

# World Mental Health Day –October 10, 2018

## Come let us Work for the Promotion of Youth Mental Health

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### I. INTRODUCTION

To think in-depth, about the need of mental health promotion strategies along with physical health interventions, among global population, one more World Mental Health Day has come. This day aims mental health education globally, advocating and making people aware against existing social stigma related to mental diseases and mobilizing global efforts in support of mental health. Every year, 10<sup>th</sup> of October; the World Mental Health Day, World Health Organization (WHO) celebrates with different themes. And this year, mental health of young people be at the central point of discussion with the theme “Young people and mental health- focused activities began from the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards prove that medical world has recognized the significance of general awareness about preventing mental diseases and mental health promotion. Following this, governing bodies and health agencies worldwide have started to take actions in regard to this view. All over, physical and mental health has to get equal importance, since there is no health without mental health. A healthy body with a healthy mind equally contributes to build a healthy human. Our minds can affect how healthy our bodies are. Today’s healthy young people are the true builders of tomorrow’s incredible nation. They are the greatest wealth and strength of any nation. A mentally and physically strengthened younger generation/ youth, only can take critical decisions and can bring significant changes in the social fabric. During such a fruitful time of life, youth must be given special attention and protected from all kinds of mental disturbances.

#### ➤ *DEFINING THE TERM “MENTAL HEALTH”*

“Mental health is defined as 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”.

- WHO

### II. INTER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

A healthy mind lays the foundation for good health. The overall health of a person depends on his level of well-being.

It has to be given equal importance to physical health and mental health, because of the inseparable relationship between them. There is scientific evidence linking health outcomes with mental and physical fitness. Physical activity increases the speed of circulation to the brain. Thus, more amount of oxygen reaches into it. At the same time, it increases the concentration of a chemical substance, endorphin in our brain which controls a number of physiological functions in the human body including positive stress response. Another example, an optimistic person who is affected with a serious disorder, (where, optimism is a characteristic feature of good mental health) showing a positive attitude towards his sickness, only can bring necessary adjustments towards treatment outcomes. Such an attitude is crucial in bringing better treatment outcomes. A person’s inability to make adjustments with increasing demands and simultaneously occurring changes in life can lead to severe mental diseases like chronic depression and schizophrenia. Similarly, the other acute and chronic medical conditions– such as heart attack, high blood pressure, Diabetes Mellitus, and digestive instability, also have been linked to mental health. It is evident; a person with a mental illness will experience disorder in his overall physical functions because mental illness affects thoughts, state of mind, attitude, occupation, and lifestyle negatively. Hence, it became significant that physical health and mental health is interrelated and directly proportional to each other.

### III. COMMON MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES OF YOUTH

Youth period is the transitional phase of growth from childhood to adulthood and is a peculiar timeframe with multiple features. This stage is the only stage with a possibility of maximum productivity. During this stage, the young people need good attention and appropriate guidance. Parents and society have to come together, to bring up their children as value-rich individuals. The following are the major problems the youth may face.

#### • *Problems related to Role changes*

Since youth is the immediate stage after childhood and a preparatory phase to adulthood, the young person may undergo a variety of problems. One of such issues is the role confusion related to their identity. To fulfill the career

requirements, the young ones may have to migrate from their home to their allotted destinations. That is, the home; they lived as almost fully dependent into a new world where they become completely independent. That is; a sudden change from the level of dependency to a high level of independence.

Developmental Psychologist, Erick Erickson describes, in this phase the young one gets an opportunity to re-examine his identity and try to find out exactly “what he is”. During this time, young people explore their possibilities and begin to form their own identity based upon the outcome of their explorations. A failure to set up a sense of identity within society puts them into a state of role confusion. Role confusion involves the not being sure about themselves or their place in society.

- *Academic/ Career related Stress*

Stress is ever an individualized phenomenon. The young ones who enter in educational institutions certainly confront some kind of academic/ career related stressors. Such stressors are known as pupil perceived stressors. The way of confronting stressors may be unique to each student. Academic stress is a subjective feeling, which is unavoidable for students. Comparatively, the amount of stress has been increased in modern system of education than traditional system of educational practices, because of the increasing demands in the field of education. The sources of such academic stress may be some life events or chronic strains related to academic programmes and workloads. Such stress can manifest fear, tension and other psychosomatic problems associated with a variety of serious negative behavioral outcomes in young students, including suicidal ideation, smoking, and drinking. The areas from where stresses generate may be, difficulty to adjusting with academic demands, adjusting to the new course, the medium of instructions, institutional situations, developing appropriate communication with teachers and classmates, etc. These stresses are identified as harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the academic activities do not match with their capabilities, and available resources and needs. In extreme situations, students may seek professional help/ support to cope up with the debilitating effects.

- *Strong unhealthy peer influences*

Studies show that peer presence directly influences on building up of youth behavior. A person in the age of youth ever tends to keep bondage with people of the same age. This influence would become either negative or positive. And if it is a negative influence, it will result into a destructive progression. If it influences positively, would bring constructive developments in the youth. The relationship with parents brings very less mediation effect, more upto the type of friends and risk behavior. The negative influence of the peer group has the chance for developing risky behaviors,

whilst the positive peer influence is more likely to buildup protective behaviors. Not the number of friends, the quality of friendship matters most. Friendship quality includes all-time companionship, morally and ethically grounded, intimacy and support, ability to resolve conflicts etc. Thus, friendship quality defines the nature of same agers influence.

- *Emotional Disturbances*

Emotional immaturity and emotional instability are often seen in youth. Emotional immaturity is the inability to handle situations without unnecessarily escalating them. Inability to make interpersonal relationship and bondage with parents and family members, failure in building a relationship with teachers and friends etc. are the commonest manifestations of youth emotional disturbances. A strong want to know about sex and reproduction, to get an opportunity to practice it and to incline to abusing addictive substances are also very common among this age group. Moreover, a self-withdrawal, hyperactivity, excessive anxiety etc. are also notable features of this category. Even though a majority of these problems are transient, must be taken seriously and should be handled carefully.

- *Overdependence on Internet and Social Media (Social Media Addiction)*

Overdependence on internet/ social media will put a serious impact on mental health. Social media is addictive precisely, because it gives us something, which the real world lacks: it gives us immediacy, direction and value as an individual. There are many young people who cannot control themselves from being away from social media use. Such an addiction to social media has many serious effects including poor study habits, living out of reality and poor health. Because of using social media /cell phone all day, they will not have time for outdoor activities such as playing sports or any games. They will prefer chatting with friends through social media, the friends whom they can directly meet. And they will show more interest to update their news on social media. Gradually, they will live only in a virtual world.

- *Lack of Positive Parenting*

While comparing olden living styles and modern system of living, family structure and living patterns have changed a lot. People’s attitude and perception about the family relationship has also undergoing to modifications. Uncontrolled dependence on modern urbanities often brings familial imbalance and mental disturbance. Lack of proper attention and care, impaired communication, unable to get proper guidance in each life stages etc bring huge behavioral alterations among children and youth. Today’s parents become unable to find out and fulfill their children’s psychological needs. This can influence each stage of young one’s life and can lead them to serious mental health issues.

#### IV. STRATEGIES TO WIDEN THE HORIZONS OF MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

The predominant strategies for Youth Mental Health Promotion include:

- Connection with social fabric,
- Facilitating Positive Parenting,
- Mental- Health- related Stigma Reduction,
- Educating people on mental health
- Periodic Counseling to Youth
- Promotion of stress reduction strategies and popularizing relaxation techniques,
- Skill Training Programmes/ Youth Development Programmes,
- Awareness about the benefits and harmful effects of social medias.

##### A. *Keeping Youth Connected with Society*

Social connectedness is a crucial element in mental health promotion among youth. Even though the sense of belonging begins in the family; it grows through peer group, community and culture. In their search for identity, purpose and direction youth need to feel connected to someone or something in order to thrive for excellence. Help the younger ones to nurture healthy social connections and a sense of belongings, whether in their academic settings, the community, family or peer group is essential to abandon loneliness and creating opportunities to build up psychological resiliency. Youth need people, inside and outside of their family, who care about them; who can be non-judgmental listeners; who they can turn to for well-informed guidance and advice; who they can call on for help in solving problems; who encourage them and promote high expectations; and who set developmentally appropriate limits, rules and monitoring.

Youth has to be motivated to constructively to engage in social institutions, religious communities, and recreational facilities; that are safe, stable, and equitable. Such social institutions provide support for youth in intellectual, social, emotional, moral, and physical development, and opportunities to take part in organized activities like academic enrichment, sports, social clubs, support groups, volunteering and the labor force.

##### B. *Facilitating Positive Parenting*

The influence of parents on young one's life is significant at all ages of their life. Nevertheless, the role of parents in this age is an overall evaluation on youth's decisions and living style. Parents should correct them appropriately and comment on children's every individualized decision with a critical mind. It is identified that the family unit is the first and the most critical environment to promote healthy youth development. Parents or primary caregivers are in the position of not only acting as the support system, but also as their teacher and supportive in their lives. However, it was acknowledged that many parents are lacking the resources

and/or skills to support child development in an ideal way. They are often contending with stress and the social determinants of health, which may impact on their ability to optimize the environment for children to flourish. This should be a strong emphasis, that working with families to build supportive environments and positive parenting approaches will help youth in reaching their potential and developing resiliency. As such, the family environment and the role of the parent is an upstream approach for mental health promotion.

##### C. *Reducing Social Stigma about Mental Illness*

The presence of social stigma is considered as a barrier to mental health promotion strategies. Societies negative attitudes and ignorance of mental illness is pervasive. Such a situation is the exact call to initiate actions. Openly, it is required to discuss the importance of mental health promotion work by focusing on reducing stigmatic attitudes and raising awareness about mental health. Demystifying mental illness will not only promote a shift in societal attitudes, but will inevitably assist those who are struggling with mental health issues to seek help effectively.

##### D. *Mental Health Education*

Mental health education is a key area of focus for mental health promotion work. A larger portion of the global population is still inconsistent in defining the terms "mental health" and "mental illness". This situation is a call for actions to enhance educational mile stones in the field of mental health across various sectors of population. Mental health educational programmes improve the availability of mental health services and modify the underlying concepts of positive mental health in mental health promotion. Raising awareness and understanding of mental health and wellness has the ability to reduce stigma and enhance access to services for those who require support.

It is necessary to re-frame the mental health educational strategies to implement. Along with reframing, the areas of implementation also have to be evaluated. Many of the people are not in favor to accept the concepts of mental health promotion very immediately. So, making them aware is the primary step of mental health education. Extensive interventions can bring into action, awareness onwards.

##### E. *Periodic Counseling to Youth*

Youth is called the age or period of turbulence, where every individual goes through certain changes in their mental as well as physical structure. Adolescence is the most complicated phase of one's life. Adolescent counseling is useful as therapeutically and prophylactically. Widely, people believe that adult counseling ever meant for therapeutic means. Even though, In fact, it brings better outcomes in certain behavioral disorders, its preventable aspects include, helping the young people to make sense of their feelings, behaviors and thoughts and admits the use of unique therapeutic techniques. Every parent claims that the stage of

youth is difficult and confusing. Hence, it is very important for parents to handle their adolescent children in the best ways. Thus, these psychological counseling sessions are available for them and they turn out to be effective, most of the time. Adolescent counseling sessions focus not only on the patient but also on the patient's family.

#### *F. Promotion of Stress Reduction Strategies and popularizing Relaxation Techniques*

Today's youth face more amount of stress than ever before. Prominent two of those stress- inducing areas, include academic stress; including regular academic classes, homework, exams & grades and growing competition among students and family stress including multiple parent-expectations, parental/ familial conflicts, sibling rivalries/ mutual conflicts and changes in family structure, etc. In such a scenario, if youth are not sufficiently equipped with effective relaxation techniques, they sometimes rely on unhealthy responses, like illegal drugs and alcohol use. Still, a particular percentage of youth is not richly equipped with the stress management tools to effectively handle the large amounts of stress they face daily. If stress is not managed effectively, it can lead to maladaptive behaviors, serious mental disorders like anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, aggression, physical illness and illegal drug and alcohol use. Awareness about relaxation techniques among youth will certainly bring better mental health outcomes.

#### *G. Skill Training Programmes / Youth Development Programmes*

Skill training programmes aim to support and to provide guidance to young people in facing the today's emerging challenges. The ultimate goal of it is an overall development of youth. At the same time, youth should be encouraged and actively engaged in addressing societal problems. Such programmes focus on spiritual, ethical and will enable them to take vital decisions. Encourage them to actively involved in these programs to form socially acceptable behaviors.

#### *H. Awareness about the benefits and harm sides of social medias*

The social media addiction means a change in behavior manifested as spending large amount of time online to produce the pleasurable effects, not paying attention to other tasks, experiencing unpleasant feelings from reducing or stopping usage of social media etc. There is no exact treatment for social media addiction. International Classification of Diseases (ICD) included excessive internet usage which interrupts daily activities as Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD). The only way to solve them is to engage the youth in quality works. Make them aware about the value of time and health impacts of overtime social media usage. Motivate them to come out of the world of fantasy to the world of realities.

## V. SUMMARY

Youths are the backbone of the social fabric. Development of youth of a person must be comprehensive and humane. An optimal growth helps for overall development.

A positive outlook and spirit of healthy living are the main determinants of good mental health. Prevention and promotion of mental healthy living styles contribute for the growth of society.

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