to a hospital, or have a private practice.

A PSYCHOLOGIST has a masters degree or higher in psychology, which is the study of the mind and behaviours. They are attached to a hospital, or may have a private practice. They evaluate and treat mental and emotional disorders but cannot prescribe medication.

A COUNSELLOR has a master's degree or higher in mental health counselling or marriage and family therapy. They help clients to discover better ways to manage their problems, mainly by providing psychotherapy or talk therapy. Counsellors usually work in a private practice, in schools or mental health clinics.

HELPLINE INFORMATION

If you, your student, or anybody close to you feels like they need to speak to a trained expert, please call the helplines listed below. They are good resources for emergencies or if for some reason or the other, you are unable to visit a counsellor in person.

Mental health professionals on these helplines are able to help individuals who are worried about their academic grades, careers, have trouble in their relationships with friends and loved ones, or are just feeling very lost about the way ahead and the tough decisions to be made.

COOJ MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION (COOJ)

Helpline: 0832-2252525 | 01:00 PM – 07:00 PM |
Monday to Friday

Email: YouMatterByCooj@gmail.com

Proficient with: English

PARIVARTHAN

Helpline: +91-7676 602 602 | 10:00 AM to 10:00 PM |
Monday to Friday

Website: www.parivarthan.org

Proficient with: All Indian languages except Telegu,
Malayalam

CONNECTING TRUST

Helpline: +91-992 200 1122 | +91-992 200 4305 | 12:00 PM
to 08:00 PM | All days of the week

Website: <https://connectingngo.org>

Proficient with: English, Hindi, Marathi

ROSHNI TRUST

Helpline: 040-66202000, 040-66202001 | 11:00 AM - 09:00 PM | Monday to Sunday

Email: roshnihelp@gmail.com

Proficient with: Telegu, Urdu, Hindi, English

iCALL

Helpline: 022-25521111 | +91-9152987821 | 08:00 AM to 10:00 PM | Monday to Saturday

Email: icall@tiss.edu

Proficient with: Marathi, Bengali, Telegu, Hindi, English

MITRAM FOUNDATION

Website: www.mitramfoundation.org

Helpline : 080-2572-2573 | 10:00 AM - 02:00 PM | Monday to Saturday

Email: share@mitramfoundation.org

Proficient with: English, Hindi

ARPITA SUICIDE PREVENTION HELPLINE

Helpline: 080-23655557 | 10:00 AM - 01:00 PM | 02:00 PM - 05:00 PM | Monday to Friday

Email: arpita.helpline@gmail.com

Proficient with: Hindi, Urdu, Kannada, Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam, Konkani, Assamese, Gujarati, Bengali



LIFELINE

Helpline 1: 033-40447437 | 10:00 AM – 06:00 PM | Monday to Sunday

Helpline 2: +91-90 880 30 303 | 10:00 AM – 10:00 PM | Monday to Sunday

Email: lifelinekolkata@gmail.com

Proficient with: Bengali, Hindi, English

SUMAITRI

Helpline: 011-23389090 | +91-9315767849 | 02:00 PM to 10:00 PM | Monday to Friday | 10:00 AM to 10:00 PM on Saturday & Sunday

Email: feelingsuicidal@sumaitri.net

Proficient with: Hindi, English

SAMARITANS MUMBAI

Helpline: +91-84229 84528, +91-84229 84529, +91-84229 84530 | 05:00 PM – 08:00 PM | Monday to Sunday

Email: talk2samaritans@gmail.com

Proficient with: Hindi, Marathi, English

MANN TALKS

Helpline: +91-8686 139 139 | 09:00 AM– 06:00 PM | Monday to Sunday

Website: www.manntalks.org

Proficient with: English, Hindi, Marathi

VANDREVALA FOUNDATION

Helpline: +91-9999 666 555 | 18602662345 | 24x7

Website: www.vandrevalafoundation.com


Proficient with: English, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam & Bengali

KIRAN

Helpline: 1800-599-0019 | 24x7 | Government Helpline

Proficient with: Hindi, English & other regional languages

Disclaimer: The Live Love Laugh Foundation ("TLLLF") is not in the business of providing counselling services and does not own, operate or control the helpline numbers listed here or on the website. The helpline numbers are listed for referral purposes only, and TLLLF does not make any recommendations or guarantees regarding the quality of response and medical advice you might receive from any of the helplines. TLLLF does not endorse these helplines and makes no representations, warranties or guarantees as to, and assumes no responsibility for, the services provided by these entities. TLLLF disclaims all liability for damages of any kind arising out of calls made to these helpline numbers.



You are not alone. There are others who have the same questions, concerns, & doubts.

LiveLoveLaugh website details:

Visit us at <https://thelivelovelaughfoundation.org/> to know more.

STORIES OF HOPE

Disclaimer: The stories of hope ("Stories") set out by The Live Love Laugh Foundation ("TLLLF") are intended purely for reference purposes and are by no means intended to malign or defame any person, organization, caste, or community. The Stories are views of the concerned author only and TLLLF does not endorse, recommend, or represent on the veracity of the advice contained in the Stories. Additionally, the Stories should not in any manner be considered a substitute for professional help. All experiences are personal, hence advice and suggestions contained in the Stories may not apply to the user's specific facts or situations, and it is recommended that professional help is sought for such matters. TLLLF disclaims all liability of all nature arising out of reliance placed on the advice set out in the Stories.



GEETA'S* STORY OF HOPE

She takes a leaf out of this quote in her interaction with students. "Children have to be educated, but they have also to be left to educate themselves"—

Ernest Dimnet, French priest, writer and lecturer, and author of "The Art of Thinking."

I have learnt that as teachers, we need to build relationships with our students. They spend most of their waking hours with us during their formative years, and so we have the responsibility of being observant, and to realize that each adolescent needs to be handled in a different way.

This is my story of a very dear student of mine, Vinay* (name changed), who came to our college in class eleven from a school which had a similar campus as ours. He participated in every competition, was very comfortable facing a crowd, and would make us all laugh. I enjoyed my interactions with him. Vinay was a picture of confidence and was climbing the popularity ladder very fast.

However, Vinay's confidence gave him the perception that he was better than his classmates. This began to show when he started behaving in a condescending manner and downplaying the efforts of another student whom he thought was not at par with him. I felt that this needed to be nipped in the bud.





Thereafter, whenever I made any suggestions, he voiced his objections and disapproval. Our interactions became uncomfortable.

I decided to give him his space and allowed him to deal with his emotions but also kept a close watch on his behavior. Neither he nor I made any references to the incident in the class. His popularity dipped, and he lost the student representation elections in both class eleven and twelve. This affected him deeply and his academic performance took a beating.

At the end of class twelve, before passing out Vinay ran through the episode from class eleven with me. He told me, "It was nice that you did not attack me that day with your questions or ask me to change. I could see that you were allowing me to handle this with my own confidence, and I felt that you knew I was capable of doing it."

As teachers, we have to decide when we have to intervene and say what is on our mind or stay away and facilitate the student to help themselves.

Our students look up to us for trust and understanding. Just by listening to them, we can help them feel assured and give them confidence.

*Name changed to maintain anonymity.

PRATIBHA'S* STORY OF HOPE

A teacher plays a very important role in a student's mental health by being understanding, empathetic, and encouraging them to talk about issues that worry them – academic or personal.

I am a maths teacher and most of my students love the subject in lower classes. As they reach middle school, the concepts increase, and children do not practice as much at home. This is when they start to form a dislike for the subject.

Difficulty to cope with the subject is a huge stressor for students. To help with this, I start my lessons with a value-based story or a real-life situation which gives a message that being relaxed, happy and persevering will help them to get through life. I feel that the way a teacher responds to situations goes a long way in playing a very important role in a student's mental health.

We are not a special school, but an inclusive one that accepts children with learning disabilities. And even though our classes do not have more than 25 students, there are cases of bullying, especially in the lower classes. As the children grow older, often, they realize that bullying is not healthy, either for the bully or the one who is being bullied, and that all children, especially with disabilities, need empathy.

Now that we have resumed going to school for classes nine and ten, the post-pandemic period is most challenging for both teachers and students. Students have missed school and are happy to be back, but are not used to waking up and getting to school on time, or sitting in class for long hours without a phone. We have framed a timetable in such a way that they get time for games and to catch up with each other. They are slowly getting used to an organized routine again.

As a teacher, it is important that I also take care of my mental health. I want my students to say, "I have a teacher who smiles a lot." Yes, there was a time when I

underwent a personal crisis, nothing interested me. I would cry a lot and I withdrew into a shell. But I am glad I went to a mental health professional.

I always encourage my students and my colleagues to express their feelings and talk when something bothers them. This is not easy especially for children in the higher classes. The stigma of going to seek help is still there. So, we teachers must make our children and their parents aware and comfortable that going to a counsellor is the same as going to a doctor for a physical ailment. Talking about your issue with a mental health professional just helps you to move on with life, to accept the changes that come your way.

*Name changed to maintain anonymity.



FAQS



YOU ARE NOT
ALONE.
I AM ALWAYS
WITH YOU!



1. How can I help a student in distress?

There are many steps that you can take to help recognize mental health issues of students in your classroom. You can educate yourself and others about mental health, provide a safe and open environment to discuss the topic, encourage good health (physical and mental), and help students access mental health resources within your school, or outside. For more information, please refer to the 'Supportive Mentoring' section in this booklet.

2. Is there a connection between mental health and a student's academic performance?

Yes, prolonged mental illness can hamper a student's ability to perform ordinary tasks or functions including their academics. For example, if a student is dealing with social anxiety, they may find it difficult to participate in a class group discussion. Another student who may be in distress may have trouble concentrating and appear to be distracted in class.

3. How can I promote positive mental health in my classroom?

Here are some ways to promote positive mental health in your classroom or school:

- Increase your awareness about the topic including the signs and symptoms of mental illness.
- Seek support of a school counsellors or psychologist. Implement resilience building techniques with students, including social skills training.
- Educate students on mental health.

TEACHER,
THANK YOU FOR
YOUR SUPPORT!



- Encourage open and authentic conversations about mental health.



4. I feel like I am depressed, what can I do?

Just like other illnesses, depression is a serious, but treatable, medical condition. You can reach out to a mental health professional or a helpline number. Statistics suggest that 1 in 5 Indians will suffer from some form of depression at some point in their lifetime, so always remember that you are not alone.

5. What if people judge me for visiting a mental health professional?

There should be no hesitation or shame in seeking mental health support. Visiting a mental health professional is the same as visiting a physician when you catch a fever or break a bone.

6. What do I need to tell my mental health professional on the first visit?

- Be open, expressive and tell your mental health specialist exactly what you feel.
- Observe and write down any behaviour change or symptoms you think you are experiencing.
- Make sure to ask your mental health specialist all the questions you have in mind.
- Take a friend or family member along with you.



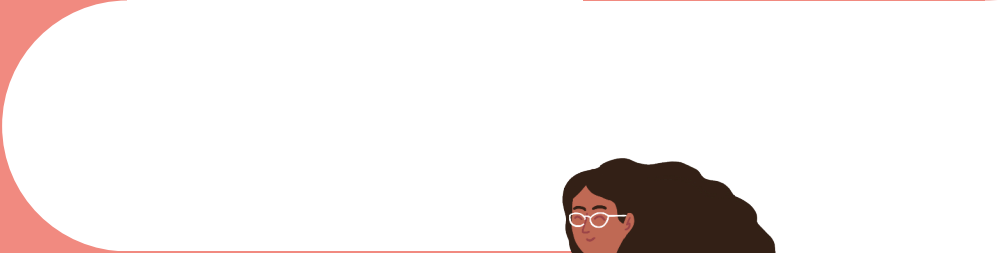
7. What typically happens in a counselling/ talk therapy session?

Regular counselling sessions are held in a private and confidential space. In the current scenario of the pandemic, counselling can even be done via a phone call, video call or online chat.

Counselling relationships are professional working relationships with a purpose.

During a session, your counsellor will listen to you, ask you questions and try to gain a better understanding of who you are. In subsequent sessions, you may mutually set goals with your counsellor and work towards them. Counselling can help you understand yourself better and enable you to cope with any challenges you may be facing.





ADDITIONAL READING

PANDEMIC SPECIFIC

1. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/covid-19-is-hurting-childrens-mental-health/>
2. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/three-ways-to-protect-your-mental-health-from-covid-19>

GENERAL

1. <https://healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/healthy-homes/building-resilience>
2. <https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/learn-more/perma-theory-well-being-and-perma-workshops>
3. https://nimhans.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/1.-Child-and-Adolescent-Mental-health-Research-in-India-An-Overview_79-89.pdf
4. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4477835/>
5. https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/62308/WHO_MNH_PSF_93.3_Rev.1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

