

**“Making a difference: Adopting a Right Attitude can convert a negative stress into a positive one”**

**“Being Positive is one of the ways to avoid stress”**

**CENTRE FOR COUNSELING AND SUPPORT**

**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE**

**BANGALORE**

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### **ROLE OF COUNSELING AS SUPPORT SYSTEM AT IISc**

Prof. Nalini Dwarakanath, PhD;

Counseling Psychologist, IISc

As Educational Requirements get more stringent at all levels of education, students everywhere experience considerable stress. The most predominant factor is the **Academic stresses** experienced by the students, followed by stress caused by poor inter personal and personal relationships.

Academic stress among students have long been researched on and the researchers have identified stressors as **too many assignments in a short time frame, unhealthy competitions with other students, failures and poor relationships with fellow students and faculties.**

Academic stressors include the students’ perception of the extensive knowledge base required and the perception of an inadequate time to develop. Sometimes lack of awareness, where to look for information, whom to approach and how to approach, becomes a causative stress.

**Students who join Indian Institute of Science come from different parts of the country. Cultural Differences and Language Barrier pose a threat to some or majority of them in the first two semesters. Those who are mentally strong have good adjustment and adaptability, overcome these barriers very soon. Those, especially, from rural belts are mostly seen to be not strong enough in Emotional Intelligence. They feel shy to communicate with the students of their own departments and outside as well. Their coping ability in the above said factors is understandably poor.**

Keeping the above factors in mind, this paper is written to create awareness on factors that may play a slip shot in day to day functioning. Salient features of most important topics as **UNDERSTANDING SELF AND ENVIRONMENT OF IISc, CAUSES OF STRESS AND RELATED COPING MECHANISM** and the need for **MAINTAINING GOOD MENTAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE** are highlighted.

**Students observed over a period of time at Indian Institute of Science campus, report experiencing academic stress at predictable times, especially in the first two semesters of their joining and then**

**before their comprehensive which they are expected to complete by the end of two years period or so.**

More stressful situations are experienced by the students when they have to face the first end semester exam, for which they would have still not been mentally well tuned and academically well prepared. With the result they end up with poor grades and/ or failure in one or more course work(s).

When the stress that results out of the above said factors is perceived negatively or becomes excess, students experience physical and psychological setbacks.

The reason for this has been found to be **lack of awareness on proper utilization of Academic freedom hitherto not exposed or experienced poor time management and inadequacy in balancing the work and leisure.**

**In the context of the above discussion, the psychological counseling service plays a supportive role in enlightening the students on**

- Understanding self—
- Understanding the environment--Campus, Faculty and Facilities
- Understanding the Academic / Research Culture
- Expectations and Demands of Qualitative Research
- Need for a healthy Rapport with all- especially the faculties
- Maintaining Good Inter and Intra Personal Relationships with all
- Need to exercise "SELF EFFORTS" to potentially develop unused or underused resources and make use of the available opportunities optimally.
- The need to maintain Good Mental Health and Hygiene.
- Need to focus on the essentials and avoid indulging in time wasters and unhealthy wants.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF ACADEMIC STRESS:**

- Feel of Underperformance
- Poor Memory & Concentration
- Forgetting
- Anxiety,
- Sleep Problems
- Lack of interest,
- Feeling Helpless and Worthless
- Fear of Failure
- Physical illness during tests and Exams
- Headache
- Exhaustion
- stomach Problems
- Depression

- Anxiety
- Injuring Self and Use of Stimulants

### **CAUSES OF ACADEMIC STRESS:**

**Internal Factors** and **External Factors** determine our body's ability to respond to external stress inducing factors or stressors.

#### **External factors come from outside:**

Our Physical and Academic Environment, Our Job, Noise level constantly too high or too low, Pollution, Trauma, Injury foreign organisms as bacteria, virus and fungi, toxins, Poor working conditions (inadequate light and air circulation) Lack of Privacy, Excess Demands, Relationship with people inside and outside the Home and all the Situations, Challenges, Difficulties and Expectations we are confronted with on a daily basis are all causative factors of stress.

**INTERNAL STRESS** comes from inside us and determines our body's ability to respond to deal with the External Stress-inducing factors or stressors

Nutritional Status; Attitudes, Thoughts, Feelings of anger, fear & Worry, Anticipation—Expectation not matching with the reality, Imagination, Memory, Overall Health and Fitness level, Presence of illness and infections, Emotional Well Being, Amount of Sleep and Rest.

**Managing Stress** involves making changes in external factors which confront or in internal factors which strengthen one's ability to deal with what comes in the way.

#### **EXTERNAL STRESS IS OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH:**

- Work Place Stress
- Inter Personal Conflict
- Relationship/ Marital Stress
- Balancing Career/Academic & Family
- Being a parent.

#### **INTERNAL STRESS MANAGEMENT:**

- Anger management—Dealing with Anger, fear and Worry
- Healthy Nutrition and using Correct Food Supplements to help Cope with the Stress
- Developing a Positive Mental Attitude
- Exercising Moderately but Frequently
- Practicing Relaxation Techniques
- Dealing with Sleep Disturbances

#### **EXTERNAL STRESS MANAGEMENT:**

- Developing Good Social Interaction

- Total control of “self”
- Being aware of happenings in the environment
- Emotional control
- Being Positive

#### **MANAGEMENT OF ACADEMIC STRESS:**

- Comprehensive Understanding of the courses chosen
- Mental preparedness to focus from Day One
- Balancing the available time Effectively between Academic Demands and Personal Enjoyment
- Being aware of the fact **“Self Management == Effective Time Management**

By and large, students of IISc who join for different courses are able to manage the personal as well as Academic and Research pressures. But sometimes, managing stress becomes a challenge. It is then, the external help becomes essential.

The institute has made provision for the students to seek help from Academic Counselors, Health personals and Psychological counseling from Counseling Psychologist from the Center for Counseling and Support.

#### **MYTHS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING:**

It is only for mentally challenged

Going to a counselor is bad and he/she will be branded

Social Stigma—Personal well Being should be given utmost priority than to attach undue importance to other’s opinion.

#### **WHO SHOULD SEEK HELP?**

**You, me and everyone who feel helpless to handle any problem or issue by ourselves.**

All of us do experience distress during some period of our academic, career and personal lives. Allowing it to escalate will pull our energy level and hamper our progress. Hence it is always better to seek external help to understand the stress and the connected negative emotions and get helped to lead a Quality Life.

#### **PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING-WHAT IS IT?**

Counseling is a learning oriented process, carried on in a social environment, in which the counselor, professionally competent in relevant psychological skills and knowledge, seeks to assist the client by methods appropriate to the latter’s needs and within the context of the total personnel program, to learn how to put such understanding into effect in relation to more clearly Perceived, realistically

defined goals to the end that the client may become happier and more productive member of the society.

**Psychologist-Gustad 1953**

Counseling is helping an individual become aware of himself and the ways in which he is reacting to the behavioral influences of his environment. It further helps him to establish some personal meaning for the behavior and to develop and clarify a set of goals and values for future behavior **Blocher 1966**

#### **GOALS OF COUNSELING:**

- Create awareness to understand self better
- Develop good Communication and Inter personal Relationship
- Help manage Academic/Research Demands and Personal pursuits
- Create awareness on the opportunities and Resources available in and around the campus
- Help realize one's potential and develop optimally

#### **FRAMEWORK OF COUNSELING PROCESS AT IISc:**

- **Individual Approach:** At the Counseling Centre with Prior appointment over phone or through mail.
- **Group Approach:** Meeting the students once a month in the respective departments and interact on the topics or issues that the students feel the need to be helped. Prior permission from the chairperson and the Professors concerned is essential. Student representatives of the departments are expected to coordinate.
- **Referrals:** From Department ; Health Centre and authorities

#### **VALUES IN COUNSELING PROCESS:**

- Assured confidentiality
- Respect for the individual's dignity
- Empathy—Understanding from his/her stand point; from surrounding/environment point; feelings surrounding the environment
- Genuine- Not being defensive
- Non Judgmental and Non Sentimental
- Empowerment- Helping to discover, develop and use untapped power within them. Changes can only be brought if the individual cooperates and makes up his/her mind to change
- Taking the client's view seriously
- Assuming Goodwill
- Focusing on the agenda/ issue of the client

#### **AWARENESS ON PROBLEMS/ ISSUES NORMALLY FACED**

- Adjustment difficulty in class and Handling them
- Course Failures/ Poor grades especially in the first two semesters
- Lack of Knowledge on the basics of Qualitative Research and Academic Excellence

- Poor Intra and Inter Personal Relationships with fellow students, Faculties and people around
- Personal Relationships going awry and inability to cope with the related emotions
- Negative thoughts and Emotions
- Poor Management of Emotional and social Intelligence

#### **HANDLING THE ISSUES:**

- Proper **planning and Prioritizing**
- Diligent **Execution**
- Developing **Good Communication and Social coherence**
- Approaches and or Methods for equipping and **Enhancing the KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN** to achieve Academic Excellence and aim for **Quality Research**
- Clarity and **Focusing on the Goal** from day One
- Understanding the **Expectations of the Research Supervisor**
- Periodical **Professional Discussion and Personal Contact** with the Guide/ Academic supervisor, fixing up prior appointment
- Going Prepared while going for discussion –not wasting the time, relying on abstract memory
- Prior Planning and Execution

A well balanced Person is one who enjoys **GOOD MENTAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE**

#### **MAINTAINING GOOD MENTAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE:**

Good Mental Health is necessary for the complete functioning of the mind. It is a basic condition for the growth of the mind. It is a condition of psychological maturity. A mentally healthy person displays good social functioning, owns responsibility for his behavior, is self reliant and maintains a true sense of individuality. He/she has a realistic life goal as well as philosophy of life and values.

On the other hand, mental illness renders a person incapable of coping with reality and robs him/her of the zest for life and desire to learn. Hence Sound mental Health is important to respond constructively to stress and change and not merely to adjust to these factors. The terms '**adjustment and adaptation**' pervade our thinking about mental health. **Constructive Behavior** is a prime criterion of good mental health and should be a major **objective of education**.

#### **Mental Health may be considered in terms of the following aspects of an individual:**

- Attitude towards oneself
- Growth, Development and self Actualization
- Integration
- Autonomy
- Perception of reality
- Environmental mastery
- Sound Physical Health

The individual's attitude towards "self" includes Self-acceptance, Self confidence, Self reliance, Self dependence and Initiative.

#### **A mentally healthy person has**

- A positive self concept and is motivated to strive for self-actualization.
- A unifying outlook on life and has a reasonable capacity to resist stress.
- Exhibits sense of autonomy in relation to the environment and with regard to decision making.
- Exhibits a healthy and objective perception of reality, free from distortion and displays social sensitivity
- Ability to love, adequacy in inter personal relations, Capacity for adaptation and adjustment, efficiency in Problem solving

#### **FACTORS AFFECTING MENTAL HEALTH:**

**Social condition** as poverty, discrimination, casteism, violence

**Medical condition** as various organic conditions that affect brain functioning

**Psychological condition** as stressful situations that poses a threat to individual's Psyche

**Behavioral condition** as faulty learning as failure to learn necessary adaptive behavior

**Inter Personal condition** as unsatisfactory interpersonal relationship among human beings.

In lieu of the above stated facts, it is very essential to maintain Mental Hygiene. Mental Hygiene is a process of attaining Mental Health and preserving good mental health in the society.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF MENTAL HYGIENE:**

- To help to realize one's potential
- To develop self respect and respect for others
- To understand one's limitations and tolerate the limitations of others
- To cause Harmonious development
- To create Happiness
- To enable one to make effective adjustment
- To enable one to know his or herself.

#### **RELAXATION TECHNIQUES:**

- **Yoga and Meditation**
- **Regular Exercise at least for half an Hour**
- **Listening to Music**
- **Aerobic Exercise**
- **Walking**

- **Any Hobbies that is of interest**

**CONCLUSION:** With these few awareness notes on **“THE ESSENTIALS of COUNSELING and MAINTAINING GOOD MENTAL HEALTH and HYGIENE”**, I would like to submit that this is only a small attempt in creating Self awareness for a Progressive Academic and Personal Life, as long as you are in the campus of the prestigious Indian Institute of Science, to accomplish a productive career and research life.

In case the need is felt for external help, please feel free to get in touch with the Psychological Counseling at **CENTRE FOR COUNSELING**. Kindly take prior appointment to help us serve you better

**CONTACT DETAILS:**

Phone: 2293 2990; Mobile: 99453 21422

E-mail: [counselor@admin.iisc.ernet.in](mailto:counselor@admin.iisc.ernet.in)

[nalini.bng@gmail.com](mailto:nalini.bng@gmail.com)

Best Wishes

Dr.Nalini Dwarakanath, PhD

Dr. N.S. Shiva Prakash,  
Chairman; CCS,IISc