

Well-being Essentials

for College Students



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Message



The concept of well-being has drawn a lot of attention due to the increase in stress-related problems. In the last few years, due to changing socio-cultural milieu and increasing demands of life, self-care has taken a backseat. This requires attention and younger age is most appropriate to inculcate the habit of self-care. Well-being is ‘the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy.’ Along with the presence of complete physical, mental and social health, Wellness is merging with ‘the abstract concept of living the life to its subjective fullest.’

This manual is an appropriate and timely step towards shifting focus to students' well-being. I am delighted to see the excellent resource on ‘Well-being essentials for College Students’ with the impressive content, flow, and organization. I sincerely appreciate the Psychiatry faculty and Psychologists for their invaluable inputs, commitment, and humane contribution from conceptual planning to the final execution of the Well-being manual.

Well-being essentials for College Students contain interesting sections about relevant issues faced by students in their day-to-day life. Understanding these concepts will not only help the students in their personal growth but also add to mutual support among peers. College life provides an important avenue to prepare oneself for future roles, and transitions. In this way, with an enriching environment and holistic approach, our students will be fully competent for personal care, helping others, and achieving excellence in academic and extra-curricular interests with truly living their life to the fullest.

I wish good health, happiness, and enriching life with personal and professional growth for all the students.

Prof. Sanjeev Misra
Director & CEO
AIIMS Jodhpur

Message



“Our capacity to draw happiness from aesthetic objects or material goods in fact seems critically dependent on our first satisfying a more important range of emotional or psychological needs, among them the need for understanding, for love, expression, and respect.”
(Alain De Botton)

Wellness involves feeling good in every aspect, in mind and spirit as well as in body. Our emotional health is just as imperative as our physical health—and may be more so. Emotional balance doesn't mean that you never experience a negative emotion because these emotions are usually natural and normal. Emotional balance commences with being aware of our emotions and understanding them.

One of the biggest changes for new college students is newly found freedom. College students have an increase in personal responsibility. There is no one to regulate their routine, an increase in their academic workload, a greater need to multi-task and balance, and a myriad of new social opportunities and challenges. The college years are a time for learning new information, new life skills, and a new way of relating to our world. Issues ranging from depression and anxiety to eating disorders and addiction can impact students' lives in significant ways.

Everyone knows about stress, but not everyone is aware of how to deal with it. It's imperative to understand the stress and learn ways to deal with it so that it doesn't unsettle routine life. Learning how to manage it where one can and coping with unavoidable stress, one will be well on the road to becoming the best student one can be.

You may be able to jettison many external stressors by working on your time management skills. Schedule your days carefully and stick to the schedule. And don't hesitate to talk things over with one of our counselors, who may offer other solutions. Learning to advocate for your well-being is essential. A big part of advocating for yourself is knowing when to ask for help. Seeking help when you need it is a sign of strength and integrity instead of admission of failure. We can't eliminate all stressors, but we can surely learn to cope so that we don't feel so stressed out most of the time. We can take control of our lives and find healthy coping strategies. No one answer works for everyone—you have to look at your life, be honest with yourself about what affects your daily attitude, and then look for ways to make changes. The positive aspect is that although old negative habits can be hard to break but once you've turned positive changes into new habits, they will eventually lead into a brighter future.

Students who feel in control of their lives report feeling much less stress than those who feel that circumstances control them.

“Well-being cannot exist just in your own head. Well-being is a combination of feeling good as well as actually having meaning, good relationships, and accomplishment.”

Martin Seligman

**Prof. Surajit Ghatak
Dean (Student Welfare)
AIIMS, Jodhpur**

Message



The youth of today is looking for excellence in their academic and social engagements. Academic achievements are an important steppingstone for ensuring future success in life. Thus, with prevailing circumstances it has become an important source of stress for this age group. Although some degree of stress is essential to improve performance, an excess can prove detrimental to the outcome. Heightened societal expectations, highly competitive entrance exams and peer pressure lead to enormous burden on our youth. In such a scenario, wellbeing has emerged as an important concept, which ensures that an individual is able to cope well with stress and achieve their true potential. The concept of wellbeing emphasizes the holistic approach i.e., engaging optimally in physical, emotional, social domains, which contribute towards professional or academic success. Without such a holistic approach any individual is likely to fall short of their potential.

This manual prepared to guide the college students to adopt the holistic concept of wellbeing will prove an important resource that will not only help students in achieving their full potential but also guide them to minimize the possibility of experiencing psychological issues.

The students should try to relate the issue discussed in the manual with their real-life circumstances, to get the best out of it and adopt practices that best suit them. This will not only improve their well-being but also contribute to improving their surroundings by influencing their peers. Such changes can improve the quality of their experience in the personal and professional sphere. The manual will also provide mentors, teachers and parents an insight into the minds of our youth and ways to modify our current system of selection and need to develop arrays of other avenues utilizing their inclinations.

Heartiest congratulations to all who have contributed to the preparation of this manual and best wishes to all students in their journey towards *wellbeing*.

Prof. Kuldeep Singh
Dean (Academics)
AIIMS, Jodhpur

Preface

Well-being is a state of harmony that every individual wants to achieve in their life. It has various levels such as emotional, psychological, spiritual, physical, and social well-being. Pursuits of attaining harmony at different levels of well-being are important to living a healthy, happy, and meaningful life. Well-being is not a target that we want to achieve rather it is a state that we need to experience and sustain. It may not remain stable always due to challenges in our day-to-day life. However, actively utilizing the available coping resource is the key towards experiencing the state of well-being. Students' well-being is essentially related to their core competencies in social-emotional interaction as well as academic learning and achievement. Therefore, understanding the essentials of well-being is important for holistic development at different stages of life. Moreover, transition to college life with several new experiences and challenges provides an opportunity to learn and evolve suitable ways to enhance overall well-being.

The journey of writing this well-being manual started almost a year back and we are happy to share the final version of this manual. This manual was more of an experiential activity for us rather than an academic activity. As the idea of writing this manual came from our experience and interaction with colleagues and college students. We acknowledge the challenges faced by youth in those crucial years and their perceived barriers to seeking help or guidance.

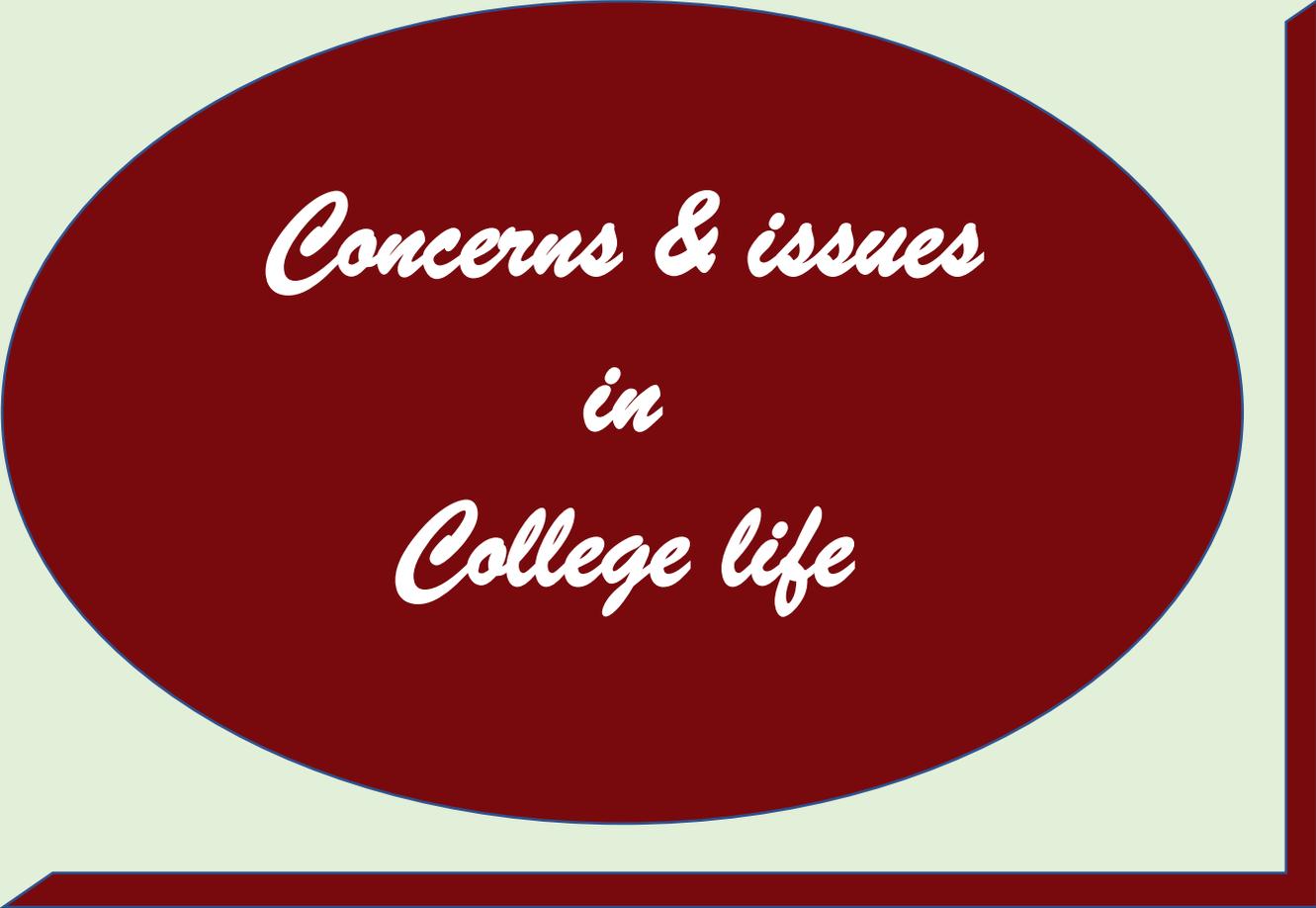
Therefore, we hereby present this manual as a kind of self-help guide for the students that covers the majority of the issues faced by them. The best part of the manual is that it not only covers the concerns and challenges faced by students, but it also provides the skills to manage those day-to-day issues. Students may face issues related to the uncertainty of life, cultural adaptation, stress, peer pressure, time management, academic pressures, rejection from peers or breakup in romantic relationships, excess involvement with screen/gadgets/virtual world, or temptations towards substance use. Often, discussion of these issues with someone is avoided or taken as a last resort by students, therein this manual can guide them towards the path of self-management. Also, the various sections of this manual are designed in such a way that you can pick and choose the specific issue that you are facing and read about the solutions to that issue. So, they need not spend hours reading the whole manual to find a solution to a specific problem.

Sometimes the lack of awareness, inability to pinpoint the specific issue, or poor emphasis on personal care are the major reasons so that students keep their troubles and experiences to themselves. This manual is likely to help readers to get a better understanding and the ways to deal with the situation. Furthermore, it will enhance understanding of difficulties and troubles faced by fellow students, which will help in creating a supportive environment to contribute to the well-being of self and others and to equip them to handle unforeseen situations, demands, and pressures effectively. We wish to see you all happy, healthy, productive, goal-oriented and focused to achieve your best potential in all the spheres of life.

**Naresh Nebhinani
Tanu Gupta
Mukesh Kumar Swami**

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*Concerns & issues
in
College life*

The transition from school to college brings several challenges like shifting from parental supervision to self-reliance and independence for the first time, management of expenses, adjusting to a new environment and academic curriculum, leaving old friends, building a new support system, and dealing with new people from a variety of backgrounds (teachers, colleagues, or seniors). That is too much on the plate in form of too many changes in one go, but students should be able to balance the importance of social life during college with academic commitments. Therefore, beginning of the college life naturally generates excitement as well as worries due to different levels of expectations and responsibilities. Some students may find the adaptation to the new environment difficult due to feeling homesick, issues in dealing with changes and challenges. College life provides an important avenue to prepare oneself for the future turbulence of life. However, this phase of transition brings several concerns like cultural variations, relationship issues, and changes in the academic pattern that may significantly affect the social adjustment and overall well-being of the students. Every student has a unique persona with varied personal and academic experiences. Therefore, all the students should remain open to new experiences and deal with upcoming challenges by learning new skills and applying their strengths and strategies proactively.

Challenges in transition to College life

Before entering college life, students learn values and attitudes from their parents. The children who are receiving love, care, warmth, appreciation from parents remain more resilient, happy, and confident. In contrast, children who are receiving criticism, blame, and abuse in their early years have low self-esteem, are more susceptible to stress, and are likely to face problems during the transition to college life. Students who have never stayed separate from their parents may experience a vacuum in their life and homesickness. On the other hand, many students seeking independence may get annoyed due to frequent contact by parents out of their concern. So striking a balance between the two extremes is essential for an easy transition.

Due to lack of experience and expertise, during the transition to college life, students tend to cope up with immature ways or indulge in alcohol or drugs in stressful or demanding situations. Therefore students should be taught the adaptive strategies that aim at removing the stressor by dealing with the root cause of the problem and providing a long-term solution with a practical approach.

Stress is commonly seen with transition-related issues as some students may face problems due to logistics like college or tuition fees, availability/facilities of hostels, and the overall cost of living in a new place. Sharing rooms with a new person with different lifestyles, approaches, and values and staying in the hostel for the first time may not be easy for some students and students may experience psychological problems if the distress remains unaddressed. Thus, students need to juggle with the new roles and environment and also need to prioritize and adjust their academic journey.

Academic issues are commonly reported by the students due to drastic differences in the classroom structure, curricular activities (content and approach), and assignments. Moreover, students may find it difficult to adapt to a different kind of academic learning and assessment system (more self-directed learning and competency-based assessment). Students may also feel the burden of continuing the streak of excellence in academics with fear of failing, or lagging in academics, because of the high level of competitiveness instilled by parents, society, and teachers since early school years.

Cultural diversity is commonly seen in colleges as students come from different backgrounds, states, regions, religions, and communities. Cultural diversity provides an opportunity to learn about self and others, with respecting cultural variations with an open mind. This helps in developing better social skills, confidence, and resilience among the students. However, sometimes this cultural diversity may lead to barriers, miscommunication, dysfunctional adaptation, and disturbance in different spheres of life.

Students have a natural desire to be a part of the group, but sometimes individuals may experience pressure for doing something against their liking, which negatively influences the overall adjustment. It often becomes difficult to combat pressure from peers and thus it is essential to know about one's values, boundaries and be assertive, along with discussing such issues with trusted colleagues, seniors, teachers, mentors, and family.

College life brings up new relationships (friends, colleagues, or affection towards other persons). A healthy relationship depends upon basic tenets of trust, mutual respect, effective communication, acceptance, empathy, and common interests. Evolving social skills and limited prior exposure make students vulnerable to experiencing hiccups in their relationships. Some students may also feel infatuations and sometimes go through the pain of losing a close friend, or breakup of romantic relationships. Due to curiosity and lack of adequate knowledge regarding

sexual health and safe sexual practices, students may indulge in unsafe and risky sexual behaviors. It may further affect their physical and mental health.

The temptation to use *drugs and psychoactive substances* among college students is common. Substance use is also associated with motor vehicle accidents, physical injuries, violence, academic difficulties, emotional and interpersonal issues. Curiosity, peer pressure, experimentation, yearning to impress others, and personality factors are the common reasons to start smoking, alcohol, and other drug use. Students need to be aware of the detrimental effects of substances on their health, academic achievement, and career.

Similarly, *digital addiction* has become a concerning problem among youth due to the inability to delineate between normal and abnormal use of the internet and vulnerability to get trapped in the virtual world. It may start interfering with their daily routine and subsequently leading to poor academic performance, social disconnect, psychological and physical problems.

Well-being essentials for holistic development

Well-being is ‘the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy.’ Along with the presence of complete physical, mental and social health, wellness is merging the abstract concept of living life to its subjective fullest. Wellness comprises the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, vocational, financial, and environmental dimensions.

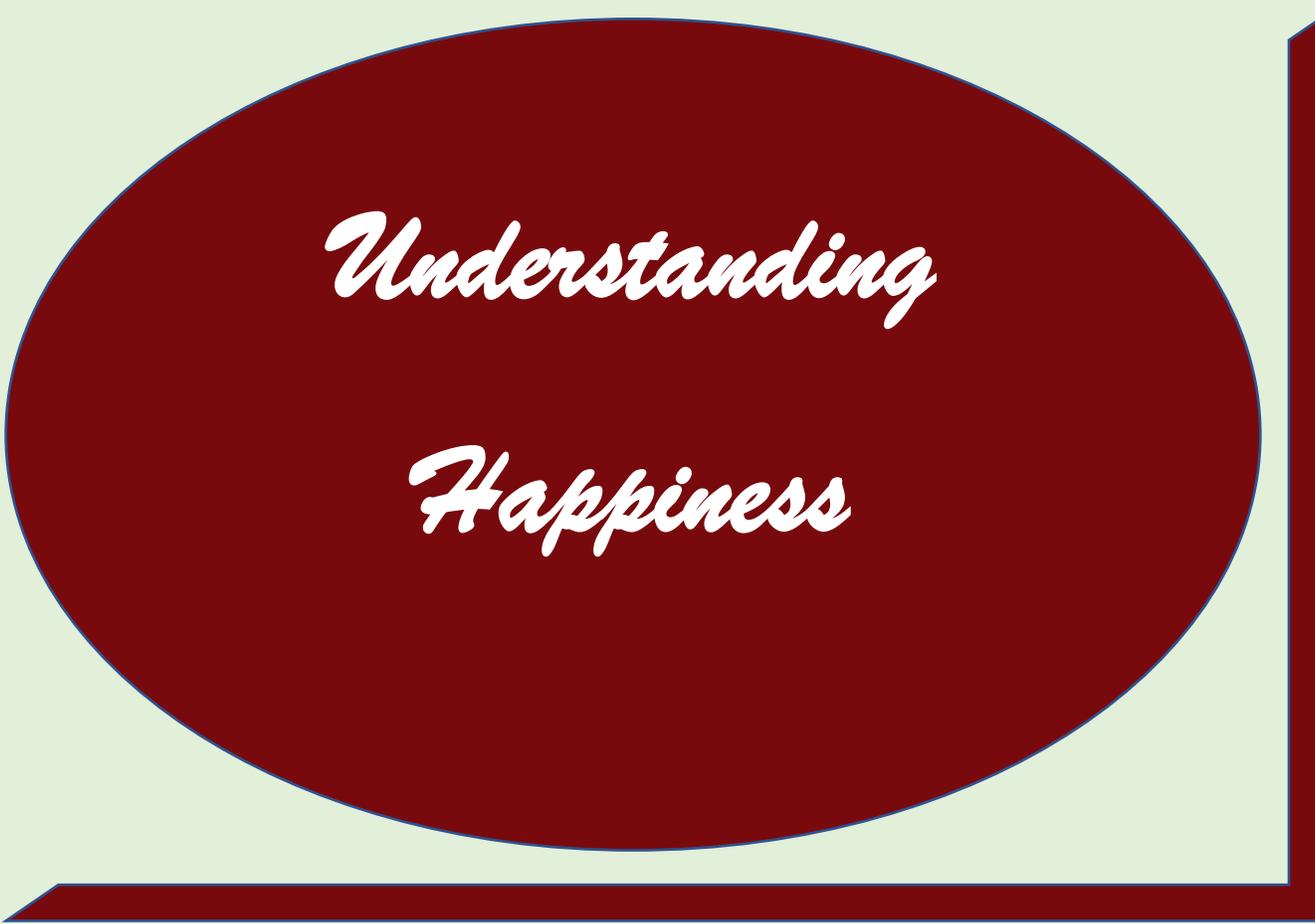
For the personal and professional growth of the students, we aim to create a safe environment for learning with a holistic approach and opportunities. In this way, our students will be competent to care for themselves and others with further enhancement of professionalism, medical science, and patient care.

We would like to emphasize that students’ goal should not be just surviving during medical training and career, but it should be thriving i.e. growing/ flourishing all through. On reading this manual you will find many interesting sections for building knowledge and skills about self-care, stress management, time management, study skills, emotional regulation, building healthy relations with peers, handling sociocultural diversity, and facilitating adaptation in college, mindfulness practices, and promoting resilience with staying sober, healthy, and sunshine happy. Understanding these issues will not only help students in their growth but will also improve their understanding of issues faced by peers. This will ultimately create a supportive environment filled with trust and understanding where everyone will thrive and help each other. It is possible that all

issues described subsequently may not apply to everyone, so one should try to reflect on their experiences to identify their concerns and then adopt the measures suggested to deal with such concerns.

Tips for a smooth transition and wonderful experience in College life

- Keep your emotional and social bonds with family, schoolmates, and friends active and try to establish a good interpersonal relationship with your roommate, colleagues, support staff, and teachers.
- Find your inner circle, i.e. group of friends, classmates, and seniors with whom you feel comfortable.
- Make it feel like home (making few homely touches in your hostel room, identifying few places in the campus where you feel homely and relaxed)
- Follow a healthy lifestyle
- Know and use your resources well (identify people around you from whom you can seek help in academic and personal issues) and seek timely help.
- Be aware of your strengths and weaknesses and learn new skills for personal and professional development.
- For personal development and enriching life read motivational and self-help books like The Power of Positive thinking- by Norman Vincent Peale, How to win friends and influence people- by Dale Carnegie, Think & Grow Rich- by Napoleon Hill, Medicine for the Youthful mind- by Tola Adeliyi, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens- by Sean Covey, The Power of Now- by Eckhart Tolle, etc.



Understanding

Happiness

Learning Objectives

- Understand concept of happiness and its effect on health
- Learn how to attain happiness

Introduction

Happiness is described by the American Psychological Association as an emotion of joy, gladness, satisfaction, and well-being. As can be seen from the definition itself, this word has been used synonymously with well-being, satisfaction, wellness, et cetera. Although studying happiness as a scientific construct is difficult to start with due to its subjective nature, the branch of science which deals with it is termed 'Positive psychology'. In simple words, the scientific study of what makes life most worth living. It focuses more on the positive aspect of the human being to improve/enhance it rather than looking at the negative aspects and trying to improve it.

In general, everyone wants to remain happy and avoid non-desirable emotions like sadness or anger. But we know this for the fact that all emotions (happy, sad, anger, disgust, fear, and surprise) are an integral part of human life. There is a difference between 'feeling happy' being a temporary state of joy and 'being happy' being in a state of general satisfaction with daily living. Almost everyone can 'feel happy' at some of the other time even if they are not satisfied with life but 'being happy' is what we are aiming to understand and achieve through this chapter.

Why aim for achieving happiness in life?

We are aiming to achieve this state of 'being happy' because it had been associated with a plethora of benefits in all domains of life. These are as follows:

Promotes physical health: Persons in the state of happiness have been seen to do well in terms of physical parameters, for example, blood pressure, blood glucose levels, and even have a higher immune functioning as compared to otherwise. A happy person is seen to be more physically healthy and less prone to non-communicable diseases as compared to a less happy individual.

Lesser chances of depression and anxiety: People having a high degree of happiness have been shown to have lesser depressive and anxiety symptoms. A low degree of positive emotions and a

high degree of negative emotions are seen to be vulnerability factors associated with both the development and maintenance of depression. In the long run, it is seen that happy people not only feel better in that particular time but also tend to develop resources for living well.

Promotes a healthier lifestyle: It is seen that happier people have a higher chance of following a healthy lifestyle involving themselves in regular exercise, meditation, and eating a healthy diet, et cetera.

However, the exact relationship between these benefits goes both ways, i.e., physical health and emotionally healthy people mostly follow a healthy lifestyle and in turn, are more likely to be happy.

Common reasons for unhappiness:

1. Reason applicable to all: Any significant life stressor including loss of a loved one, break up of a romantic relationship, a financial setback to name a few, failure in examination, can lead to unhappiness in life which may continue for a substantial time period.
2. Reasons applicable to a specific group of people: A certain ‘style of thinking’ develops in certain individuals due to genetic factors, upbringing, or early life experiences. These ‘styles of thinking’ may lead to unhappiness in certain individuals. These are also termed cognitive distortions in psychological terminology. These are as follows:
 - a. All or none thinking – ‘I am a good student only if I come first in class test otherwise, I am a bad student’
 - b. Jumping to conclusion – concluding based on incomplete information
 - c. Personalization – taking responsibility for things that have little or nothing to do with oneself
 - d. Approval-seeking – I must be approved of and loved all the time and if not, then life is terrible
 - e. Comparison – I constantly compare myself to others with little information or based on an isolated event; so, I feel either superior or inferior
 - f. Perfectionism – I and others must be perfect and when this does not happen, I become upset even if the matter is unimportant
 - g. Self-righteous cognitions – People should always do what I think is right and if they don’t, they are wrong and should be punished

- h. Selective perception –I pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively while ignoring all the rest so that my vision of all reality becomes narrow and dark
- i. Magnification/minimization – I focus on the worst possible outcome and overestimate the probability that it will happen (magnification) or I inappropriately shrink the importance of an attribute or event (minimization)

The above-mentioned thought process can lead to unhappiness even in day-to-day life, therefore, needs to be analyzed and kept in check.

Various scientific facts about ‘Happiness’:

In the subsequent text, we would learn about various scientific findings of the concept of happiness. These findings are as follows:

1. **Happiness is causative rather than a by-product of success:** It is seen in prospective studies that people who are happier early in life turn out more successful in terms of personal, family, and financial life.
2. **People are bad at making predictions about emotions:** People are terrible at predicting the length of a particular emotion and how is it going to affect them. For example, ‘for how long does the pleasure of getting good marks in the exam last?’ People tend to overestimate the length of a particular emotion as compared to the actual time spent in that state.
3. **Happiness improves physical well-being:** Happier people tend to live longer and also tend to recover earlier from infectious diseases and have less severe symptoms.
4. **Positive emotions and negative emotions are distinct and can occur in various combinations:** We usually read about 6 basic emotions namely, happy, sad, anger, disgust, fear, and surprise. These emotions tend to have different types of behavioral responses in individuals. Positive emotions like happiness and surprise lead to making people active and alert. Negative emotions like fear and anger make people want to fight or flight. But these can also occur at the same time with variable behavioral outcomes.
5. **Positive emotions build people’s psychological and behavioral skills:** It has been seen that positive emotions signal safety and enhance people to experience/ try new experiences and therefore, lead to improvement in their skills.
6. **All the ‘good days’ that an individual has, have certain common features:** We always have that feeling of ‘I am having a good day’ when things are going in our way and

whatever we do goes well. It has been seen that during almost all 'good days' a person feels more autonomous, more competent, and better connected with others.

7. **Positive expectations have a neurological effect:** Happiness through the release of endorphins in the human brain has an analgesic effect on the human body, hence, pain (emotional & physical) reducing effect.
8. **Money has a relation with Happiness (but it's complicated):** Money does correlate with happiness if a person is extremely poor. If you have a decent amount of money to fulfill your basic needs, having money in excess of that does not matter as far as happiness is concerned. But if you have excess money, then spending it on buying materialistic things does not bring happiness, however, spending money on getting novel experiences does.
9. **Your work matters:** Status of work being 'employed' is associated with more satisfaction with life. The point to be noted here is that employment, not income is associated with happiness.
10. **Good values and social relations acts as a 'buffer':** If an individual has good social relations and has a good strength of character, those would act as a protective factor against the damaging effects of stressful events.
11. **Positive institutions have common features:** Institutions(families, schools, or companies)that encourages people to flourish share some features in common these are, shared vision of the moral goals of the institution, feeling of safety within the institute, a practice of fairness in the institute, a sense of mutual care & concern and feeling of dignity towards the members of the institute.

Scientific knowledge that can be used to achieve 'happiness': These are as follows:

1. **Being grateful makes you happy:** Being grateful means showing appreciation for something that you experienced. It is seen that counting blessings daily would make you happier than the other way around.
2. **Working in 'Flow' is fruitful:** Flow is described as the phenomenon in which you feel happy and accomplished when you are challenged in your abilities to perform. It is the phase of optimum, stress-free productivity (optimum skill, optimum challenge, and voluntary). For example, we all know that we become 'super-effective' when our exams

are near and can finish whole chapters in a matter of days. A person feels strong and skillful after that.

3. **Providing service to the needy and doing acts of kindness is profitable:** Doing small deeds of kindness, like helping a junior to finish his/ her assignment or helping an old lady to cross the road for that matter can make a person happier and feel more accomplished.
4. **Relishing good things is beneficial:** People can improve their happiness by celebrating their achievements by sharing experiences, taking souvenirs or throwing a party, et cetera.
5. **You can be happy by using your strength in a noble way:** If you try to learn something new or re-learn an old skill in a new way, the happiness increases, for instance, learning a new language, a new musical instrument or playing the old tune that you already know on a new instrument.
6. **Positive view of the matter is good:** A rosy view about a particular situation or a person leads to a happy time spent in that situation or with that person. For instance, a positive illusion (illusion in general terms) about a partner is associated with higher rates of a long-lasting relationship.
7. **Virtue is important:** Good moral standards (being a ‘good person’ – loving, hopeful, curious, grateful, and enthusiastic) facilitates achieving greater life satisfaction.
8. **Meaning in life is important:** Purpose and meaning in life are important to increase the happiness quotient in life. However, the process of actively pursuing happiness can make you unhappy. In his book ‘Man’s search for meaning: an introduction to logotherapy’, Dr. Viktor Frankl describes the ability of man to find meaning in even the harshest of life circumstances (locked up in a Nazi concentration camp in his particular case). He postulated that the inmates who had a meaning in their daily life (desire to meet a loved one after getting free or serving the diseased people inside the camp) were more likely to survive in inhuman conditions of the camp. Hence, finding meaning in one’s daily life is of utmost importance.
9. **Other people matter:** Having good relations and positive communication with people, in general, enhances the degree of happiness and satisfaction.
10. **Important correlates of happiness are social in nature:** Following are factors associated with a subjective happy life:
 1. More number of friends

2. Being extroverted
3. Being grateful
4. Being Religious-Spiritual
5. Pursuing leisure activities
6. Having meaning in life

11. Kindness enhances happiness: Being generous and kind to other people can augment happiness in one's life. Its effect is enhanced after journaling about the act of kindness.

12. Seeking pleasures and avoiding pain is not desirable: Being true to your moral standards is a better indication and predictor of one's satisfaction with life in general. Moreover, many people run after pleasures so as to remain happy. Evidence suggests that it usually does not serve its purpose.

Keeping the above knowledge in mind, there are certain activities that can be done to achieve happiness as listed in table-1.

Table-1: Steps to be followed/ to-do list to stay happy

1. Be grateful and count blessings daily
2. Try to reach the 'state of flow'
3. Indulge in helping the needy
4. Try to learn something new or do something that you already know but in a new way
5. Try to look at any day-to-day matter in a positive way
6. Follow your moral standards
7. Actively make an effort to find the meaning of your life
8. Spend time with your friends and family (people who care for you)
9. Follow Religious-Spiritual activities (meditation, prayer, etc.)
10. Do not run after money
11. Go after new experiences
12. Remember that most of the people (including people whom you care about – friends and family members) are resilient

Take home message

Happiness is a complex construct and is likely to have different form for everyone. Exploring various ways to be happy can help us to identify the means to happiness that best suits us.

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Activity: Daily Gratitude Journaling

Disclaimer: This is just a 5-minute activity that you can include in your busy schedule easily.

Please follow the following steps:

1. Every night, whenever you are going to bed (or any time for that matter), sit in your bed or on a chair and keep this page in your hand (figure-1) along with a pen or a pencil.
2. Think generally about your day and how was it in general.
3. Try to think of 3 things that happened to you throughout your day for which you are grateful. It can be simple things like 'getting a good score on your test' or 'getting praise from a friend', et cetera.
4. If you are not sure that what you should write then you can mention being grateful for life and living in general.
5. Try to do this every day but it is Ok even if you miss a day or two.

The image shows a 'Weekly Gratitude Journal' template. At the top, the title 'Weekly Gratitude Journal' is written in a cursive font. Below the title, the days of the week are listed in two columns: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Each day has a header with a blank line for the day name (e.g., 'Sunday _____'). Under each day header, there are three numbered lines (1., 2., 3.) for writing, each followed by a blank line for the text.

Figure-1: Weekly gratitude journal



*Socio-cultural diversity
&
adaptation*

Learning Objectives

- Understand effect of socio-cultural diversity on adaptation to college environment
- Ways to overcome the challenges faced in adaptation

Introduction:

The students who join the college come from different socio-economic as well as different cultural backgrounds. Some come from different states of India and some even from other countries. For many students, college may be the first time when they are exposed to hostel life, away from their family and away from their cultural milieu. Also, around the same time, they are exposed to other people with different sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds, which can create various challenges as well as opportunities for their growth and development. It is necessary to understand these barriers or challenges related to this socio-cultural diversity and the various ways in which these barriers can be managed effectively, to achieve optimum growth in one's career as well as to have a good quality of life.

Adapting to a new environment:

When a student enters the college in a different city, or state, or country, the values, social norms, and traditions at the new place can be very different from the place where the student had grown or studied till then. Apart from that, the student will also have to understand the language of the host society as well as adjust to the food and weather in the new place. All these factors in addition to separation from the family and his cultural milieu can cause psychological stress or distress to the student.

Ability to adjust to the new environment and the duration required for the same differs for each person and depends on various factors – (a) Individual factors like level of proficiency in the language spoken by host culture, Introvert nature vs Extrovert nature, methods used for coping with stressors, past experiences (Both good and bad experiences), (b) Group factors like the level of acceptance vs discrimination of the person's culture in the host society, degree of tolerance for diversity in the host society, (c) Structural factors like time available for interaction apart from the usual college hours, availability of supportive environment in the college, presence of clubs or groups with a mutual interest in the college as well as (d) other factors like the amount of academic

pressure, financial problems, level of involvement of family members in the life of the person at the host society, etc.

Hence, it is necessary to understand that each person can go through a different duration of adjustment. While some students may find it easy to adjust, most often students take time to adjust to the new environment.

Stages of Cultural Adaptation:

There are different stages of cultural adaptation which an individual goes through when he goes into a new cultural environment. These stages are:

1) Honeymoon stage:

The person in this phase may find the new culture and societal environment exciting and arousing curiosity. The person can feel happy and energetic during this stage.

2) Crisis stage or Culture Shock stage:

During this stage, the person starts to focus on the differences between the culture they have lived till date and the new culture and the problems that arise because of these differences. Some of the problems are

- i. How to interact with people from a different culture (with colleagues, with seniors, with persons in authority, with people who are prejudiced against one's home culture), especially when there are language barriers?
- ii. How to adjust to the food, dressing style, religious practices, gender norms, etc. when it is different from one's home culture?

These conflicts, which are usually internal, can lead to a lot of psychological and emotional distress for an individual and can lead to feelings of low mood, anxiety, loneliness, low self-confidence, frustration, and even anger. The person may also have confusion about which values or culture they should follow. Because of these, the student may experience extreme homesickness, may tend to avoid social interactions, may experience sleep difficulties, or may have difficulty in concentration, which in turn, can lead to feelings of frustration, irritability, etc.

It is necessary to understand that this stage of 'Culture shock' is a common experience by many students when they enter college from different socio-cultural backgrounds. However, the intensity and duration of these symptoms can vary from individual to individual.

3) Adjustment or Recovery stage:

In this stage, the individuals start to better understand the culture of both societies and they learn how to adjust to the differences between the two. It is necessary to understand that even though many individuals adjust to the new cultural environment, the method of adjustment varies from individual to individual. For example, some individuals may develop problem-solving skills for dealing with host culture with a positive attitude, while some may isolate themselves from host society people. The adjustment phase is usually slow and can involve repeated cycles of crises and readjustments.

4) Adaptation Stage or Conflict Resolution or Acceptance stage:

At this stage, the individuals start feeling comfortable, have a realistic understanding of their likes, dislikes in both cultures, and adapt themselves to the new environment. Most commonly, individuals adopt what they like from both cultures (Integration or Biculturalism). However, some may stick to only one culture or reject both cultures completely. People feel a sense of confidence and maturity in this stage.

How to overcome the challenges associated with this cultural adaptation process smoothly?

Understanding the various stages of cultural adaptation and understanding the fact that each individual is unique and hence may go through these phases of adaptation for the different duration is important. Also, these stages need not go in the same order. For example, a person may directly go into cultural shock without going through the phase of the 'honeymoon stage'.

To smoothen the process of adaptation, the steps that can be taken by a student after joining the college has been briefly discussed below:

- i. Knowledge about the host culture is important for adaptation. Hence, before joining the college or soon after joining the college, do homework to know more details about the host culture. Understanding and anticipating the challenges that one will face in the new environment and preparing the solutions beforehand on how to handle those situations can be useful.
- ii. Connect with senior students, faculties as well as other staff with similar cultural backgrounds and share your concerns and any other difficulties faced in adapting to the

new environment, as they can provide valuable insights by sharing their lived-in experience while they had adjusted to the new environment. They can also provide necessary resources when required and help you adapt to the environment comfortably and faster.

- iii. Get associated with social groups of your interest – For example, get involved in Chess club, Yoga club, Sports club, etc. If no such groups are existing in your interest area, you can create one along with other friends who have similar interests.
- iv. Have a Non-judgmental attitude towards both cultures – Don't consider anyone's culture is right and the other culture is wrong.
- v. Interact with students and staff from all cultures – Do not restrict only to one culture. Communication skills are important while you interact with others, especially those with other cultures.
- vi. On certain occasions, when you get time, cook your favorite food from your own culture and share with your friends / learn to cook the food you liked in the host culture along with your friends.
- vii. Keep your contact with your family and friends from the home cultural background through phone / other means regularly. Staying connected with one's cultural values also helps individuals to cope well.
- viii. Plan and explore the city/town / nearby places, along with your friends. This would help to understand the culture of the place better.
- ix. Take steps to learn the language of the new host society. As language is an important medium to express our feelings, thoughts or ideas, and emotions, it is necessary to learn the language of the host society, at least to the extent that we can understand and communicate. Allot some time to learn the new language daily.
- x. When you are with people from different linguistic backgrounds, always try to speak in a language in which every person understands so that everyone feels included.

While these are some tips for improving adjustment, students can further explore and find their innovative ways of adjusting to the new culture.

Students who have adapted to the new culture can help the new entrants from a different cultural background in adapting to the new environment, by sharing their experiences.

Conclusions:

Students coming from different cultural backgrounds undergo various stages of cultural adaptation before they can successfully adapt to the new environment. Understanding these stages and planning strategies accordingly can help to reduce the psychological distress associated with the same. Whenever the individual feels the adaptation process to be overwhelming for them, the individual should never hesitate to contact the student counselor or the psychiatrist available in their college.

Take home message

Adapting to a new and culturally different environment can be difficult for everyone but engaging the environment with well thought activities can help in fruitful adaptation.

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3. Oberg K. Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments. *Practical Anthropology*. 1960;7(4):177-182.

Activities:

1) **Problem-solving method to face the challenges in adapting:**

- a. Make a list of the challenges and concerns that you are facing currently in adapting to the new environment.
- b. Make a list of the possible solutions for each of these challenges.
- c. For each of the possible solutions, start writing what are the possible consequences if that step is taken (Benefits, Possible Harms if any, and what is usually expected).
- d. Based on the analysis of the possible solutions, choose the solution which you consider might work and try using that solution. Also, keep the next plan in handy, if the first solution does not work out.
- e. Review the result of the first solution and either continue the same or shift to another solution, depending on the result.

2) **Do some group activities, reflecting your home culture,** along with people from your home culture. Plan these activities in such a way that people from other cultures can also participate if they want to. **Also, get involved in the group activities of other cultures, which you like.**

Example: People from the Southern part of India can celebrate Pongal / Onam along with other people from their cultural backgrounds. At the same time, the celebration should be open to students from other cultural backgrounds, who would like to join the celebration. Similarly, people from the Northern part of India can celebrate Holi along with other people with similar cultural backgrounds, which should be open to students from other cultural backgrounds.

3) **Take steps to learn the language of the host culture**

- a. Take some online courses for learning the new language
- b. Make a list of a few sentences and words in the new language daily and revise them.
- c. You can get the help of a colleague or a new friend to record a few words or sentences in the new language along with the meaning and listen to them.
- d. If there are some words which you do not understand, do not hesitate to ask the meaning of the same. If still, you do not understand, note them down, and ask other persons or search online for the meaning of those words.



Self-care strategies

Learning Objectives

- Understand self-care and its benefits
- Know different strategies of self-care

Self-care and its benefits?

Self-care is referred to as practices and regular rituals which students can incorporate into their daily routine to promote physical, mental as well as spiritual well-being. It is a multi-faceted concept that helps to promote a balanced approach, general well-being, and stress management. Students should start practicing self-care activities as early as they enter the college as there may be added stress due to transition and a high-performing environment. Self-care activities may include a balanced diet, physical workouts, relaxation, deep breathing, learning new skills, expressing creativity, etc. as elaborated below

Balanced diet

Consuming a balanced diet, having appropriate nutrients, fresh fruits, vegetables, etc. and feelings of wellness are inter-linked. A good nutritional intake is important for overall well-being and in contrast, a diet with high levels of refined carbohydrates, processed food, and saturated fat is associated with poor physical as well as psychological health.

Healthy eating habits include:

- Consume a balanced diet having adequate nutrients in an adequate amount as required.
- Eat five portions of a variety of fruits and vegetables every day
- Base your meals on higher fiber starchy carbohydrates (whole wheat, brown rice, etc.)
- Limit consuming food containing high saturated fats and sugar
- Eat less salt: no more than 6 grams a day
- Don't remain thirsty. Drink at least 1.5 -2 liters of water every day.
- Do not skip breakfast.

- Avoid packed and street foods that are prepared in an unhygienic way.

Regular physical activity

Regular physical activity is required to stay fit, physically as well as psychologically. Exercise leads to improved learning, better attentional skills and motor skills (such as hand-eye coordination), better problem-solving, and overall thinking. During physical activity, endorphins, also known as “feel good” chemicals, are released by the brain which helps to improve energy levels and mood. Altogether, academic performance, resilience, and self-confidence are boosted by the positive effects of physical activity. Physical activities in the busy schedule of students may include:

- Work out in the morning- brisk walking, skipping, running, etc. (20-30 minutes 4 times a week)
- Stretching the body muscles the short breaks between classes.
- Doing physical activities that are fun-dancing, hiking, climbing, joining sports teams, etc.
- Be active on the way to college; prefer walking, using stairs, etc.
- Take a break from technology.
- Plan fun activities with friends and colleagues
- Participate in college sports events, marathons, and runs.

Adequate Sleep

Good sleep is one of the most important things to do well in school and college. Students who take adequate sleep have better memory and perform well cognitively. Our body rests repairs and rejuvenates itself while sleeping. Not sleeping enough puts the body under stress and the immune system also becomes weak. Adequate sleep is also helpful in positive mental well-being by regulating mood and emotions. For adequate and good sleep, it is advised to follow sleep hygiene as follows in Table-1.

Table: 1 Sleep hygiene tips

Practices	Description and relevance
Limit mobile/ screen use	Blue light from electronic devices may impair sleep onset, so avoid using the phone or other gadgets (TV, Laptop, iPad, etc.) at least one hour before bedtime. Keep mobile and other gadgets away from the bed as it helps to decrease the temptation to pick them up or check. In case of need better to use a separate alarm watch, instead of a mobile alarm.
Avoid daytime nap	Better not to sleep in the daytime. Though brief naps (15-30 minutes) may help in refreshing, longer naps and late afternoon naps can make it harder to fall asleep at night
Avoid Spicy food	Heavy meals,high-calorie, spicy, fried food, and carbonated drinks can trigger indigestion that disrupts sleep. Maintain 2 hours gap between night meals and sleep if possible
Avoid any tasks during bedtime	Don't engage in any mental tasks during bedtime, as it may disturb the sleep
Relax before bed	Before sleep, one must do relaxation exercises e.g. deep breathing, meditation, and progressive muscular relaxation, or any relaxation activities. You may try listening to light instrumental music if you find it useful. Avoid heavy exercise at night hours.
Soothing sleep routine	Have dim light at night at bedtime and bright light in the rest of the working/study time. You may try a warm shower before going to bed. Avoid any type of stressful activities/interaction before sleep, as these activities may increase alertness and impair your sleep
Good sleeping environment	Keep your bed and bedroom quiet and comfortable for sleeping. Get rid of anything in your bedroom that might distract you from sleep, such as noises, bright lights, bad smells, uncleaned room/mattresses, or warm temperatures. A TV and computer in the bedroom can be a distraction and deprive you of needed sleep
Be consistent in timings of sleep	Keep a similar time for going to bed and getting up in the morning as it will improve quality sleep and set up your biological clock
The bed is exclusively for sleep	Reading book or newspaper, talking on the phone, eating food and doing any kind of work should not be done in bed
Avoid smoking, alcohol, or other substances	Although alcohol may help in initiating sleep it leads to frequent awakenings and poor quality of sleep. Avoid using caffeine (tea/coffee) and nicotine (zarda, bidi, cigarette,) especially in the late evening and before bedtime as they may activate the nervous system which leads to difficulty in the onset of sleep

Relaxation

A relaxed individual can manage day-to-day stress efficiently and can remain calm throughout the day. Relaxation helps to keep away various psychological problems like anxiety, depression, etc. It also equips an individual with better physical health and energy, enhances mood, confidence and helps to deal with anger and its management appropriately. Core techniques of relaxation involve muscle relaxation, deep breathing with or without visualization, meditation, and yoga.

Deep Breathing is a common and simple technique that can be performed under any circumstances.

Procedure for deep breathing:

1. Get in a comfortable position, lying down on the back or sitting. Breathe in through your nose letting air to be filled in your belly. Focus on breathing.
2. Breathe out slowly with the nose.
3. One hand to be placed on your belly and the other on your chest.
4. Feel your belly rising as you breathe in and feel your belly lowering as you breathe out. Observe your hand on your belly moving more than the hand on your chest.
5. Breathe fully into your belly as it rises and falls with your breath and take three more full, deep breaths.

A vital part of the above technique is counting which helps to streamline the thoughts, prevent distractions, and leads to rhythmic breathing patterns. It can be modified as per the need and comfort as one does not need to close eyes always or breathe loudly. It helps to calm down the stressed vital functions of the body by counteracting the sympathetic nervous system and activating the parasympathetic nervous system and in turn leading to lower heart rate, improving digestion, and muscle tension.

Progressive muscle relaxation: It involves 2 consecutive processes to systematically tense and relaxes the muscles. Regular practice makes students familiar with a sense of muscle tension and relaxation in various parts of the body. It helps to ameliorate the initial signs of stress i.e. muscle tension.

Steps to practice Jacobson Progressive Muscle Relaxation (JPMR): The basic principle of JPMR is that the state of anxiety and relaxation will not remain together therefore it is important to learn the difference between tension and relaxation by following the given steps.

Procedure for Jacobson Progressive Muscle Relaxation:

- Lie down. Relax the entire body by taking 3-5 deep and slow breaths.
- Clench your right/left fist separately for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds
- Tense arms, hold, and then relax.
- Hold lips tightly together and then release.
- Tightly close the eyes, hold and then open up.
- Lift the eyebrows, hold and then relax.
- Raise shoulders to ears. Relax.
- Deep inhalation and tighten chest, hold and then exhale slowly.
- Tense the abdominal muscles followed by relaxing
- Tense thigh muscles, hold and then relax.
- Squeeze the buttocks, hold and then relax.
- Tense knees towards each other, hold, and then relax.
- Tighten your calf muscles, hold and then release.
- Pull your toes upwards, hold for 5 seconds and relax. Pull toes downwards, hold, and then release.
- After the exercise, relax the whole body keeping your eyes closed and being in a relaxed position. Open your eyes slowly and enjoy feeling refreshed and relaxed.

Note: The key in the above technique of JPMR is to tense each group of muscles and hold for five seconds, followed by exhaling as the muscle groups relax fully for 10seconds before moving on to the next group of muscles.

Visualization: Visualization or guided imagery often makes one feel at peace, freely letting go of all tension and apprehension. The most calming and peaceful setting or situation for oneself can be chosen. Visualization can be practiced in different settings whichever suits the individual the best. The different settings may include using listening aids, such as recording that matches chosen settings or soothing music, etc.

Yoga: Yoga positively affects our health. The mind-body connection within a person is strengthened which improves mental strength and well-being and overall fitness. Practicing simple yoga-asanas not only helps the students to keep their minds relaxed and focused but

also improves memory, concentration and helps them to perform better in exams. Some of the simple asanas are *Surya Namaskar, Vrikshasana, Tadasana, Paschimotamasna, Setubandasanas, Pawanmukata asana, Shavasana* etc. *Pranayama* is an essential part of yoga that helps students to relax by learning control over their breathing. *BhrahamariPranayam, NadiShodhan/AnulomVilom, Kapalbahti, Om chanting*, etc. are a few examples that can easily be adopted by students in their daily routine.

Meditation: Meditation helps to reconnect with what is present and vital in experience. It is scientifically proven to enhance physical health and mental well-being. By doing meditation, students learn to calm their minds, allow peace and relaxation while taking care of themselves. It also improves concentration, memory, and learning. Even when relaxing at your desk for a few minutes while doing work may be considered meditation, which often provides an emotional boost. Regular meditation sessions can help to reduce stress, lower blood pressure, reduce anxiety, and sleep-related problems.

Some useful meditation techniques for students include:

- *Breath Awareness*- Follow the flow of air as it passes through. Focus on the breath each inhales and exhale. Feel the air hitting the nostrils and filling your lungs and then go out again.
- *Body Scan*- Start from the top of your head. Pay attention to sensations, tightness, or resistance. Try to relax that area. Work your way down slowly shifting focus on your eyes, cheeks, jaw, neck, shoulders, arms, chest, abdomen, fingers, and down to your toes. Try to relax the tensions felt in the respective areas.

Self-reflection

Self-reflection is a way to access the unconscious or putting a mirror up to for self and analyzing what we see or feel as objectively as possible. This can help to better understand ourselves in a way how we think, feel and behave. It is a path towards self-awareness. A few important points to be considered for self-reflection include:

- Knowing “Who am I”
- Recognition of ourselves
- Recognition of our character

- recognition of our strengths and weaknesses
- Recognition of desires and dislikes

Sense of Purpose

The motivation that drives a person towards a satisfying future is referred to as sense of purpose. It is shaped by things one believes in and personal values. This helps everyone to live by those values. It can change as one grows and learn new things with new experiences. However, it is important to be able to identify the things that matter to be able to recognize and do things that add meaning to life. When things go wrong, sense of purpose matters the most. Whatever we do, smaller or larger, it helps to get the most satisfaction from the things we do and achieve.

How is sense of purpose useful?

- To remain motivated when things go wrong
- Setting priorities in life if circumstances change
- Recognize things that truly counts
- Promote resilience

To recognize sense of purpose, you may need to know the most valued beliefs and things for you like:

- Being fit and healthy
- Offering help to others
- Being a good friend
- Taking care of family
- Social work for the community
- Traveling the world, etc.

For students

- Focusing on goals like completing projects/syllabus, caring for friends, getting into college sports teams (may be considered as important short-term goals of students in college) and hence gives sense of purpose to the students.

- Planning for goals like volunteering in various NGOs, getting admission in higher studies (Post graduation) or going to a good university, etc. (may be considered as long-term goals of college students based on their values and principles), and giving a sense of purpose in a long run.

Helping others

Acts of giving and kindness, either smaller or larger, promote a sense of positive psychological well-being. The reward areas in the brain are stimulated by helping others, giving, and cooperating with others. This further helps to create positive feelings and optimism.

A feeling of self-worth is obtained by helping and working with others. Help to give can be done in various forms and may range from small everyday acts to big formal commitments.

On any day:

- Be thankful to anyone who has done some good for you
- Asking your friend about his well-being
- Talk to a colleague or friend who seems to need support

At weekends, you can:

- Plan and arrange for a day out for you and your friend.
- Help your friend or colleague to finish off the project or work assignments.
- Enroll yourself in a mentoring project to support and benefit others by giving your time
- Offer help in the community as a volunteer like in schools, hospitals, etc.

However, it is simultaneously important to take care of yourself while doing these help-giving practices. These help-giving practices do not burden you of putting others before your own needs.

Help-seeking

Help-seeking is a process in which one individual appraises to have any problem and is willing to seek help from other available sources. The process can be defined in four stages:

1. Identification and acknowledgment of problems
2. Expression of the problems as well as the need for help

3. Knowledge of available sources for help
4. Willingness to seek out and disclose to the available sources

Importantly that one must be willing and able to tell his/her problems to the available help sources. The common barriers preventing youth from seeking help include difficulty in recognizing the problem, stigma, embarrassment, preference for self-reliance, confidentiality and trust, hopelessness. Students should be able to overcome these barriers to seek help whenever in need and should not be hesitant to reach out to the possible and available sources for help.

Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation is the ability to manage the experience and expression of pleasant or unpleasant emotions. It is the ability to act in our long-term best interest by managing or regulating our emotions and behavior well in different situations. Adaptive emotion regulation strategies should be adopted by the students and youth for the positive long-term outcome and well-being. Adaptive emotional regulation strategies include:

Problem-solving

It involves various stages such as defining the problems, looking for alternative solutions, choosing the best solution, trying the best solution out of all alternatives, and then reviewing the results.

Acceptance

Acceptance means that a person accepts his/her emotions without judging or controlling them. It allows students to be aware of his/her positive as well as negative emotions, accepts them as they are, and believe that they will not last long.

Humour

Humour is an essential skill for an individual to handle day-to-day stressors and hassles of life. Humour is very effective in managing negative emotions.

Take home message

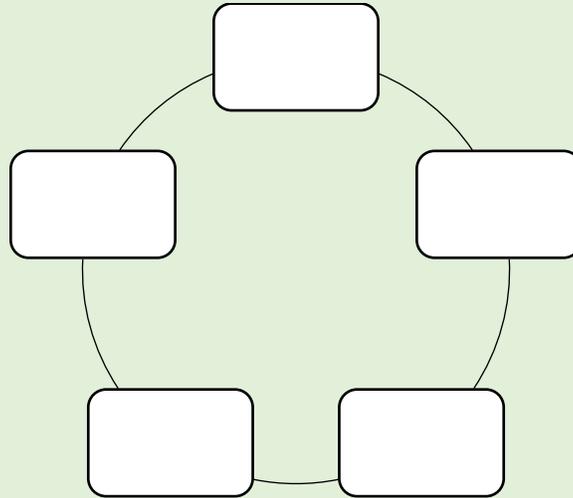
Self-care activities are beneficial in reducing stress, increasing productivity, improving health, and achieving work-life balance. Importantly, students need to know the difference between self-care and self-indulgence. Behaviors that relieve stress temporarily such as smoking, drinking, binge-eating and excessive screen exposure are common example of self-indulgence. These self-indulgent behaviors may seem to be quick stress-busters but long-term effects on the health may be detrimental.

Suggested readings

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Activity 1

Draw a self-care circle that specifies the activities/things you do to take care of yourself in a typical day and stick that in front of your study table.



Activity 2

Self-reflection

Reflection of the day: write down various scenarios of your day that you want to reflect upon

Situation you encountered	What you did?	How did you feel?	What else could have been done?



Mindfulness

Learning Objectives

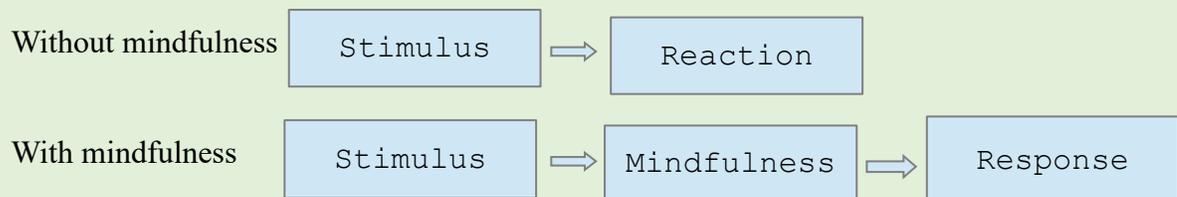
- What is Mindfulness
- Mindfulness and the Brain
- Benefits of Mindfulness
- How to use it

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a mind-body practice that has immense physical and psychological benefits. Mindfulness originally derived from the Buddhist concept was popularised by Dr. Jon Kabat Zinn. He defines it as “paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.” Mindfulness is not sitting idle or keeping your mind blank

Mindfulness teaches us to focus and be in the present moment than traveling in our past or wondering about our future and being anxious. We often function in autopilot mode and hence when faced with a situation we react before pausing or reflecting, very often leading to regret. Mindfulness helps you by making you aware of the space that exists between noticing a stimulus/experience and reacting to it. Helping you to observe the process and help you make more intentional decisions.

With this practice, you will become aware of the space that exists between the stimulus/your experience and the response/reaction you give. It will help you to slow down and observe the processes of your mind so that you can be more aware of the options available and conscious of the decisions you take.



Most of the top Universities like Harvard, Michigan, Oxford & Yale teach mindfulness, firms like Google promote it in their workspace. Top successful people like Bill Gates, Kobe Bryant, Oprah Winfrey vouched for mindfulness as making a major impact in their lives. It becomes integral to a person practicing mindfulness to be forgiving, compassionate, embrace vulnerabilities &

imperfections. They learn to approach everything with curiosity, and most important is being appreciative, grateful, and embracing both good & bad experiences.

Three components of mindfulness:

- **Awareness/Purpose** – This requires you to intentionally direct your attention to whatever task at hand rather than let it wander.
- **Presence**- Being able to fully engage self and be attentive to the present moment. Being fully aware.
- **Acceptance** –It involves being non-judgmental towards whatever you observe or arise in the present moment. Whatever sensations, emotions and thoughts are observed they are not judged as good or bad, not labeled as pleasant or unpleasant; they are observed, experienced until they eventually pass off.

Mindfulness and the Brain

Research suggests that mindfulness meditation practiced regularly, even less than 6-8 weeks can bring changes in the brain. fMRI scans have shown more activation in the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) which is associated with self-regulation and learning from experience, increased amounts of grey matter in the hippocampus responsible for better learning and memory. Reduced amygdala reactivity which manages the reaction to difficult emotions like anger and better functioning of the pre-frontal cortex.

Benefits of Mindfulness

There are numerous benefits of practicing mindfulness regularly we are listing a few of them below. Research provides evidence in various domains like:

Psychological Benefits- Having increased awareness of one's mind, increased mental flexibility, enhanced focus, attention, working memory, and concentration better decision making/ planning, and emotional regulation, along with reducing emotional reactivity, ruminative thinking stress, anxiety, and depression.

Physiological Benefits – Building a greater resistance to stress-related illnesses, enhancing the immune system and brain density & neural integration.

Spiritual Benefits- Increasing self-insight & self-acceptance. Enhancing compassion, empathy, and overall sense of morality.

It is known to enhance health, resilience, improve connectedness, better interpersonal relationships leading to an overall increased sense of well-being in the long run.

Practicing Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a skill that can be learned with practice, it may seem tiring, frustrating to not be able to concentrate on it in the beginning few days, but that is how it is supposed to start. Be patient and continue practicing it, start with mindful breathing first, moving on to more structured exercises then start integrating it into your daily activities.

Below are three simple exercises that can be practiced by you anywhere. There is a wide range of mindfulness meditations audio, videos, and scripts available online. Choose anything which resonates with you and suits your time. You can do it anytime while you are reading, sipping coffee, or have 5 minutes spare.

1. Mindful Breathing (3-5minutes)

- | |
|--|
| i. Find a comfortable position when you can relax. You can be seated on the floor, chair, keeping your back straight. Keep your hands in a resting position, do not cross your legs |
| ii. Just notice your body don't try too hard to relax, just become aware of you sitting, feeling the pressure of the chair, floor. Try to observe the sensations you are experiencing |
| iii. Start focusing on your breath. Try to observe the flow of your breath- observe the continuous cycle in and out. Do not try taking a long breath, or modifying your breath, just observe the natural flow. |
| iv. Start observing how the breath is entering your nostrils, passing through your lungs, reaching your abdomen. Observe where you can feel your breath. See if you can feel the sensation one at a time. Observing them as continuous waves of an ocean. Try to relax with each passing breath. |
| v. While you are doing this it's natural that your mind will start wandering and you will get lost in thoughts. This is alright; just when you realize your mind is wandering gently redirect your attention to your breath. You can set up reminders for the practice. Appreciate yourself for it |

2. Mindfulness Exercise: Releasing Tension

We can observe how the tension, the pain has been accumulating for a long time and we often feel like a pressure cooker ready to let off our steam. So it is crucial to learn how to release this tension from time to time.

- Choose a comfortable position standing, sitting, or lying down whichever works well for you.
- Let's consider a scenario- you are driving your car you are in a hurry to reach your destination, you may be aware of the tension you feel from time to time, busily looking around, and checking the time again and again. You would hardly describe this commute time as enjoyable or relaxing. In the signal when stopped at the red light you are desperately waiting for it to change to green. Here we can consider the red light as a signal for you to pause and observe this tension/ stress you are experiencing.
- You can make use of this time in the signal to sit back, relax, and practice mindful breathing for a few seconds. Being aware of the tension while you are breathing in and imagine releasing the tension, feeling relaxed every time you breathe out

You can experience peace only when you try to live, be aware of the present moment. You can practice it multiple times in a day whenever you take a break, doing your routine chores like brushing, dressing, reading, cooking, etc. You can practice it regularly to gain maximum benefit.

You can also check out these apps for using mindfulness Headspace, Inside Timer, Stop, Breathe & Think, UCLA Mindful, 10% Happier

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Activity

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Techniques

Mindfulness can best be practiced by being aware of your breath at the moment. So take a few deep breaths and focus your awareness on each breath. Slowly try to engage in the following exercise

Look 5 things that you see around	
Be aware of 4 things that you can touch in your surroundings	
Focus on 3 sounds that you can hear	
Be aware of 2 things that you can smell	
Notice 1 thing that you can taste	



Resilience

Learning Objectives

- Understanding Resilience
- How to build and enhance resilience
- Need for building Resilience

Life does not provide us a map; however, we all encounter zigzag paths which we need to navigate on our own, facing various hurdles ranging from illness, traumatic events, and life-altering incidents to the death of loved ones. Life often throws surprises and challenges, which we are unprepared for; each challenge affects people differently, initiating a unique set of responses, a gush of thoughts, stirring up strong emotions and uncertainty. Still, with time we adapt well to the stressful life-altering scenarios, the credit goes to Resilience

“Resilience is a personal quality that enables an individual to thrive when faced with adversity”

“Resilience is the ability to respond adequately and perform successfully in the face of adversity or to exceed expectations during hardships”

Resilience works like protective gear shielding people against all adversities similar to the shell protecting a turtle. Being resilient in the university has been positively correlated with good mental health, adjustment, and successful transition into further roles.

Research highlights real resilience is when vulnerable individuals possessing few resources, assets, cope better than expected in their given circumstances when compared to individuals in similar contexts.

While we are faced with pain, in these adverse events, it doesn't have to dictate the course of our life. Many aspects of our life can be controlled, modified, and further improved on. Learning to enhance resilience not just helps us sail through the difficult storms but also teaches us to navigate better, be a better sailor and take charge of the ship we own. Resilience has overlapping attributes it can be viewed as a developmental outcome, set of competencies, or coping strategies.

The good news is that resilience encompasses several skills, thoughts, actions that can be learned by anyone like emotional awareness, impulse control, optimism, flexible thinking, empathy, self-efficacy, and reaching out to people. Being resilient doesn't mean that we won't be experiencing any hurdles, worries, or difficulties. In fact, the path to becoming resilient often involves overcoming adversities, going through pain and emotional distress.

Protective factors

Family factors- family cohesion, strong attachment, caring family, good social support

Individual factors-realistic planning, good self-esteem, adaptability, problem-solving skills, good communication skills, optimism, strong moral beliefs, development of personal identity, having meaning in life, routine, and emotional regulation help in building resilience.

Why do we need to become Resilient?

When faced with failures, stressful, overwhelming situations resilient people do not crumble instead they bounce back, work through the problems & overcome the challenges while banking on their strengths & relying on their support systems. Resilience empowers people by making them more open, accepting, flexible in a situation, and moving ahead. Building resilience is PREVENTIVE, like taking vitamins or going to the gym to boost up your immunity.

Enhancing Resilience

Dr. Ginsburg has discussed the following 7 C's of resilience demonstrating the role of both personal strengths and external resources:

Competence	The art of handling situations efficiently. For this individuals need to develop skills that aid them in making responsible choices based on their sound judgments
Confidence	This is connected to having competence. Once you can effectively deal with situations this enhances your confidence
Connection	Having a close-knit circle of family, friends, groups, and community provides a sense of security and belongingness in the individual. Be open to helping anyone in need
Character	Understanding basic morality. Differentiating between right and wrong is essential as it guides in making a responsible choice, being a contributing member to the society, and enhancing the self-worth
Contribution	Being part of a community and able to contribute gives a positive outlook to life. Having a sense of purpose is a powerful motivator
Coping	Having good coping skills are very important to deal with setbacks and adversities.
Control	Knowing what can and what cannot be controlled in a situation provides a framework to look at it from problem-solving mode rather than being in victim mode. Knowing that the solution lies in your hand makes you feel more confident, controlled of the situation than feeling helpless.

Apart from the above factors below are some other factors that can contribute towards resilience-

- a) **Self-care** - Having a healthy lifestyle, ensuring proper nutrition, sleep, and exercise strengthens the body, to deal with stress, anxiety, and depression.
- b) **Self-awareness-** Being aware of one's strengths knowing how to use them, recognizing one's weaknesses, is imperative. Understanding internal locus of control, to see how the outcome of events can be controlled by you as opposed to the external forces.
- c) **Have a positive outlook-** Being proactive and taking initiatives, looking for opportunities for self-discovery. Avoiding negative outlets even if it may seem tempting, trying to maintain an optimistic & hopeful view. Being able to learn from your past.
- d) **Acceptance-** Certain goals, priorities set may become difficult to achieve in certain adverse circumstances. Realizing this and accepting the current situation can help change your perspective and instead help you focus on what can be altered or setting realistic goals.

Inculcating gratitude, compassion, acceptance, finding meaning, and harnessing forgiveness is the essence of building resilience. Often recognizing when you need help and seeking it is important in building resilience.

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Five simple activities that can help in enhancing resilience

1. Self-reflection activity

Finding meaning especially so in dealing with adverse situations, having a strong sense of purpose is an important aspect of resilience it has been highly correlated with a strong sense of well-being, better cognitive functioning, and longevity.

You can use these questions to help you discover your unique purpose:

Why are you here?	Five years from now when you reflect on life how do you want it to appear?
Why do you get up in the morning?	What is the purpose of you having lived another day?
What keeps you awake at night?	If you meet your older version what advice would you get?
What is the one thing you can do now to make a difference in your life?	How can you use your assets in the best interest of yourself and others?
If you want to live purposefully, what does not living with a purpose look like to you?	What does living a meaningful life mean to you? Define it, what should it entail?

2. Recreating your story

Often we keep recalling past events & get stuck in them mentally which blocks productivity. Resulting in anxiety, worry, or regret. Try writing a different version of the event with a more neutral or positive interpretation. See how you feel in this process. Therapeutic writing is a well-known form of experiencing well-being.

Reading stories of successful gritty people also helps example- SudhaChandran, Arunima Sinha, Michael Jordon, J.K Rowling to name a few.

3. Building a positive framework

While trying to build a positive framework it's important to keep in mind, absence of problems does not necessarily indicate positivity. There are certain qualities/habits when integrated into your current lifestyle can enhance your happiness, well-being & resilience.

- a) Having self-compassion & being forgiving towards your mistakes & learning from them rather than being punitive. Treat yourself as you would treat your friend.
- b) Performing acts of kindness for yourself & others. Choose one person a day to whom you will perform an act of kindness & make them happy, e.g. helping a stranger to cross the road. You can join a volunteering group if interested.
- c) Start a gratitude journal, list 3-5 things you are grateful for every day before you sleep, or at least do it once a week. Be appreciative and express gratitude to the people around you, consider giving a gratitude letter to them.
- d) Seeing the silver lining in the cloud. Trying to see the bright side is scientifically proven to decrease negative thinking, have a positive impact on cognitive re-appraisal. Try to engage in this as much as possible. Think of a frustrating experience e.g. getting negative comments for your presentation can be viewed as an opportunity to improve/learn & do better in the next one.

4. Design a Flow Activity

Csikszentmihalyi used the term “Flow” to describe optimal states of consciousness, those peak moments where you feel total absorption in an activity. Positive association in various domains of experiencing a flow state & resilience has been emphasized. Try to see if you have such activities or try to seek some activities which can optimally engage your attention and make you sense a feeling of accomplishment.

In trying to explore new flow activities, you can use these criteria to help you. Consider a task requiring skill & concentration, needing intense focus, is goal-directed, is challenging enough to not deter you but can be done feeling in control, which can provide on-going feedback.

5. Using relaxation, enhancing spirituality

Introducing journaling, mindfulness meditation, integrating it with yoga.

Prayer also aids in restoring hope and prepare you to face adverse situations.

Start with simple mindful breathing. Look at the mindfulness section for more details



Time Management

Learning Objectives

- Understanding importance of time management
- Techniques for effective time management

Time is an indispensable and irreplaceable resource. Once lost it can neither be recovered nor worked upon, it is the most precious asset. An asset whose utilization decides its worth. The more efficiently you utilize it, the greater is the reward and accomplishment. There is a major transition from school studies to higher education in terms of academic responsibilities and managing time. On entering college, the mode of learning shifts to self-learning which places a demand to learn effective time management. For most of them, this is the beginning of independent living and taking responsibilities that are now posing additional challenges.

Time management is crucial at all ages especially when it comes to students and it co-relates well with enhancing productivity and grades. This skill requires consistency, however when faced with continuous demands students start facing problems like uncertainty and task aversion which leads to procrastination. This further leads to the piling up of tasks, making it difficult to prioritize the important task, getting more distracted, and procrastinating it till the last moment leading to panic.

The feeling of being 'out of control', unable to manage your time makes you feel frustrated leading to stress and anxiety. Feeling in control is crucial in maintaining one's mental well-being. The more you feel in control the better you will feel, you can prioritize and work around the most critical things in your life. It can save up a lot of energy and give you more space to work to fit in additional things and work efficiently.

Much like learning any skill, for instance, learning to ride a bicycle, swimming, playing the keyboard, playing any sport, effective time management is also a skill that can be learned with practice and can be mastered with determination, discipline, and consistency.

To start with this technique you need first work on your own beliefs about how you think about your level of efficiency and effectiveness, no skill will work if you don't change your beliefs if you believe **you can't you won't** replace it with **'I can' or 'I will'**. Start visualizing how you want to be and start acting as though you are already good at it.

Five Tips to manage time effectively

Before trying to make a schedule, spend some time reflecting on how you spend your days.

How much time you are spending on activities that are beneficial and which are non-beneficial. What are your positive points that you can utilize, what are your negatives which you need to work on? Identify your peak time of the day so you can utilize it to the best.

1. Learn to curtail and handle your time cheaters/ time-wasters, which eat up your time

- Time cheaters come in all shapes and sizes. They can be physical and mental, created by you or imposed upon you by other people. We need to become aware of them and learn to deal with them effectively. E.g.

I get panicky and try to do everything at once- Learn to prioritize

I spend a lot of time looking for my notes before tests- Organise them efficiently

Time runs out! I am always late- Allow extra time when planning, be prepared for unexpected events

- Identify your main distractions, time-wasters and try to eliminate them.
- Taking on too much work, and multiple things at a time- Learn to say 'NO'
- Spending unnecessary time on activity or people- Be assertive, say 'NO'
- To save yourself from unnecessary interruptions, mute your group chats and turn off notifications on your phone
- Make sure to delete all unnecessary apps from all your devices like phones, tablets & laptops.
- Check notifications & emails 1-2 times a day (depending on your role)

2. Manage the time efficiently

- Jot down a time log to track everything you do for a few days, this will give you a better idea for management
- Tracking, daily logging will also help you see the discrepancy between your subjective time and reality e.g. on tracking you may realize you are spending 3 hours surfing online whereas you were assuming it to be 30 minutes per day.
- Make a list of to-do tasks every week or even better for everyday
- You can keep a done list with the to-do list this may provide more motivation, confidence, and clarity
- Finish the most important task of the day at the earliest
- **Set time method:** Set specific time to accomplish a task e.g. Monday 1:00-2:00- Biochemistry, Tuesday- 5:00-6:00 Gym time

- Make good use of your travel time instead of just surfing online
 - Plan a rough schedule for a week, making sure you know what you will be doing every day. Be realistic in planning.
 - At the end of the week spend some time reflecting on how much you could do and what changes you need to make for the upcoming week. Even better if you can do it at the end of every day and then plan accordingly
 - Fix a time when you will stop every day, it's important to keep you more focused on completing a task as you will be aware of the time limit.
 - **Swiss cheese approach:** if there is a large task, try to do a small part of it every time you are free e.g. you are preparing for a presentation, you find 10 mins before class starts try reading, watch relevant videos to it during lunch/break time. In this way, every step adds to help you prepare better. You may save a lot of time, and in the end, you may finish the task in a smaller time frame (due to smarter use of time and finishing bits of your assignment).
3. **Setting SMART goals** is also extremely useful in assisting you to be motivated and track progress. You can also take help by looking at your current schedule and see if it is going to help you achieve your goals. If not work on the desired schedule to achieve your goals. It is important to set realistic goals, using the SMART technique.

Specific

Measurable

Attainable

Relevant

Time Bound

4. **Apply the prioritizing skill – Eisenhower Matrix designed by former US President, also known as Urgent/Important Matrix**
- Understand what's important and urgent and accordingly work on those priorities.
 - Follow this matrix and make your matrix based on this and thoughtfully use your approach to make the best use of your time.

Matrix: Activities as per urgency & importance

I M P O R T A N T	URGENT	NOT URGENT
	1. Urgent and Important <i>e.g last-minute cramming crises deadline-driven assignments</i>	2. Important not Urgent <i>e.g. Planned study, preparation, planning, relationship building</i>
NOT I M P O R T A N T	3. Urgent not Important <i>e.g. Interruptions, unplanned activities, saying 'no', some phone calls</i>	4. Not Important Not Urgent <i>e.g time wasters excessive TV, online</i>

Approach

I M P O R T A N T	URGENT	NOT URGENT
	1. Urgent and Important Manage DO IT NOW	2. Important not Urgent Focus DECIDE WHEN TO DO IT
NOT I M P O R T A N T	3. Urgent not Important Reschedule DELEGATE IT	4. Not Important Not Urgent Minimize DUMP IT

5. Avoiding time mismanagement

Procrastination can be defined as intentionally, habitually, without good reason, putting off things that should be done now. It's renowned as the world's number one time-waster.

- To tackle procrastination- do not wait for a time to be fully motivated to start, starting poorly is better than not starting at all, avoid the temptation to do easy things first, remember putting things off till the last minute has never helped you. Use tips 1-4
- Know your peak time in which you are the most productive & choose the most difficult task at this time.
- A hack to stop piling up tasks is to complete any task requiring less than three minutes immediately. Do it now.
- Work smart instead of working hard, organizing yourself in a way that ensures that you invest your time in activities that are helping you towards the goals you had set up. Make sure every action counts.

Don't forget to keep relaxation time, break time, fun time in your schedule. It helps you sustain motivation, improve concentration and enhance productivity. It is very important to use rewards, do not think of it as self-bribery or manipulation. However, if used in the right way it can motivate and reinforce you to follow your schedule rigorously. To make the reward effective make it fit the accomplishment; keep it realistic and reward yourself immediately and let it not be something that distracts you from what you were doing. Keep it positive. Don't forget to acknowledge your successes and celebrate them. Use the above-discussed strategies consistently to booster your time management skills.

These are some apps that can help you with time management My Homework Student Planner, Trello, Evernote, Distraction-blocking app, Toggl, To-do list app, Coach.me.

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3. Based on the Urgent/important matrix, can you give examples of some activities from your day to day life:

I M P O R T A N T	URGENT	NOT URGENT
	1. Urgent and Important	2. Important not Urgent
NOT I M P O R T A N T	3. Urgent not Important	4. Not Important Not Urgent



Stress Management

Learning Objectives

- You should be able to understand what is stress
- Different types, sources of stress, its manifestations
- How to recognize when you are starting to be stressed
- Learn how to change your response to stress and manage it

What is stress?

"This is too stressful" or "I am stressed" are common phrases for us. We all have experienced it at some point in our life. Stress can be understood as any physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental unrest – a feeling of emotional or physical tension, we face when we find it difficult to cope with or being in situations, we don't have much control over what happens.

Lazarus & Folkman describe stress as a process whereby an individual perceives/understands and responds to events that he appraises as overwhelming or threatening to his well-being. So inherently it has two components i.e. external pressure/ demands and how do we handle/respond. Stress is everywhere and no one is immune to it, everybody has gone through it at some point in time. Everyone handles it in their unique way and the effect it has on one individual varies from the effect on another.

The comfort zone

This is where you can perform with complete ease, you feel fully able, competent, and comfortable. When circumstances force us out from it, most people act with resistance. Mainly fearing failure because of the unfamiliarity and this induces stress.

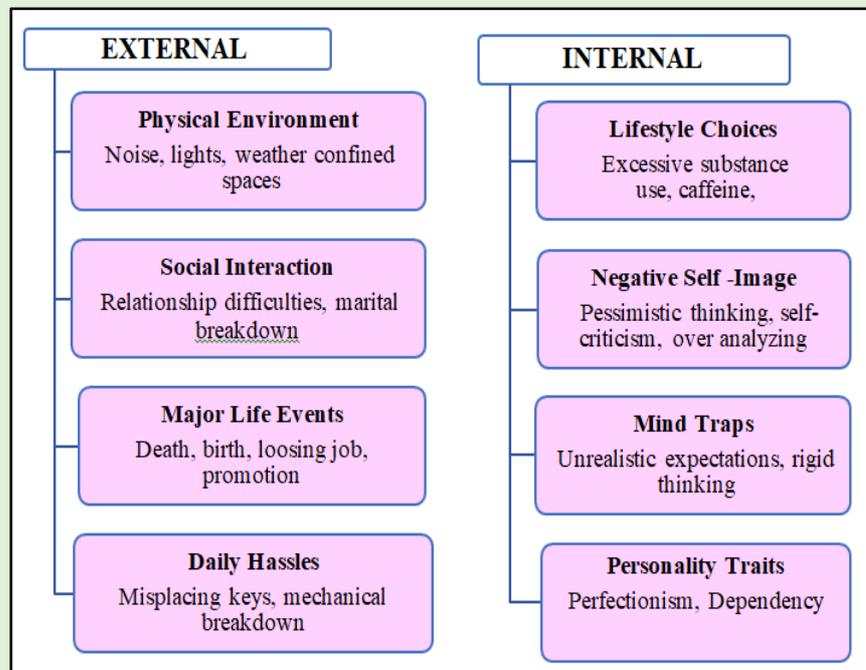
Dr. Hans Selye described stress as 'the response of the body to any demand made upon it.' The situation that produces stress is called stressors. He further described two types of stress:

Eustress (positive stress): Stress caused by desirable situations. It enhances a person's performance e.g. fear of exams leading to better preparation.

Distress (negative stress): Feeling excessively burdened, overwhelmed, and being unable to cope with it makes a person feel very helpless and makes them feel they cannot deal with it, which causes mental agitation e.g. multiple pending tasks.

The American Psychological Association, discuss three types of stress: *Acute* stress- short time stress, *Episodic* acute stress- repetitive acute stress episodes, and *Chronic* stress- Long term stress, with no resources to deal with it.

The source of the stressor can be internal or external



Why is it important to know how to deal with it?

Research has shown that stress can aggravate symptoms of any known medical condition like asthma, chronic pain, fibromyalgia, cardiovascular diseases, etc. It not only worsens the condition but also affects the prognosis. It's also known that chronic prolonged stress can weaken the body's immune system, which can make one more susceptible to various infections. It also delays the healing process.

It not only affects the health but also has an impact on academics leading to poor concentration, memory concerns, decreasing motivation overall resulting in a decline in academic performance, students who outperform in academics are known to be efficient in managing stress. It also has a bidirectional relationship with managing relationships be it with family, friends, or a romantic relationship. Being stressed can affect it and stress can also result from conflicts or disrupted relationships. It also affects your overall mental health leading to distress, anxiety, and depression. So as discussed we know it has an impact on our physical, mental, social, and academic spheres.

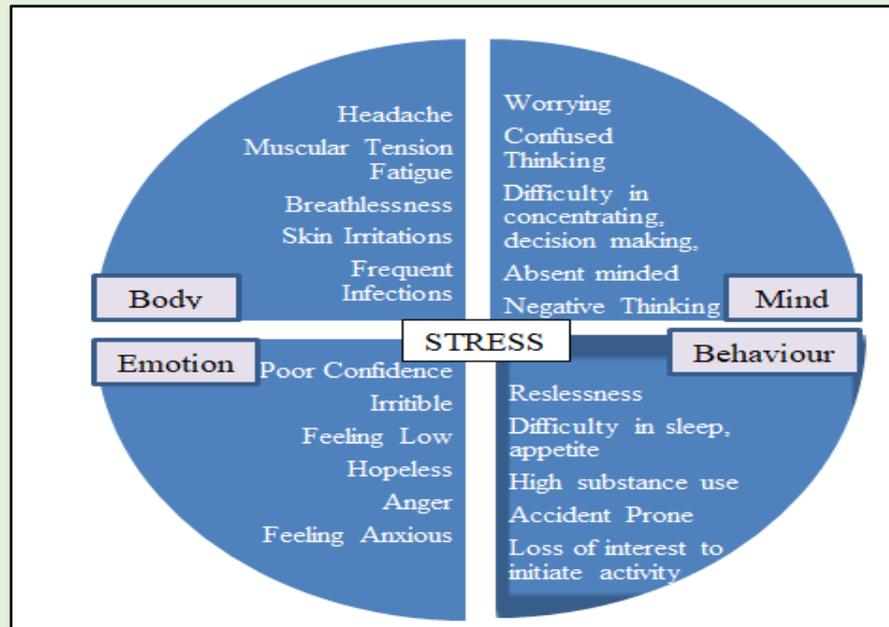


Fig 1: Symptoms suggestive of stress

Our body follows a sequential physiological reaction to stress as described as General Adaption Syndrome (GAS) by Canadian Physician Hans Selye. It has three stages:

In the first *Alarm stage*, the body recognizes the stress and starts mobilizing all potential resources one has to deal with it, if resolved the body comes back to a normal state, if it remains unresolved it moves to the second stage.

Resistance stage-When the stressor is prolonged the body tries to resist or adapt to it, However, if the stressor gets resolved, your body returns to a normal state. When it persists then the body enters the final stage.

In the *Exhaustion stage* if the stressor is prolonged and continues to exist after you have depleted all your resources it leads to breakdown.

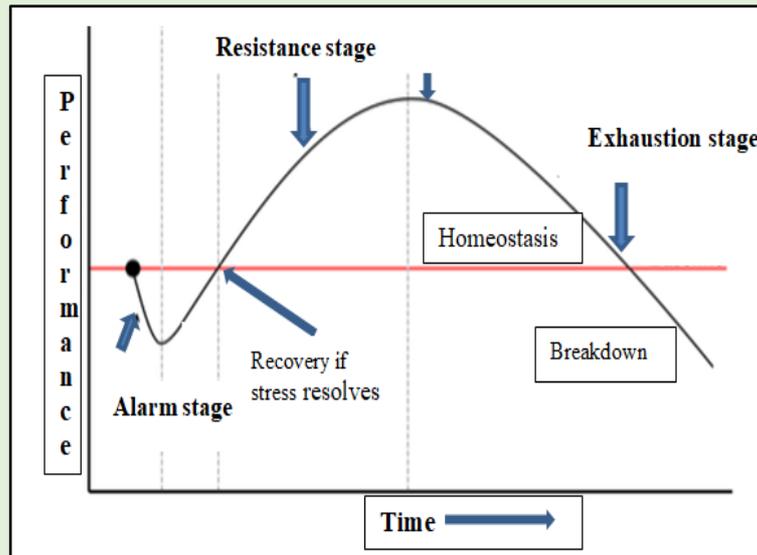


Figure 2: Three stages of the stress response

Who is more susceptible to Stress?

Unfortunately, no set standard can be applied to say which person is completely immune to it. Not all of us interpret it, in the same way, what may seem stressful may not be the same for another individual, and vice versa e.g. one person may find passing stressful and another stressor could be becoming the topper in the class.

However, certain risk factors can make a person more vulnerable to it

- Physical inactivity
- Poor nourishment: under-eating, irregular meal timing, and unhealthy food.
- Inadequate sleep: Too much or too little sleep, having no fixed time
- Medical conditions: It places a demand on the body & poses for a risk to be under stress
- Having a hectic lifestyle: which may include long working hours, hectic jobs, Shift works, continuous traveling which does not facilitate the body to rest & recover.
- People having Type A personalities who always are on the go
- Having passed through stressful life events/ number of traumatic events experienced
- Passing through predictable life transition phases like adolescence
- Having poor life skills (decision making, problem-solving, time management)
- Being involved in caregiving in longterm
- Lacking a strong socially well-connected network

List of Potential Stressors:

You can go through this list and check the source of the stressor

▪ Academic pressure	▪ No friends	▪ Divorce of parents
▪ New romantic relationship	▪ Difficulty with peers/friends	▪ Relocation
▪ Unable to meet deadlines	▪ Addiction	▪ Conflicts with parents
▪ Missed classes	▪ Sexual concerns	▪ Parental expectations
▪ Issues with roommate	▪ Death of loved one	▪ Adjustment issues
▪ Financial difficulties	▪ Breakup of relationship	▪ Pregnancy
▪ Issues with teachers	▪ Failing in subjects	▪ Having a sick family member
▪ Impending graduation	▪ Long commute	▪ Very high self-expectations

Here are some useful tips which can help in managing stress

Tip #1: UNDERSTANDING APPRAISAL & COPING WITH STRESS

- Lazarus explained how stress results from an imbalance between demands and resources. The interpretation (appraisal) is more important than the stress itself & it is directly related to their coping. When faced with a situation the primary appraisal involves interpreting the stressor, if it is not seen as a threat it does not result in stress.
- In secondary appraisal further understanding the support system (your resources) and if the stress is perceived as within the ability to cope results in positive stress viewed as a challenge resulting in growth. If it is perceived as not within the ability to cope it results in negative stress.
- An event irrespective of its importance, may or may not be perceived as stressful/harmful

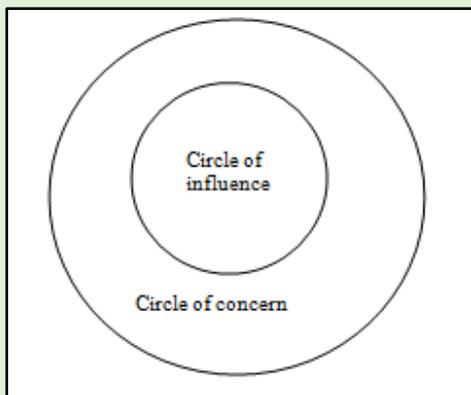
For example, when hearing about a surprise test tomorrow, primarily appraisal involves seeing it as no threat if the student is well pre-prepared. Secondary appraisal involves realistically seeing if some preparation can be done in the time available, coping response will involve working harder for it. If the student views this as completely out of his capacity to manage it, this may result in panic & stress.

TIP #2: SELF-REFLECTION

- Start with some time in self-reflection. Self-reflection leads to better self-awareness which can provide more clarity in terms of the steps that can be taken
- When you are panicking in a tough time you can remember your core assets, resources & draw strength from them
- Focus on the goals you have set for yourself, see how this fits in & how your goals can be accommodated despite the stressful situations.
- Engaging in self-reflection daily provides a way of checking with yourself for stressors & even building up calming techniques when the problem has just begun. Self-reflection in itself is a powerful stress management tool.

Tip #3: COVEY'S CIRCLE OF CONCERN & CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

- The outer circle is the 'circle of concern', what's going on around you, the way your classmates treat you, their lifestyle, etc. There is nothing much you can do as it is outside your purview, wasting energy on this results in more stress.
- The inner smaller 'circle of influence' includes things that you can do something about and which are in your control.



Proactive people focus on what they can do & influence. Reactive people focus their energy on things beyond their control focussing more on outer circle which often results in stress. Often having a victim attitude. Make an effort to focus energy on inner circle that can enable you to make effective changes

Tip #4: LEARN TO IDENTIFY THE SOURCE OF YOUR STRESS

- To do this, you can start writing a "stress journal" you can write down the time you feel stressed & what triggers it.
- A simple technique is cutting out things that are adding to your stress in your life e.g. Watching news gives tension, keeping pending work adds up to piling up a huge task.

Tip # 5: DEAL WITH STRESSFUL SITUATIONS IN FOURWAYS

- Once you have identified the trigger, you can use the “Four A’s” strategy.
A: Avoid unnecessary stress B: Alter the stressful situation
C: Adapt to the stressor D: Accept the stresses you can’t change

Tip # 6: USE RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

- Backed up by strong research a sure way of dealing with stress is integrating any kind of relaxation in your schedule, e.g. you can choose from yoga, meditation, guided imagery, etc. even if it is for 5-10 minutes whenever you feel you need a break.
- Simple deep breathing exercises can be used regularly and at the time of perceived stress/ discomfort.
- Mindfulness is the ability to pay attention to the present moment with utmost curiosity, without judgment. An example of that is detailed below:

Five senses exercise- This involves you focusing all your five senses on the environment around instead of your thoughts. For example, let’s consider you consider a huge park. Look around, start by noticing what you see the greenery around, start noticing what you hear in your background whether it's silence, birds chirping. Notice what you feel like the grass below your feet. Next, try to notice something you can smell the mud or scent of the trees. Notice the current taste in your mouth or having chocolate.

You can even try this in any place you are in, trying to involve as many senses as possible. Refer to the mindfulness section for more details.

- Guided imagery for relaxation
Get started by being in a comfortable position. Sitting or lying down, once you feel settled, start imagining yourself as being amidst a soothing environment like a garden, beach, or anything you like. Try to see how each of your senses feels in the scene. You can do this as long as you want.

Tip #7: AVOID UNHEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES

- Some methods may work in short term but in long term, they are ineffective or may even lead to negative consequences. Some examples of them are

Unhealthy self-soothing	Numbing	Risk-taking	Self-harm
When overdone they can result in addictions like binge drinking, overeating, excessively using the internet, games	Seeking out activities that may make you feel numb to the stress, override the distress like excessive junk food, alcohol use, and drugs	Involving in risky behaviors seeking an adrenaline rush like gambling, unsafe sex, reckless driving, experimenting with drugs	Seeking an escape from the extreme stress, indulging in self-harm behavior

Tip # 8: USING HEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES

Coping refers to the thoughts and actions we use to deal with a threatening situation.

Problem-focused coping strategies (Using active ways to tackle the situation directly)	Emotion-focused coping strategies (Handling the feelings of discomfort, distress rather than the problem)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trying to analyze the situation realistically -Working harder Looking back at similar, previous difficult circumstances & how you dealt with it Talking to other people with similar experience or with people who are directly connected to the situation Make a temporary plan to deal with the stressor Keep revising as necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep brooding about the task/concern instead of saying 'no' in the first place, or accepting it but keep complaining about it now Keep wishing that the problem just disappears & imagining life without it putting no effort Trying to avoid or deny the situation or everything related to it Escaping the situation using drugs /alcohol Blaming self or others Talking to a friend seeking emotional support

What happens if we rely on just emotion-focused coping in the long run?

Let's imagine you had a bad presentation in class and your teacher has provided you with negative feedback. You worry about facing the teacher again & hence avoid doing the discussions for the next assignment; even if you can avoid the stress for some days it

may become unsuccessful in the long run & cause extra stress. It is important to have different types of strategies to adapt to various situations.

- Being positive & looking at obstacles as learning experiences. Choosing to not overreact to the stressors. This involves using cognitive reframing, looking at it from a more objective view. Challenging the negative thoughts and trying to see a silver line in the situation. Doing this, in the long run, can make you more optimistic.

Let's consider the example from above, you get upset about the teacher's feedback & on further analyzing you see what is the outcome that can be derived from it, whether the points mentioned in feedback can be incorporated in the next presentation, can it enhance the quality of your work & if the answer is yes then take it as a learning experience.

- Learning to deconstruct stress and work on it or learning to reconstruct our life with stress using any of the strategies discussed above e.g. relaxation, exercise, etc.
- Looking at the big picture- We should not be baffled by the stressor thrown at us, do not let it overpower us. Once you get overpowered all your attention will be focused on that & it blocks constructive thinking.
- View the problems in terms of doable small goals coupled with effective time management techniques. Check the respective sections for more details.
- Learning to accept yourself along with your mistakes and being kind to yourself than being harsh will result in guilt & make it more stressful.
- Developing self-control, having some discipline & being consistent can help in a long way to reduce stress. E.g.- being aware that you have exams, trying to follow a schedule as planned, and following it consistently & to stop yourself from the temptations requires self-control & discipline.

TIP # 9: THE STRESS BUCKET

- When we are overwhelmed, we are like a bucket with overflowing water. Instead of water, this may contain some problems the bucket can't hold. Everybody has a different capacity of the bucket to hold stress. Smaller the bucket larger the risk and hence the more need for learning effective skills. So have a larger bucket i.e. be resilient

- You can use effective coping skills to empty the bucket, like having a tap onto the bucket, so you can turn the tap on & off when you need to. It helps to empty the bucket & keep it strong.

TIP #10: MAKE CONNECTION TO RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL SIDE

People having a strong belief in a superior power above them have shown to be better at coping with stress. Being more optimistic & hopeful. It is a protective factor against depression. It gives the person a vision towards the higher purpose of life, making them realize stressors are not invincible.

Tip #11: ENGAGE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY / EXERCISE

Physical activity is central to maintaining good mental health. There are multiple activities you can choose from like joining the gym, hiking, strength training, swimming, aerobics, kickboxing, and Zumba. Even minimal regular exercise can be of great help in the long run. WHO recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity in a week for adults.

Tip #12: ENSURE GOOD SLEEP AND GET PROPER DIET AND NUTRITION

National sleep foundation recommends 7-9 hours of sleep for adults. Ensure to get around 2230-2320 calories per day. Do not skip meals.

Tip #13: BUILD A SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORK

Do not bottle up your emotions, learn to communicate. Try to have a close-knit circle consisting of people who genuinely care for your friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors. Share your concerns with them. Having healthy connections goes a long way in enhancing well-being & reducing stress.

Tip #14: 'HAVING ME TIME', USING HOBBIES, IDENTIFY WHAT RELAXES YOU

- Must have 'Me Time', have time where you will do something you enjoy, time for yourself even if it's 15-20 minutes in a day. If it is not possible every day at least 2-3 times in a week. This time will re-energize you.
 - Involving in your hobbies can be a mood up-lifter and stress buster
- People have different things which relax them, make them happy like spending time praying, getting a massage, reading books, listening to music, taking long baths with

scented candles, doing gardening, shopping, playing with a pet, creative work, calling/spending time with loved ones, etc. Once you know what de-stresses you, go on.

TIP #15: SEEK PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE

- When you feel, you can't cope on your own and the stress is unbearable. Feel free to consult a mental health professional. It is as consulting for any other ailment, so don't stigmatize, don't delay, and connect timely with an expert for timely benefit.

You are stressed & need help if

- Most of the time feeling that difficulties are pooling and seem overwhelming
- Having a feeling that you are unable to control the most important things
- Unable to sleep or eat adequately because you're constantly worrying
- You have become more irritable/upset for minor things
- You want to stay by yourself away from friends/family
- You are feeling you are unable to manage simple tasks without worrying about it
- Talking about it and managing on your own is not solving the issue

Choose the strategies that look best to you and start practicing them consistently and be hopeful that you can do it. *Remember only you can make a difference in your life.*

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Activity 1:

Here is a simple way to check your stress levels by seeing how happy you are on each of these domains- On this scale from 1 to 10, score how happy you are on each of the domains from 0 being unhappy to 10 being most happy. Based on your score you can decide which domain needs the most attention.

Domains	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Academics	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Mental health	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Physical health	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Friends	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Finances	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Partner	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Personal development	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Fun, recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Family	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Spirituality	<input type="checkbox"/>										

Activity 2: *Busting my stressor*

You can write all the things that are causing you stress; it could be from any domain- personal or professional. Then list all the changes you would like to do to bring a change in the stressors. Set the target for a week or a month.

After a week or a month according to what you had decided check it to see if you have made the changes you aimed for, appreciate yourself for doing it, and make necessary changes in the action plan as required



Study Skills

Learning Objectives

- Understand the applications of study skills
- Improve concentration and memory
- Understand goal oriented approach and tips to keep yourself

School and college years are golden years of life, as this period determines the success and achievements in the life course. In college life, many students worry about performing well, while some students worry about just passing the exams. Therefore students struggle with the tremendous stress of academic pressure. Here we elaborate on some important tips for better study skills and exam preparation.

Healthy study habits: Techniques for better concentration and output

- Having a specific study time everyday
- Study in a particular place with calmness, focus, and lack of distractions
- Sit in the comfortable and appropriate posture
- Keep water and useful stationery in your proximity
- Take a break if the concentration is low or having some pressing work
- Plan study time for 30-60 minutes, with an appropriate break after this period as concentration reduces after a specific period
- Don't use drugs, alcohol, smoking, or excess coffee or tea to improve concentration
- Choose your study time whenever you have a good energy level to match the demand of the topic/subject. That's why few people have effective study in morning hours while others feel better in night hours. So align yourself with the best energy time for better output.
- Sound sleep is very important for memory consolidation and effective recall. So please follow strategies to improve your sleep quality (sleep hygiene tips are suggested in Self-care strategies section)
- Determine your style of reading: If you understand better by listening and using the *auditory* medium, then repeating topics/chapters with closed eyes, reading aloud, listening to recorded lectures/discussion would help you in better understanding, application, and recall. If your style is *visual*, then using diagrams, flowcharts, pictures, colors, highlighting important concepts, and making notes would suit you better. If you are more *kinaesthetic*, then using the movement of hands, pen or other types of

movements would help you in better grasping. Sometimes a mix of the above mediums may help individuals depending on one's experience and approach.

- Practice '5 steps SQ 3R formula for successful studying.'

5 Steps SQ 3R: A Reading formula for students	
Survey	Before reading, survey the chapter by glancing at the different sections, subheadings, diagrams, tables, flow charts, key points, etc. as it helps in organizing the information well.
Questions	At the beginning of reading have questions related to different parts of the chapter as it generates interest and focuses on the topic/sections
Read	Read actively in search of answers to your questions, re-read the text/parts which are not clear, underline/mark the important statements, and subsequently summarize and note down relevant points
Recite	It is wise to spend your study time recalling what you have read as it helps in better concept formation and long term memory
Review	Always review the chapter/section to make sure that you have done your work appropriately and completely as it further helps in better concept formation and long term memory

Improving your memory: some useful steps

With little effort, almost everyone can improve their memory. Here are some tips to add to your existing plan for better memory recall:

1. Prepare yourself and be clear about the content that you want to remember
2. The practice of '5 steps- SQ 3R formula' for successful reading will also help in improving memory recall
3. Minimize interference (i.e. avoid any type of distraction/ obstacle in memory formation) - for example, frequent WhatsApp/messages/calls during study time may hinder our attention, concentration, memory encoding, storage, and subsequent recall.
4. Engage in distributed learning/ practice (i.e. regular practice for a defined period is better than completing the book in one go)
5. Use visual imagery and other mnemonics/ strategies

'*Method of loci*' technique involves linking content with visual images and arranging in relevant order (e.g. preparing a speech or list for grocery). 'A picture is worth a thousand words' saying holds for improvising memory with the help of mental images. *Acronyms* are words that are made up by taking the first letter of all the keywords/ ideas one needs to remember and creating a new word out of them. Like VIBGYOR for colors of the rainbow (Violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red)

Acrostic also called as 'First letter technique' is very useful to remember the lists of items. In this technique item is remembered with the help of a phrase prepared by the first letter of each word. E.g. to learn the names of nine planets one may use this phrase- 'Mary's Violet Eyes Make John Stay Up Nights Pondering' (for Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto).

Chunking-In this, items are memorized into small, easily memorable chunks/ groups. It is more suitable for memorizing multi-digit numbers and where the order of information is important. E.g. we remember mobile numbers as chunks like 500299772 as 500, 299, 772. Finding the association of meaningful chunks would facilitate memory retention and recall.

Rhyming-many of us is more inclined to rhymes and rhythms. This technique is useful to remember mathematics formulas and chemistry equations by singing them out to the tune of favorite songs/ beats.

Mediation/ Bridging is useful to learn content involving items that can be reduced to word pairs.

Bed-time recital- Revision of difficult topics/ important chapters at bedtime improves memory formation and recall.

Trying by not trying- When you are unable to recollect something, then better to stop trying to remember it and start doing something else. As the mind works automatically to recollect the information of interest, provided mind is relaxed. It is a very useful strategy in the examination as well as in day-to-day functioning.

6. *Give yourself extra retrieval cues with aligning and using different strategies*

7. *Develop your easy codes & tips*

You should have your approach to deal with a different scenario. You may also choose suitable strategies as a few techniques are detailed above.

8. Always have a balanced nutritional diet and sound sleep for better preparations and memory recall.

It's important to emphasize that each of the techniques you want to use need practice and your extra effort. So the saying, "No pain, no gain" holds in memory enhancement training, just like any other self-development area.

The Smart ways of Goal setting

Hope we all agree that ‘Life without a goal is like a radar-less ship’ because without any sense of direction, the ship would be pulled by the currents of the sea, not knowing where it is going or reaching at the end a journey.

Steps in setting up a Goal

- Asking from the self what you want to achieve
- Brainstorming in various areas of life to generate a list of goals
- Trimming the list into specific realistic goals
- Setting long-term and short-term goals
- Design to have ‘SMART’ goals (i.e. Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant goal/task with specific Timeframe)
- Proceed with the goal(s)
- Reviewing on your goal progress/ outcome

Tips in Goal-setting

- Set attainable yet challenging goals
- Write down the goal and put it up at a prominent position on your wall/desk.
- State the goal as a positive statement
- Make the commitment about the goal to one or more person(s) who can emotionally support/press you or remind you about your goal.
- Have the big picture but focus on smaller and doable steps
- Set intermediate performance goals to facilitate your ride
- Timely assess and address the blockers in goal pursuit like as with time we may face-lack of ownership (about the goal as sometimes imposed on us), conviction about the value and giving appropriate time, distractions (external or internal), difficulties (faced or thought of), lack of perseverance, etc.

Tips in Maintaining Motivation in Goal pursuit

Here are a few tips to enable us to discover the importance of having one’s own (internal) reasons in setting up the goal(s) and maintaining motivation with knowing why we do what we do and keep doing it with good flow and positive energy:

- List out your reasons for working on the goal(s) and periodically review them
- Need to set a goal that is challenging, yet achievable
- Have supportive friends/buddy or family member to track your efforts and also to provide a timely nudge

- Collaborate with others who are similarly inclined and might work as a mutual support group
- Create an appropriate environment to work on the target/ goal by controlling the cues the distractions and facilitating the positive cues
- Accept ups and downs in your path
- Notice and appreciate smaller gains
- Reward yourself in a timely, appropriate, and proportionate manner
- Practice visual imagery to motivate you and have your role model follow

Strategies related to Examination

- Preparation for examination starts at the beginning of the academic year and continues throughout the year. Above mentioned strategies like healthy study habits, memory enhancement tips, better goal setting, and sustaining motivation will surely help in better preparation and examinations.
- Ensure good sleep, nutrition, regular physical and relaxation exercise throughout the year, and continue during the examinations.
- It is very important to keep yourself in a positive frame and practice brief techniques like deep breathing, mindfulness approach, creative visualization, serenity prayer, or religious prayers before as well as during examinations. It will help you to attend your examination properly and perform better with improving your memory recall, writing, answering, and procedural (psychomotor) skills.
- On the day of examination- have a light but adequate breakfast, check and keep all essential things with you, reach at examination hall well before the time, and better avoid last-minute reading.
- In examination hall- read the instructions carefully, legibly write your details (roll number, subject, paper number, etc.), budget the time, plan answers accordingly, prioritize your sequence of response, write an appropriate response in legible writing, and organization with proper flow charts, diagrams, tables, etc., have enough time for checking your response and emphasizing important points with appropriate depiction/ marking.

Take home message

Planning is really important and vital step to success, so meticulously plan each day, each month, and each year of this golden period of your life. Always start with better study skills, positive energy, interest, focus, goal, motivation and have a wonderful academic feast.

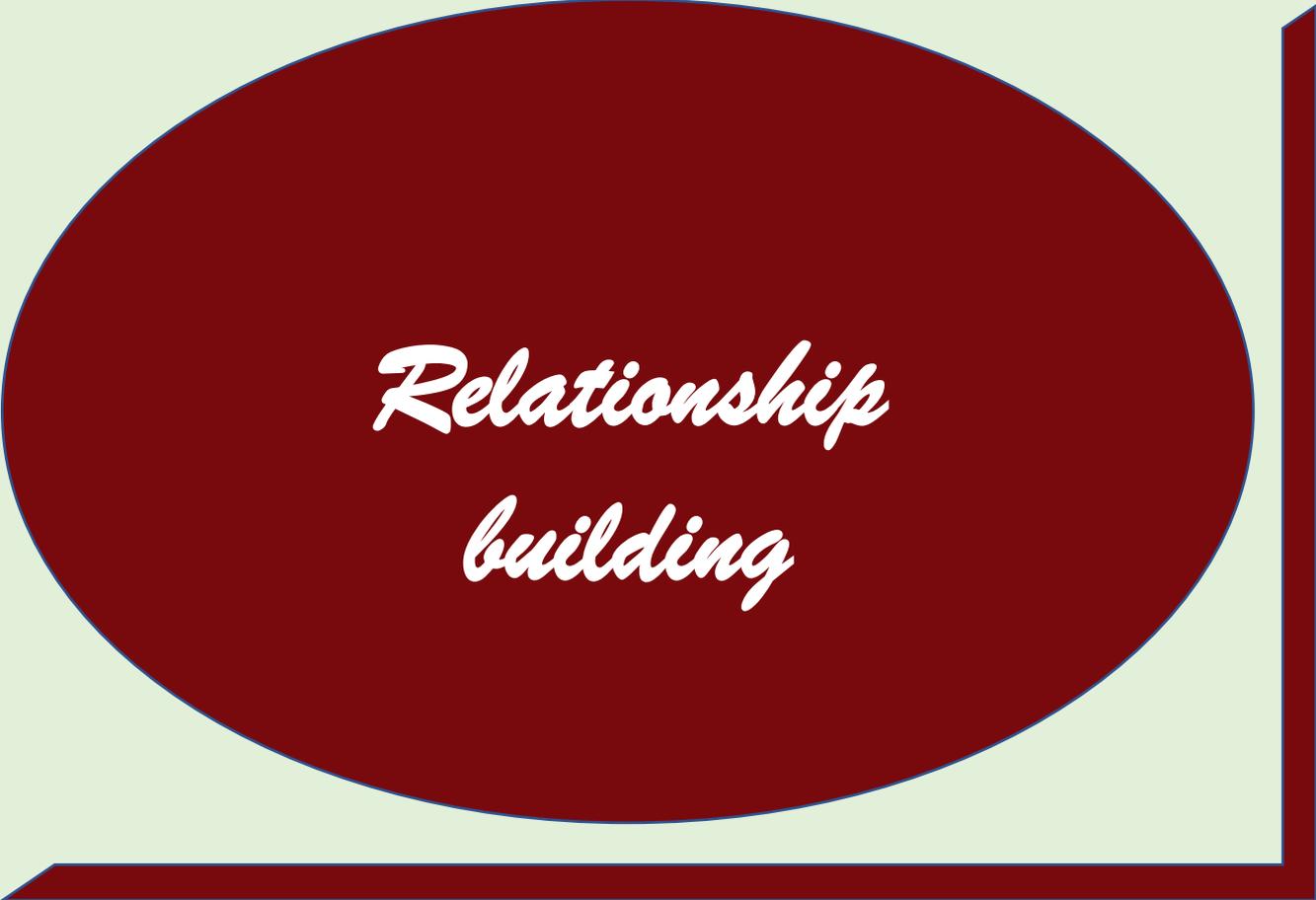
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Activity

Can you devise a list of the short-term and long-term goals that you want to achieve in the future?

Short term goals	Self-evaluation	Long term goals	Self-evaluation
Goals of the day/week (related to your study, physical activity, reading, or anything that you want to do)	<p>How successful you were in achieving your goal today/ this week?</p> <p>What were the difficulties faced?</p> <p>What could be the possible solutions for those difficulties?</p>	Write down your goals of the year or what would you like to achieve five years down the lane?	<p>Anticipate difficulties that can occur during the process of goal achievement.</p> <p>How successful you were in achieving your goal of the year?</p> <p>What were the difficulties faced?</p> <p>What could be the possible solutions for those difficulties?</p>



*Relationship
building*

Learning objectives

- Understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Types of relationships
- Various skills to build healthy relationships
- Skills to manage conflicts in relationships
- How to handle rejection and breakups

College life provides an opportunity to build life-long skills of building a relationship with friends, roommates, classmates, teachers, and intimate partners. Some students may feel comfortable and competent for interaction with others whereas many students may struggle to initiate and sustain a meaningful relationship. Due to this, they experience alienation, loneliness, and a lack of connectedness.

Difficulties in forming and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships during college years stem from various reasons such as the transition from school to college life, exposure to people from varied cultures, broadening of social circle, high need for peer affiliation or acceptance, exposure to a substance, parties/outings as a way to socialize, preference for interacting with peers more often than parents and development of attraction, infatuation or intimate relationship with opposite/same gender.

Healthy Vs unhealthy relationship

Healthy relationships make you feel happy, safe, secure, accepted, and respectful whereas unhealthy relationships instill feelings of insecurity, discomfort, a sense of uncertainty, and unhappiness in the company of another person. Healthy relationships are mutually supportive, encouraging, and beneficial for both the people involved in such relationships.

Types of relationships

Students find it difficult to understand the status or type of relationship they're in as the lines defining different relationships are blurred. If you often find yourself wondering what your equation is with a person and are afraid to ask them the same, mentioned below are the most common types of relationships, which may help you in figuring out your relationship status:

Friendship

Friendship is the most comfortable stage of any relationship. Most romantic relationships start with friendship. Friends can like each other but the components of passion and commitment in the romantic sense are absent.

Infatuation

Infatuation is based on a strong physical attraction that includes the component of passion however the liking and commitment are absent. Crushes usually come under the category of infatuation. This can be a step leading towards romantic love if intimacy and commitment develop over time. Otherwise, such a relationship may frizzle with time.

Romantic Love

People who have bonded emotionally through intimacy and physical passion experience romantic love. Flings can also be categorized as romantic love since both the components are present but they don't last longer than a few months.

Consummate Love

Consummate love is the final aim of any romantic relationship. This type of love is complete with all three components of intimacy, passion, and commitment. Partners of consummate love representing an ideal relationship try to overcome differences as they're unable to be truly happy without each other.

Relationship building skills

Interpersonal skills

Interpersonal skills are the skills that students use in their day-to-day communication and interaction with other people both individually and in groups. These skills are applicable in various settings of college life such as being a part of a college club/fest, sports activities, interacting with other students, applying for a job, and establishing an intimate relationship. These skills encourage interpersonal effectiveness in the personal and professional spheres of college life.

Communication is a basic interpersonal skill for every human being to master. College time can best be utilized to polish these key skills along with other professional skills. Good communication skills can help a student to face different stressors posed by the increased competitiveness, changing career landscapes, and advancement in different digital modes of communication. These skills are also applicable in the management of distress caused by relationship issues. Following are the important relationship/ interpersonal skills that can be learned and practiced to build and sustain healthy relationships.

Skill-1: Active listening

Listening is an important skill that we practice day in and day out. Listening seems to be passive activity as it involves silence which is not true. For making interpersonal communication effective, active listening involves complete attention, active processing of the information,

patience, and non-judgemental evaluation of the message. The practice of active listening can be reflected through different gestures such as

- Maintaining eye contact
- Appropriate nodding of the head
- Verbal affirmations, such as “hmm,” “yes,” or “ah,” or “mhmm

Skill-2: Listen beyond words (non-verbal communication)

Listening beyond words is another skill that encourages accurate understanding and interpretation of nonverbal cues in relationships. Sometimes it’s difficult to verbalize the emotions then utilizing body language, facial expressions, and body gestures can help us to maintain the closeness of relationships. The ability to understand and use nonverbal communication can help an individual to connect, relate, express their feelings and establish meaningful interactions/relationships in life.

Nonverbal communication skills can be improved by mastering our awareness about nonverbal gestures, physical space, and how people interpret them. For example, some of the body gestures communicate disinterest such as

- Avoiding eye contact
- Folded arms or legs
- Yawning
- Fidgeting
- Glancing at the clock, watch, or phone

Instead, use open body language and non-verbal communication to your advantage by incorporating the following gestures:

- Relaxed and open posture
- Engaged eye contact
- Nodding the head
- Appropriate smiling

Open body language and appropriate use of nonverbal communication encourage others to feel comfortable, safe and establish a deep connection with you.

Skill-3: Stay calm and manage emotions

Maintaining calm and awareness about our own emotions and others' emotions is a key step towards developing a healthy relationship. When we are in an emotionally overwhelming situation, we tend to misread other people's emotions and send confusing signals to others that further aggravate the chances of conflict and misunderstandings. So it's important that you can learn to stay relaxed in an emotionally heating situation and communicate effectively through the following tactics:

- Identify the signs of stress: identify stress signals from your body e.g. shallow breathing, muscle tightening, anxiety, raising heartbeat, etc.
- Take a pause: This pause/silence may help you to deepen your breaths, revive your control and collect your thoughts during that moment.
- Be specific and focused: Be specific about the issue and stay focused on one issue. Getting off the track and bringing up past issues can further worsen the situation.
- Use humor: When a situation becomes too serious then appropriate use of humor (joke/amusing story) can help people lighten their mood and distract for some time however there are times when the use of humor may not be healthy as it's important to recognize other person's distress in an emotionally provoking situation. Many a time people also use laughter as a tool to avoid and negate negative emotions.

Skills-4: Assertiveness

Assertiveness in communication is the ability to express positive and negative ideas and feelings in an open, honest, and direct way. It recognizes our rights whilst still respecting the rights of others. It allows us to take responsibility for ourselves and our actions without judging or blaming other people. Assertiveness skills encourage effective communication as they incorporate both the sender and receiver's perspectives during communication. Assertive communication usually being confused with aggressive communication whereas the following differences can be seen clearly between these two terms:

- Assertive communication involves a clear and respectful expression of opinions and feelings without violating the rights of others. Assertive communicators value themselves as well as others' needs and point of view.
- Aggressive communication involves the expression of feelings and opinions without being considerate about the rights of others. Aggressive communicators try to dominate, criticize, humiliate and control others.

Tips to improve assertiveness:

- Importantly, we all need to learn to appreciate our own ideas and opinions to enhance our interpersonal effectiveness.
- Express negative thoughts in a way that encourages respectful expressions of your feelings and emotions. Take other's state of mind into consideration during the conversation that enhances the empathetic assertiveness in your relationships. For example "I know you've been very busy with your studies, but I want you to make time for us as well."
- Learn to say "No" for things that do not align with your plans and you find difficult to manage. Don't let anyone take advantage of you by crossing the limits of your tolerance.
- Openness to feedback is another skill that encourages assertive expressions. As you welcome appreciation; learn to take criticism positively. Work on your mistakes and don't be shy in asking for help if needed.

Skills-5: Conflict resolution skills

Conflicts are an inevitable part of the relationship as it arises due to individual differences. Students find it difficult to respond and resolve the conflicts so they try to evade themselves from the situation or blame the other person. However, when conflicts are handled respectfully and positively than they also provide an opportunity for positive growth and strengthening the bond between two people. There are certain rules for fighting fair in relationships:

Remain calm:

The capacity to remain calm, relaxed, and focused in difficult situations is a vital part of conflict resolution. You may feel emotionally overwhelmed in such challenging situations however learning not to react immediately or taking a "time out" can prevent emotionally charged reactions.

Negotiate like an adult: Negotiation is a skill to find a solution that is acceptable and convenient for both parties.

Avoid giving ultimatums: Fair fighting emphasizes that you avoid giving ultimatums (you do this or else) to another person as it does not encourage resolution of conflicts rather leads to worsening of the situations.

Be willing to compromise: During fights, everyone wants to be right and win the argument however it's important to understand that when there is an overpowering need to win the argument then we don't understand/listen, to another person. Relationships are more amenable when we prefer to find a middle ground and are willing to make compromises with our loved ones, friends, and batch mates.

Avoid blame game: Accusations/blames will cause others to defend themselves. Instead of blaming others, you may talk about how someone's actions made you feel by using more of "I" statements such as "I liked it when you said..."; "I would prefer to...."

Skills-6: Handling rejection/Break up in romantic relationships

A lot of difficulties that students face are centered on romantic relationships. The hardest of them all is the feeling of being rejected. Rejection refers to turning down a person's proposal for affection. Being rejected by someone you love or want to be in a relationship with is extremely hurtful, especially when you're a teenager. You are filled with self-doubt and it doesn't help when a person says they don't like you back and don't want to be associated with you romantically. While rejection is a horrible feeling and no one wishes to experience it, often the fear of rejection can hold people back from truly being happy with someone.

If you have recently been rejected by someone, you're probably having difficulties in dealing with it. It is only understandable that you're unhappy and feel sad for yourself. You may even experience self-loathing and pity on yourself. Although it is normal to be like this, it is not healthy. As a result of this sadness, your mental and physical health is likely to suffer. To help you with this, mentioned below are a few tips suggesting you can deal with rejection:

- **Talk to someone:** You can talk to a friend, family member, or anyone you're close with and let your feelings be known to them. By confiding in them, you may receive the reassurance you need and may feel confident enough to express your emotions openly.
- **Give yourself time to grieve.** You may be tempted to come out of sadness extremely fast and heal as quickly as possible, which is understandable. However, that isn't the correct way to deal with things. You must realize that as humans, we must grieve naturally and not force or control our emotions.
- **Understand their reasons.** Being rejected by someone we like is a terrible feeling and it often clouds our judgment when someone says they don't want to be with us. It can be hard to make sense of things and we may make the mistake of lashing out in

unjustifiable anger. In such a situation, you must learn to keep calm and for your own benefit. Try to understand their reasons. This will help in alleviating any negative feelings and taking your mind off of the sadness.

- **Don't wait around:** We often make the mistake of misinterpreting someone's answer and end up thinking that they are just reluctant to be with you and that it doesn't necessarily mean that they don't want to date you. We create a sort of bubble that protects our feelings and wait around for the person to start liking you. This more often than not leads to even worse heartbreak.
- **Avoid talking to the person for a while.** When you like someone, you want to talk to them most of the time, even if they're romantically interested in you because just being around them gives you a sense of happiness. However, this is unhealthy for your emotional health and you should try distancing yourself from the person for a while to strengthen yourself and not be dependent on your need of feeling validated by their presence.
- **Focus on your education.** When you're trying to heal from rejection, the best way to cope is to distract yourself and direct your concentration elsewhere. Use the heartbreak as motivation to study harder. This will make you more accepted in another and equally important part of your life.
- **Focus on other relationships** in your life. Romantic involvement isn't the only relationship you should focus on. To take your mind off of rejection, concentrate on strengthening your relations with family members, friends, neighbors, colleagues, etc.

Handling breakups

Break Ups leave individuals with a void that is extremely hard to fill. After a recent breakup, you become heartbroken and wish to heal from the pain healthily as soon as possible. It does not matter which partner has ended the relationship as both the partners had invested physically and emotionally in the relationship and would hate for it not to work out. Mentioned below are a few ways in you can cope with a serious break-up and focus on your mental health:

- **Ventilation:** Breakups can cause lots of hurt and disappointments so it's important to discuss and ventilate your emotions with trusted people. They may be able to help you adaptively process the pain.

- **Adaptive coping:** Students generally end up using maladaptive coping strategies such as taking a substance, throwing anger outbursts, isolating themselves to deal with breakup whereas the adaptive approach encourages acceptance of the situation and appropriate processing of the loss. Each experience can help you grow as a more mature individual.
- **Give yourself physical and emotional space:** Avoid going to places where you may bump into your ex. Avoid talking to them and being in their presence. You're obviously hurt by the breakup being around them will only add to the heartache. Your avoidance won't be characterized as immaturity as you are completely within your rights to prioritize your emotional well-being over social protocol.
- **Remind yourself why the relationship was not right for you:** As time passes, you may be tempted to reminisce the memories of your relationship if you miss your ex. In such situations, remind yourself about all the things that made you unhappy when you were with your partner. Try to redirect your energy towards the negative aspects of your commitment. People may say that it is wrong to be fixated on the past and have a pessimistic approach in life but this method is extremely effective and helpful to a great extent.
- **Change the aura of your lifestyle:** You may feel comfortable with your habits and surroundings but it is important to make some changes to feel better. You can do this by updating your wardrobe, picking up a new hobby, redecorating your room, etc.
- **Try to live a healthy life:** You can start running or perhaps choose a sport you like and pursue it as a source of motivation to start your days. This is an exceptional way to let out all the pent-up frustration and anger.
- **Take the appropriate time to heal:** Breakups cause heartache, undoubtedly and you must take an appropriate amount of time to heal. Though moving on is the final step of dealing with heartbreak but a quick connection to new partners can also be counterproductive.
- **Consider therapy from a mental health professional:** There is a significant difference between sharing your feelings with a friend or family member and a trained therapist. Talking about your emotions with someone who does not personally know you is substantially beneficial. They can give you unbiased advice and help you heal from the agony of a breakup.

Skills-7: Promoting connectedness

Connectedness refers to a sense of belongingness, being cared for, and being supported by family, other important people, and organizations. Students who feel connected at college and home are less likely to experience negative mental health outcomes. Connectedness has been found as an important protective factor for youth high-risk behaviors. In addition, it has also been found to have positive effects on their academic achievement, regularity, and overall development of various skills. It can be enhanced by the following tips:

- **Be empathetic:** Empathy is a skill that encourages respectful expression and management of emotions in relationships. Being empathetic means you're aware of others' emotions from their perspective; you can feel the way they feel.
- **Acknowledge others:** The skill of acknowledging others can be acquired at any stage of life. It can be expressed through simple gestures like being available to listen when someone speaks, being respectful when someone offers feedback and being thankful when someone helps you; being available to help others in need, giving compliments and appreciation to others.

We generally want to discuss our own problems with others without considering their state of mind. They may not be ready to take your vent out so it's important that instead of bombarding the other person with your issues, you may initiate the conversation by asking them how they are doing. You may ask about their hobbies, passions, and interest to know them at a deeper level. It will reflect your interest in their lives and also help them to connect better with you.

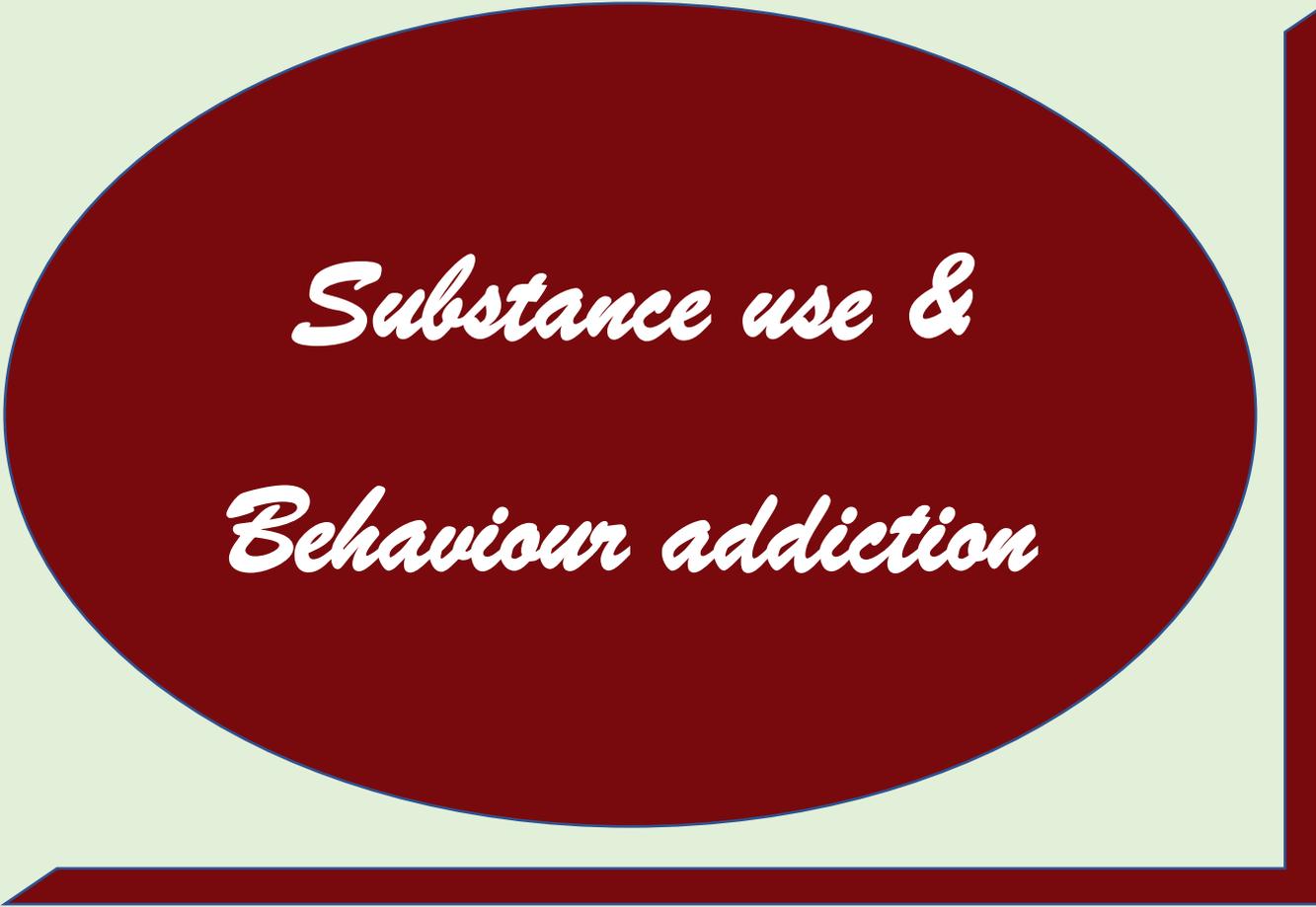
- **Practice compassion:** Compassion is a sense of shared suffering combined with a desire to alleviate or reduce the suffering of other people around. Compassionate people express kindness in their day-to-day interaction that essentially originates from empathy. Compassionate care encourages nurturing a sense of belongingness, and concern for others' well-being. Compassion can be practiced in our day-to-day interaction by incorporating small acts of kindness such as smiling/greeting others, giving compliments, appreciating others, being grateful and practicing forgiveness.
- **Be non-judgemental:** Being non-judgemental is adopting an attitude of an observer of life that accepts people, their behaviors, and situations as they are. People having the attribute of being non-judgemental do not judge others' behavior to be right or wrong. These individuals get more opportunities to help others and people prefer to confide with them.

Take home message

Relationships are base of human survival and learning the skills to build and sustain healthy relationship is essential for each and every human being. College life provides opportunity to establish different types of formal, informal, emotional relationships thus gives students a chance to learn and practice these essential skills for lifelong success.

Suggested Readings

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*Substance use &
Behaviour addiction*

Learning Objectives

- Understanding common reasons to indulge in substance
- Appreciate harmful effects of substance use
- Understand skills required to avoid substance use
- Know the basics of Behaviour addiction

It is a common belief that once you finish school and enter college, you become free from all the restrictions and you can live life your way. So, this transition from school to college is a critical period and usually, it is the starting point for several novel things including the starting of licit and illicit substance use. During this transition, significant changes occur in students' level of freedom, duties, culture, friends, and working conditions. Apart from that, young students also face many unique pressures and stressors in college life.

In this age group, the reward system is fully functional but their understanding, decision-making capacity, and judgment are not that mature. So at times, they are not able to decide appropriately the risk and benefit of any particular behavior, including substance use. At this age, students are not that socially mature plus their impulse control capacity is low, which makes them prone to substance use. If substance use is continued for a long time, it can lead to a variety of physical, psychosocial, behavioral, interpersonal academic, and legal problems. For these reasons, it is important to learn life skills that can protect from indulging in substance use.

What are the common substances used by College students?

Common substances of use in college students are:

1. Tobacco in the form of smokeless tobacco and smoking
2. Alcohol in the form of beer, vodka, whisky, rum, etc.
3. Cannabis in the form of bhang, ganja, charas, marijuana, weeds, etc.
4. Opioids in the form of poppy husk, *amal*, *affeem*, heroin, etc.
5. Other substances such as analgesic medicines, benzodiazepines, cocaine, LSD, etc.

What are the common reasons to use substances among college students?

There are various reasons for the indulgence in substance use, single or multiple factors from the below-given list can work as a trigger point-

1. **Peer pressure:** At the time of entrance into college, the majority of the students are naïve about any kind of substance experience. Usually, they get first exposure or experience from their seniors or batch mates who are already indulged and pressurize

the new students for substance use. Many times to seek approval from peers (use of the substance is associated with being ‘stud’ ‘macho’ etc.) or entry into a group also leads to consumption of a substance. Sometimes students start taking and continued substance to maintain the relationship with their friends and seniors or to remain in the particular group due to the fear that they will be otherwise removed from the group.

2. **Freedom of experimentation or to show a sense of self-control:** After entering college, students want to seek new experiences and be ready to take risks, and by doing so they want to create and establish their own identity. At a new place, no one from the family is available to supervise them, so the students feel at ease and sense of relief from the restrictions. They want to prove it by engaging in new activities by their choice including substance use.
3. **Novelty seeking:** Many of the students indulge in addiction just to try something new out of curiosity to see the effect of the substance.
4. **To copy others:** Students who witnessed the substance use at their home or among their role models such as film stars/sportsperson/teachers are at risk and often cite their example as a rationale for using a substance. When everyone is doing something, it becomes the “cool” thing to do.
5. **Positive emotional state:** There are many occasions in college life when students are happy such as after getting admission, passing the exam, birthday party, college functions, marriages, festivals, rainy seasons etc. On these occasions, the consumption of a substance can become part of the celebration.
6. **Negative emotional state:** Some negative emotional states such as failure in examination, the breakup of friendship, relationship failure, fight with a colleague, demise of a close person, etc. act as a trigger for many students and they consume substances to take the “edge” off.
7. **Faulty assumptions:** Students often feels that by taking a substance they can freely speak to anyone and can perform any task, as their confidence increase and inhibitions decreases after consuming the substance. They also feel that substance use also helps in coping with negative emotions and lifts their mood.

What are the ill effects of substance use?

Research has shown that substance use leads to neurochemical changes in the various pathways and brain circuits which are generally associated with the regulation of feelings, memory, craving, motivation, rewards, decision making, and other higher mental functions. Therefore,

substance use may lead to structural and functional changes in the brain and may lead to impairment in its functional capabilities.

Apart from the physical damage in general, repeated use of the substance may lead to:

- Academic problems
- Relationships problem
- Loss of interest and pleasure in routine activities or hobbies
- Impairment in thought process and higher mental functioning
- Risk of contracting infections (like HIV or hepatitis C) due to the high-risk sexual behavior and sharing of contaminated needles
- Psychological problems such as insomnia, distress, anxiety, and depression, etc.
- Suspension/expulsion from college

All effects are depending on the particular substance of use, such as-

Substance	Short term effects	Long term effects
Alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slurred speech • Impairment of consciousness, coordination, perception, and judgment • Blackouts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive impairment, Wernicke–Korsakoff Syndrome • Sexual dysfunctions • Psychiatric illness such as depression, anxiety disorders, and psychosis
Tobacco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatigue and dizziness, headache • Irritability and anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erectile dysfunction, poor sperm quality, and fertility problems • Increase risk of cardio-respiratory illness, stroke, and cancer • Increased risk of ADHD, depression, and Alzheimer disease
Cannabis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety, panic attacks • Loss of sense of personal identity • Paranoia and psychosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amotivation • Impairment of executive and Cognitive functions

How casual substance use can progress to addiction?

Each substance acts differently on different parts of the brain. All the substance finally acts on the reward pathway (The mesolimbic pathway that extends from the Ventral tegmental area of the brainstem up to the Nucleus Accumbens of basal ganglia in the forebrain). Here they act by releasing a neurotransmitter called Dopamine or ‘Reward chemical’ which provides a reward, pleasure, or high. This experience of getting high further motivates the individual to repeat the substance use to get a similar experience. In college students, it becomes very

difficult to make a balance between the impulse of taking substances and self-control, which may gradually lead to addiction.

What are Illegal drugs?

The variety of illicit substances that have been used by the students depends on the local availability in the different geographical areas, which includes mostly ganja, weeds, marijuana, heroin, cocaine, amphetamines, and sometimes ecstasy and LSD. Keep in mind that procuring and possession of these drugs is illegal which may lead to rigorous imprisonment or fine or both.

What skills are required to prevent indulgence in substance use?

Basic life skills are essential for every student to deal effectively while facing common problems in their life (Discussed earlier). Apart from those skills students must be aware of core issues related to substance use and build skills necessary to prevent harmful indulgence with addictive substances.

Issue: Understanding initiation and maintenance of substance use

Skill: Awareness and scientific Knowledge: In college life, substance use usually starts with friends for recreation and enjoyment. Over time, the dose and frequency of substance increase depending on multiple factors and it's very difficult to draw a line when this use can turn into harmful use, abuse, or dependence. So it's always better to avoid temptations/curiosity and think rationally about its ill effects and consequences. So, every student must understand and acquire basic knowledge about common reasons for using a substance, its harmful effects, the process of dependence, and how to identify and manage this problem. To get appropriate scientific information you can visit the World Health Organization (WHO) webpage and government websites.

A few important links are given below:

<https://www.nhp.gov.in/disease/non-communicable-disease/substance-abuse>

<https://www.alcoholwebindia.in/>

<https://sites.google.com/view/bac-aiims/home?authuser=0>

Issue: Handling Triggers**Skills: Preparedness and effective coping**

Students generally start taking substances as a way of coping to deal with the adverse conditions but in long run, it impacts badly in every aspect of life. Students must prepare a list of the possible triggers which could force them towards substance use. These can be in the form of internal triggers such as emotional upset and emotional reactions or external triggers such as common friends, places, or things related to substance use. You must anticipate and accordingly prepare yourself in advance to protect yourself from indulgence in substance use. One must learn to manage their emotional reactions or breakdown effectively. Emotional reactions are sometimes unavoidable but you must learn to handle them via mindfulness to accept and tackle the negative ones and remains more focused on positive ones. So, self-management can be done via effective coping techniques such as problem-focused coping in which one can identify their problems and search for possible solutions and properly implement them.

How to approach?

- Identify and acknowledge the actual problem/trigger
- Make a list of possible solutions-1,2,3....
- Choose the best one after seeing the pros and cons and implement

Issue: Peer pressure

Skills: Assertiveness and Resistance: The student needs to learn this important skill to resist the offer of substance use in an effective manner. By doing so, you are putting your views fairly and strongly with politeness.

How to approach?

- You might feel pressured, but you don't have to say yes.
- You must say “**NO**” firmly while maintaining eye contact in a clear voice.
- You may leave the place immediately if your peers still pressurized

Issue: Feeling isolated or loneliness

Skills: Social communication and connectedness: Social communication skills are important to integrate and to make a good bonding with batch-mates, seniors, and teachers. Sharing is not only helpful for the learning of a subject, but it also helps students to discuss their problems and to learn ways to resolve them. One needs to be connected with family/friends/seniors to

get rid of loneliness and feeling of being isolated and by doing so their perceived social support will always remain optimal.

So, what needs to be done?

- Meet regularly with your friends/seniors/teachers
- Discuss on academic or no academics matters
- Ask for help in a need and provide help to others

Issue: Known risk of substance

Skills: Anticipation

Every student must know their individualized risk in the form of genetic vulnerability (positive family history of substance use), individual vulnerability (having impulsive and novelty-seeking traits and environmental vulnerability (substance use in proximity). So, by looking into their vulnerability or risk zones, one must anticipate the chances of substance consumptions. It is always better to avoid visiting the places/friends where chances are pretty high. Similarly, if the drug is available in one's room there are high chances of its consumption, so better to remove drugs and related material from their room.

Issue: How to protect from addiction group

Skills: Make a sober group

As we know that peer pressure is an important trigger for the initiation and maintenance of substance use, but on the other hand, peer-to-peer support might be beneficial to stop or cut down such behavior. Interactions with the sober group (Not engaged in substance use) and doing well in all aspects of their life can encourage and motivate them to incorporate healthy lifestyles. Also, if you have such a friend or senior it becomes easy for you to control the craving and to get adequate support whenever you require it.

Overcoming substance use

Suffering from addiction does not mean that life is over and you can't do anything. You just need to identify it as early as possible; learn and incorporate all the skills to prevent yourself from further indulgence. Many students want to quit the substance, often search for help but hesitate to consult for this problem. Due to this barrier of stigma, they generally ask for help from their peers and seniors who are in the same boat and can misguide them due to their misconceptions. So dear students, if you find any difficulties in this process and you are

searching for any help, do not hesitate to contact Mental Health Professionals. Here, your problems will be listened to, acknowledged, and managed with confidentiality by an empathetic and non-judgemental approach.

Behavior addiction:

It is characterized by an irresistible urge, impulse, or drive that leads to repeated engagement in certain behaviors (not involving psychoactive substance use) that produce a feeling of transient euphoria or a high. This is combined with a loss of control, that is, the inability to reduce or stop the behavior despite its negative impact on the person's physical, psychosocial, and overall well-being.

The behaviors that are reported as addictive in the literature and common in college students include gambling, gaming, internet use, pornography, exercise, and shopping. The use of the internet, smartphones, and other electronic devices such as i-pad, laptops, and the smartwatch has dramatically increased over the last decades across all age groups and especially in college students. In one aspect these devices are helpful to get timely, updated, and adequate information in this faster digital era and help in maintaining virtual connectedness. On the other hand, excessive use of the same might become problematic for the overall growth, productivity, functioning of a student and lead to deleterious effects on health.

College students are particularly vulnerable due to lack of supervision, availability of smartphones, cheaper, faster, and unlimited internet services. Among these, the student who has a problem in interpersonal relationships, family conflict, loneliness, poor academics, and impulsive traits are particularly more vulnerable. Students who have low self-esteem indulge more in social media to create a virtual image to boost their self-image.

Consequences of excess use:

Excess engagement in any particular behavior can affect the mental as well as physical health of students. It may alter their sleep & eating patterns and impair their productivity and functioning. In long run, increasing involvement in a particular behavior and decreasing engagement in real-world social situations will lead to deficits in essential social skills.

Self-monitoring: Need to reflect on three dimensions:

1. Exposure: observe the total duration, frequency, intensity of particular behavior
2. Precipitants or triggers
3. Consequences: impact on physical, psychological, social well-being.

How to identify that one's behavior becomes an addiction?

- Excessive time spent in the particular behavior
- Repeated unsuccessful attempts to cut down or stop the behavior
- Diminished control over the behavior
- Tolerance- require increasing hours of use to feel better
- Withdrawal symptoms in the form of irritability, anger on trivial issues, and low feelings, etc.
- Adverse psychosocial consequences (strained relation with friends and family)

Tips to protect and manage from Behavioural Addiction:

- Keep vigilance for own behavior and identify whether it is excessive and fulfilling the criteria's of behavior addiction
- Identify personal, interpersonal, and environmental triggers and risk factors
- Cope effectively with your triggers/ongoing problems
- Improve your communication skills, emotional intelligence, tolerance, and social competence
- Improving self-control and self-efficacy
- Make a proper activity schedule
- Restricting oneself from using "addictive" websites/ links/ applications
- Track your screen time to get proper feedback
- Screen scheduling: Keep a safe limit on internet use or the use of social media apps as complete abstinence is usually not the target
- Make a rule for device-free time and replace it with some other fun-filled activity
- Delay the response: don't check your device every single minute. You can keep your device out of sight for better control
- Differentiate between essential activities versus non-essential, healthy versus pathological pattern
- Involve in extracurricular activities such as sports and cultural activities
- To understand that getting attention, encouragement, and compliment in the real world is much more meaningful than social media likes. So, encourage your peers, juniors, and seniors for their real achievements in the real world.
- So, be brave, accept the problem and prepare yourself for the required change or action
- Break your hesitation/stigma and take consultation from Mental Health Professionals

Take home message

Every student must understand the common as well as personalized reasons to indulge in substance or behavior addiction, their short-term and long-term harm, and to learn skills that would be helpful to avoid it. In case of need, please do not hesitate to contact, discuss and take help from Mental Health Professionals.

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Activity 1:

Practice refusal skills

You are in another student’s room doing a project together. Suddenly, one of your batch mates came to your room and invited you for a walk. While walking, he started discussing his fight with his girlfriend. After a few minutes, he took out a cigarette from his pocket and started smoking. He felt relieved of his stress and offered you to take a puff of cigarette as it will give you a high and will increase your focus on the project work. However, you don’t want to take it. Enumerate different ways to handle this situation?

- 1 . -----
- 2. -----
- 3. -----
- 4. -----
- 5. -----

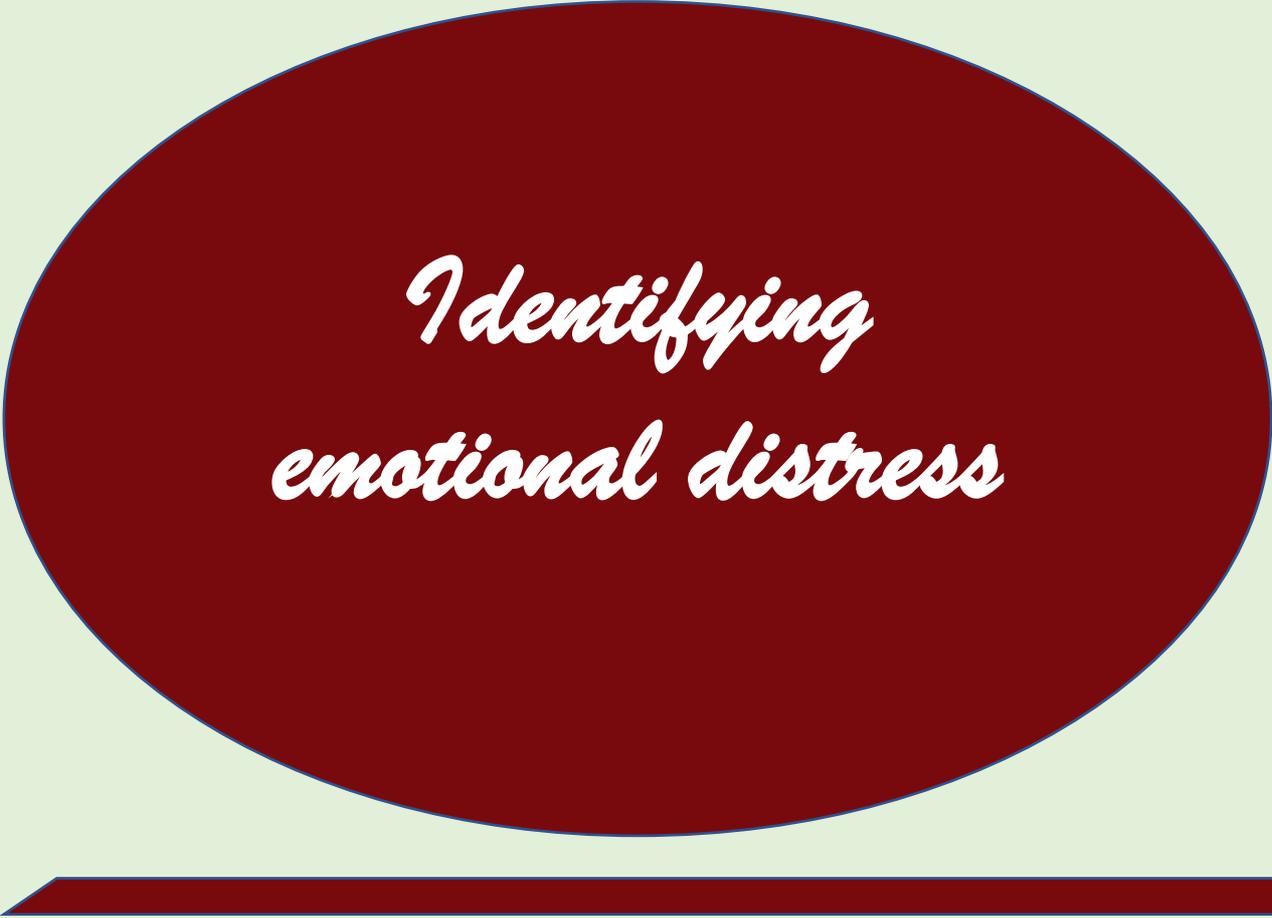
Activity: 2

Track your screen time: Paste this chart in your room where it is easily visible

Date:

Screen	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Total time (week)
Computer/Laptop Start time Finish time Total time							
Video games Start time Finish time Total time							
Mobile phone Start time Finish time Total time							
Total time (day)							

Note: Several free apps such as Freedom, ScreenTime, Zen Screen, Space, etc. are also available to help you in the tracking of your screen time.



*Identifying
emotional distress*

Learning Objectives

- Understand common mental health issues and their importance
- Understand signs of significant emotional distress
- Understand how to seek help and provide Psychological First-Aid to those in need

What are mental health and emotional distress?

According to WHO “*Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and can make a contribution to his or her community.*”

Therefore, it is evident that to be mentally healthy does not only mean the absence of any mental illness, it is a critical component of well-being. It is more about the capacity to manage different spheres of life. Emotional distress is another facet of mental health, which is “*a state of emotional suffering associated with stressors and demands that are difficult to cope with in daily life.*” Emotional distress can emanate from different routine situations related to work, studies, and interpersonal relations. It is a product of an individual’s perception and coping abilities.

Common Mental health issues

Distress is an important part of evolution, which prepares everyone to identify, polish, and invent his or her strengths and techniques to deal with the roller coaster ride of life. During this learning phase, it is imperative to experience various mental health issues like anxiety, sadness, irritability, sleep disturbances, etc., which may not necessarily indicate psychiatric illness. However, it is essential to be aware of these fluctuations, so one can prepare for such subsequent experiences. Ignorance about these mental health issues can contribute to the later development of psychiatric illness.

Common Mental Health Problems: Mostly fall under dimensions mentioned below

1. *Anxiety Disorders:* presence of restlessness, apprehension, somatic manifestations like tachycardia, sweating, palpitation, breathlessness
2. *Depression:* feeling low, negative thoughts, decreased interest in activities persisting for more than 2 weeks or causing significant disturbance in routine functioning
3. *Somatic symptoms disorders:* presence of unexplained physical symptoms, mostly vague and fluctuating but maybe persistent

Why it is essential to understand?

Understanding and acknowledging mental health issues is essential to achieve satisfactory outcomes in the professional as well as the interpersonal area. Besides, poor mental health is known to affect physical health and immunity adversely.

Furthermore, a clear understanding of the mental health issue can help in early identification and timely intervention, which is known to improve outcomes. Delay in help-seeking can not only affect the prognosis adversely but also lead to loss of precious time, which otherwise can be utilized for personal and professional development.

How to identify the need to seek help?

There is no specified norm to say when help-seeking is appropriate. Many a time people are worried about whether it is appropriate in a particular situation to seek help. They may consider seeking help as a sign of weakness. But, that is not the case, seeking help is a strong step. It reflects your clarity and will to move forward. So everyone shall be open to seeking help whenever stuck with some issue, especially when it starts affecting the routine, and it's difficult to apply a rational approach. Everyone tries to handle difficult situations in their way and succeed also. But sometimes the situation can become overpowering, one may not be able to find a solution or there is significant emotional involvement to think about anything else. Consistent change in patterns that lead to distress can be a broad indicator of the need to seek help. Few situations are as below,

- Difficulty in interpersonal relations
- Inability to comply with required assignments and decline in performance
- Reduced self-care
- Difficulty in maintaining a routine
- Changes in sleep and appetite

If needed, one can use various online self-assessment tools to identify their level of stress (<https://www.depressioncenter.org/toolkit/im-looking-more-resources-1/self-assessment-tools>). One should also appreciate any such change in their peers, as it can help to reach out to them early.

How to seek help?

For seeking help one can connect with their families and friends first, to openly discuss with them their issue. The prejudice of not being understood should not impede the intent to seek help. It's worth trying to talk to your close ones openly and clearly. Such prejudice may arise out of their inability to understand nonverbal and indirect communication but many times they lack background information, making clear communication essential.

If needed one should talk to the student counselor and mentor, who can guide the student and suggest if specialist care is needed. While seeking help one should not refrain from asking about doubts and concerns. Mental health professionals are usually most beneficial, as they are not only equipped with expertise but also provide a non-judgmental environment and privacy. So, many issues that one may find difficult to discuss with a close one, can be discussed there. While deciding to seek help you shall be aware of the barriers to seeking help for emotional well-being, as they can affect your decision. The following are two important factors that may influence the decision negatively.

1. **Poor understanding of the problem:** Many times while being in a state of emotional distress it becomes difficult to define and understand the whole issue that is bothering us. It is further compounded by the tendency to avoid distressing topics. So it is important to discuss with others, especially mentors or counselors. Family and friends can be an important resource but sometimes their limitations in psychological conceptualization can lead to delay in seeking help.
2. **Stigma:** the stigma of having some mental health issues, visiting counselors or psychiatrists is prevalent in the community. Having an emotional problem is presumed to be equivalent to having some weakness, which is a misconception. In reality, acknowledging the distress and engaging in remedial measures is a courageous step. Due to the influence of such public perceptions, people try to avoid the label of having some mental health issue, and it is common to delay or avoid seeking professional help. Many times these misconceptions are only in our minds and our peers and society are quite receptive and even in their presence only way to change the perception of others and correct their misconception is to engage with them and discuss your issues. So taking a decision of seeking help based on the perception of others can be counterproductive and worsen the emotional distress and outcome.

How to overcome stigma?

- Talk openly about a mental health issue
- Focus on facts regarding mental health rather than focusing on public perception
- Prioritize own need over expectation of others

Psychological First Aid (PFA)

PFA is the first line of psychosocial support, which can be provided by any person among family, friends, and people at the workplace or in the community. Delivering PFA does not require any specific expertise. It requires connecting with people with compassion and a non-judgmental attitude.

Why learn Psychological First-Aid?

PFA is an important tool to help an individual in distress. Its understanding and application can provide essential support at a time when immediate professional support is not available or cannot be sought and it can help in preventing damage to the emotional health of individuals around you.

It can also help in overcoming barriers in seeking professional help like stigma and poor understanding of their problems, ultimately helping in improving long-term outcomes.

In addition to this, knowledge of PFA will also enhance your understanding of stress and ways of dealing with it. Since students' lives away from their homes miss their inherent support system, the practice of PFA can create an environment of trust and support.

Who can benefit from PFA?

Any person in distress

Who can provide PFA?

Anyone, who can be compassionate and non-judgmental,

Where to provide PFA?

No specific setting is required, but it is essential to ensure the privacy and comfort of an individual.

What are the components of PFA?

Understanding of following components is essential to provide PFA

1. LOOK for common signs reflecting emotional distress

1. A persistent change in behavior- reduced interaction with peers and recreational activities or change in the routine causing problems
2. Frequent emotional outbursts- anger outburst, irritability, crying
3. Physical symptoms- unexplained, persistent physical symptoms like headache or body ache often reflect underlying emotional issues.
4. Increased indulgence in addictive substances or behavior

2. LISTEN to concerns and experiences

1. Listen to what one is feeling and why
2. Don't intrude, maintaining a calm presence sufficient
3. Being present even in silence can help
4. Allow to speak their perspective without judging or advising
5. Acknowledge the distress and empathize
6. Reassure

3. LINK to the resources

1. Share your ways of coping without passing judgment. Providing a variety of alternatives is often more helpful than providing a direct solution.
2. Encourage engagement with peers and family, especially emphasizing how it will help
3. The basic purpose is to encourage individuals to link to appropriate self-care plans and other resources when required.
4. Facilitate referral to a specialist when needed (when distress is severe or risk of harm is present), addressing barriers causing a delay in help-seeking.

These simple steps can help an individual, who is experiencing distress in face of adversity and can be life-saving at times.

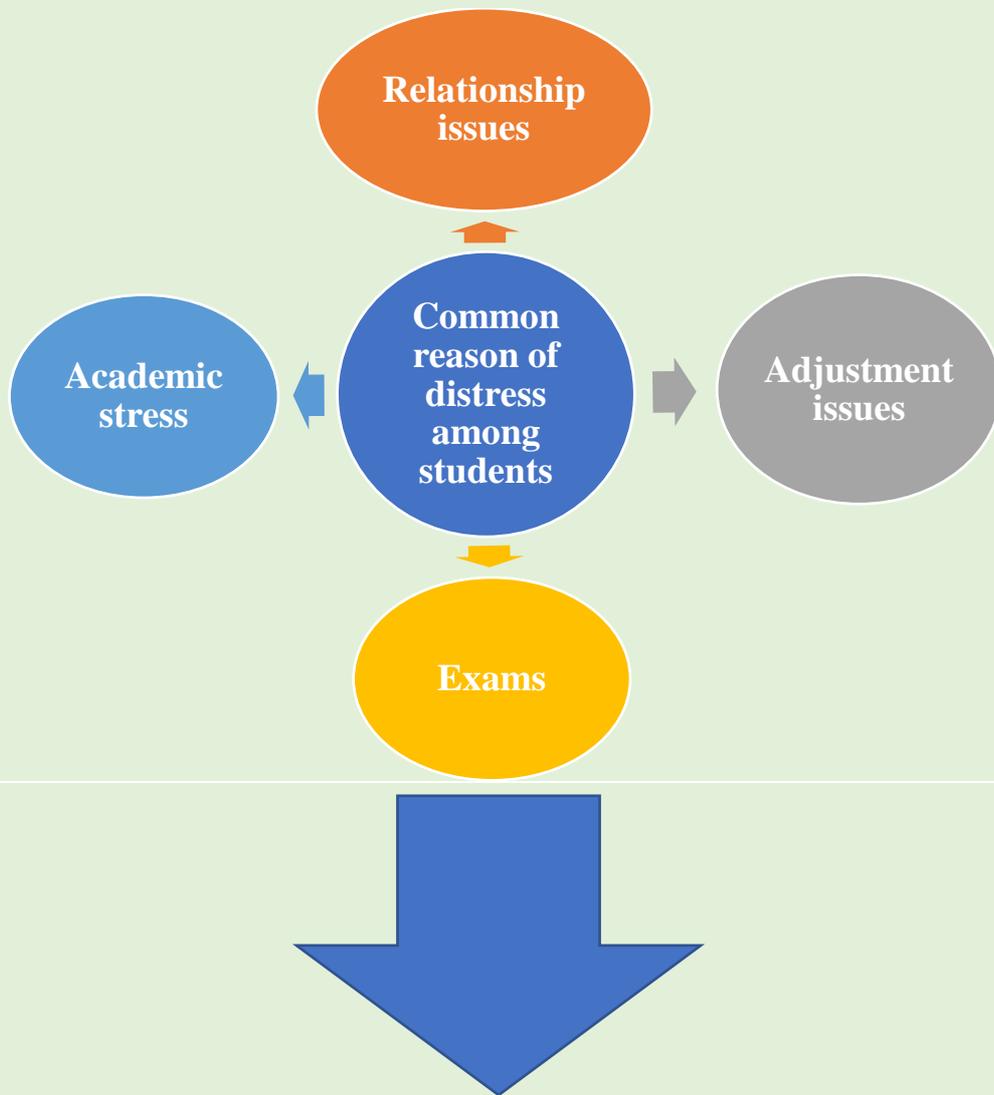
Take home message

Mental well-being is an important facet of life, which shapes personal and professional life of everyone. Understanding, acknowledging and intervening early in a situation of emotional distress can empower an individual to reach their true potential.

Reference:

1. WHO. Mental health: strengthening our response. [Updated 2018 March 30; cited 2021 November 11] Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>
2. Arvidsdotter T, Marklund B, Kylén S, Taft C, Ekman I. Understanding persons with psychological distress in primary health care. *Scand J Caring Sci.* 2016 Dec;30(4):687-694.

Activity



1. Enumerate different indicators of emotional distress in a student because of the above-mentioned stressors. How distress will reflect in the behavior?

- I. -----
- II. -----
- III. -----
- IV. -----
- V. -----

2. How you can help if someone is in emotional distress?

Concluding remarks

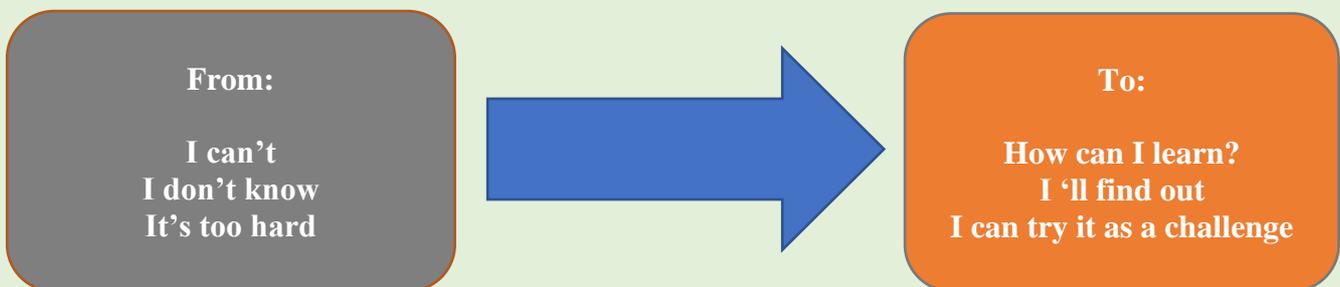
Well-being is a lifelong journey rather being a destination, one need to keep moving on the path towards well-being.

Now when we have come to an end of this manual, let's learn the five essential steps towards well-being that's all you need to inculcate in your daily life to experience the state of wellbeing:

1. Stay connected and reach out to people around
2. Take time out for yourself, to feel the small joys of life
3. Keep learning new skills
4. Do something good for others and feel good
5. Be physically active
6. Be open to change, practice serenity prayer

“Lord, give me the serenity to accept what I can't change, the courage to change what I can, & the wisdom to know the difference.”

Stress and sufferings are important part of our day-to-day life. Reframing of the mindset can help you in moving forward.



“A man is but the product of his thoughts; what he thinks he becomes.”

Mahatma Gandhi



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