

Pursuit of Wellness

**A 3-day workshop on Mental and Emotional Health for Youth
6-8 January 2021**

Organized by
Department of Mass Communication & Journalism, Tezpur University
In collaboration with
LGB Regional Institute of Mental Health, Tezpur
With support from
Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur

Preface and Acknowledgements

Pursuit of Wellness was organized by the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University as a 3-day workshop to promote the concept of mental and emotional wellbeing and wellness of young people. Youth are the biggest asset of a nation. In their well-being lies the well-being of the country. It is only by empowering youth that the society can be empowered.

Pursuit of Wellness was an attempt to create a platform for young people to connect to each other and facilitate discussions that educate, empower and instil hope, while at the same time fostering strategies for building resilience.

We duly acknowledge the support and guidance of RGNIYD in making this programme possible. We also acknowledge the collaboration with the LGB Regional Institute of Mental Health Tezpur and the Youth Wellness Hub team which was the backbone of the programme.

Background of the Program

The COVID 19 pandemic has affected the entire world in the most unprecedented manner. As the world waits for this pandemic to end, fears are being raised that we may never be able to live life the 'normal' way, and eventually have to settle in for a 'new normal'. However, even as we are trying to come to terms with this crisis, a bigger fear looms large and it is being predicted that the next big pandemic is not far away. And that next big inevitable pandemic is nothing but Mental Illness.

As per WHO data, India is already home to an large population (estimated 57 million people) who are affected by depression. And unfortunately, the proportion of youth within this chunk of patients is increasing by the day. Mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse disorders among the youth are steadily on the rise. The stress of performance in studies, as well as work, is taking a toll on the mental health of youth. The rise of social media usage has isolating them ever more from heart-to-heart relationships with family and friends.

With the COVID 19 pandemic the situation has further worsened. Social distancing has further added to the already existing feeling of isolation and alienation. The insecurity around the educational and employment scenario is escalating the pressures on the already stressed and anxious young mind and giving way to hopelessness. The mounting number of suicides is a testimony to this and a cause of growing concern.

Young people are not well equipped to handle the growing challenges to their mental health, particularly in the new COVID 19 ravaged world. And stigmas surrounding mental health only create an additional barrier in reaching out for help. Therefore, it is essential that the youth population become aware and empowered to deal with these growing challenges for maintaining a positive mental health by increasing discussions around mental health and battling the stigmas.

Objectives of the Program

1. To facilitate dialogues and discussions around youth mental health issues relevant to north eastern region
2. To build awareness about youth mental health problems and facilitate destigmatization through discussions
3. To highlight stories of strength among youth and foster hope and resilience
4. To foster newer, culturally-sensitive, locally-relevant youth-engagement initiatives related to mental health promotion

Target Group for the Program

The target group included students at the higher secondary, graduation, post-graduation and PhD levels from different places of Assam.

Inaugural Function of the Program

The inaugural function of the programme was organized on 6 January 2021. The session was attended by Prof. Sibnath Deb, Director, RGNIYD, Prof. S.K. Deuri, Director, LGBRIMH, Prof. P.K Das, Dean School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tezpur University, Prof. Sonia P. Deuri, Head, Department of Psychiatric Social Work, LGBRIMH and other dignitaries.

While appreciating the initiative undertaken by the Department of MCJ, Tezpur University, the speakers underscored the importance of creating awareness and sensitization around mental health issues promoting wellness and happiness for individual, social and community well-being. They also emphasized upon the role of young people in this regard and how educational institutions can play a part in creating an enabling environment for the same.

The keynote addresses were delivered by Dr. Nanda Kishore Kannuri, Additional Professor, Indian Institute of Public Health, Hyderabad. Dr. Kannuri in his address highlighted upon the SDGs and deliberated on the intersectionality between mental health, SDGs and the social determinants of health.

Topics Covered by the Resource Persons

- Key Note address 1: Youth engagement for sustainable development and wellbeing: Some imperatives for an effective policy.
- Keynote address-2: Promoting mental health of Youth: Crossroads and roadmaps
Resource Person: Jai Ranjan Ram
- Mental Health Challenges among Youth: Picking up early signs of distress
- ‘Does mind matter for youth?’- Youth Mental Health and wellbeing during COVID and beyond.
- Inviting wellbeing in new modes of learning: Managing challenges & discovering opportunities to grow as an online learner.
- Relationship and intimacy in virtual and real spaces
- Creating safe spaces for ALL: Youth belonging to gender-minority and other marginalized groups
- Exploring resilience and holding onto hope in wellness
- Turning stress upside down: A strength focused approach to stress management
- Mindful Photography

- Multiple Ways to Wellness: ‘The Youth Wellness HUB project’

Feedback from the Participants

- Background of the Participants: 35 students from 11 different institutions of Assam participated in the workshop. It included students at the higher secondary, graduation, post-graduation and PhD levels in various streams - science, arts, commerce, agriculture and engineering.
- Internet Connection Problems Faced by the Participants – Participants were all physically present at the workshop venue. However, some of the resource persons were online and some amount network issues were faced during some of the sessions. This was identified as one of the weaknesses of the programme by the participants.
- Effectiveness of the Online Program – The programme was conducted in blended mode. During the sessions where resource persons were online, there were on-site resource persons to facilitate the process. The participants found the programme to be quite engaging and effective.
- Clarification of Queries by the Participants during the Program: The queries of the participants were attended to and adequately addressed by the resource persons.
- Perception about the Resource Persons: The participants found the resource persons to be very knowledgeable, resourceful, creative and committed. The general opinion was found to be either very good or excellent.
- Views about the Online Mode of the Program – Participants were fine with the programme being done in blended mode. But it was visible that they preferred it more when on-site resource persons were present.
- Views about Duration of the Program – Most of the participants felt that the duration of the programme was just right. Few also said that it could be slightly shorter.

- Views about Attending Similar Program in Future – Participants were enthusiastic about attending more such programmes in the future and requested us to keep them informed about upcoming events.
- Views about Sharing of Information about the Program with Others – Most of them said that they would be happy to reach out to others and share about the programme.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The programme was very well received by the participants. We believe that the workshop has been successful in increasing the awareness and sensitivity of the youth participants regarding mental health problems of young people, given them greater ability to identify early signs of distress and made them more open to the idea of seeking help. It has also enabled them to create network other young people and mental health professionals should they need help or wish to provide mental health support to their peers. Overall it has led to the enhancement of understanding about the importance of maintaining self and community wellbeing.

Given the overwhelming response this programme has received we would recommend that more such workshops should be held on communicating and destigmatizing mental health. Such programmes should also have the scope to accommodate adolescents at the school level. It is recommended that customized training modules be developed for adolescents, youth and also educators within the institutions so as to facilitate the creation of an enabling environment where young people can openly converse about issues of wellbeing, support their peers and enhance their own wellness.

Annexure 1: Program Schedule

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Program Schedule

Days	1 st half (10am -1pm)			L U N C H -- B R E A K	2 nd half (2pm to 5pm)		
	Time	Title of Program	Resource Persons		Time	Title of Program	Resource Persons
Day -1 (06.01.2021)	9 am to 9.45 am	Participant registration		2 pm to 3.20 pm	Mental Health Challenges among Youth: Picking up early signs of distress	Angshuman Kalita	
	9.45 am to 11.00 am	Inaugural program & Keynote address-1: Youth engagement for sustainable development and wellbeing: Some imperatives for an effective policy.	Nanda Kishore Kannuri	3.20 pm to 3.40 pm	Tea Break		
	11.00 to 11.40 am	Tea Break		3.40 pm to 5 pm	'Does mind matter for youth?'- Youth Mental Health and wellbeing during COVID and beyond	Diptarup Chowdhury & Tama Dey	
	11.40 am to 1 pm	Keynote address-2: Promoting mental health of Youth: Crossroads and roadmaps	Jai Ranjan Ram				

Day- 2 (07.01.2021)	10 am to 11-20 am	Inviting wellbeing in new modes of learning: Managing challenges & discovering opportunities to grow as an online learner	Anindita Bhattacharya	L U N C H	2pm to 3-20 pm	Creating safe spaces for ALL: Youth belonging to gender-minority and other marginalized groups	Raviraj Shetty
	11-20 to 11-40am	Tea Break		—	3-20 pm to 3-40 pm	Tea Break	
	11-40am to 1 pm	Relationship and intimacy in virtual and real spaces	Suvarna Joshi & Sobhana H	B R E A K	3-40 to 5pm	Building resilience through peer and community support	Jehanzeb Baldiwala
Day-3 (08.01.2021)	10 am to 11-20 am	Turning stress upside down: A strength focused approach to stress management	Rajeev J Michael	L U N C H	2pm to 3:30pm	Multiple Ways to Wellness: 'The Youth Wellness HUB project'	Diptarup Chowdhury &Tama Dey
	11-20 to 11-40am	Tea Break		—	3-30 pm to 4-30 pm	Valedictory program and Feedback	TU& YWH-LGBRIMH Organizing Team
	11-40 am to 1 pm	Mindful Photography	Nitin Das	B R E A K	4-30 pm to 5 pm	High Tea	

Annexure II: Profile of the Resource persons

Name of Resource Person	Affiliation/Designation	Location (<i>mode of presence</i>)
Nanda Kishore Kannuri, Dr.	Additional Professor, Indian Institute of Public Health	Hyderabad (online)
Jai Ranjan Ram, Dr.	Senior Psychiatrist & Jt. Director, Mental Health Foundation	Kolkata (online)
Jehanzeb Baldiwala	Head, Mental Health Division, Ummeed Child Development Centre	Mumbai (online)
Anindita Bhattacharya, Dr.	Faculty, Azim Premji University	Bengaluru (online)
Raviraj Shetty	Senior trainer & Occupational therapist, Ummeed Child Development Centre	Mumbai (online)
Suvarna Joshi , Dr.	Consultant Clinical Psychologist	Mumbai (online)
Rajeev J Michael, Dr.	Consultant Clinical Psychologist	Kochi (online)
Nitin Das	Film-maker and Environmentalist, Delhi NCR	Delhi NCR (online)
Sobhana H, Dr.	Associate Professor of Psychiatric Social Work, LGB Regional Institute of Mental Health	Tezpur (on-site)
Diptarup Chowdhury, Dr.	Asst. Professor of Clinical Psychology & Coordinator, Youth Wellness HUB, LGB Regional Institute of Mental Health	Tezpur (on-site)
Angshuman Kalita, Dr.	Asst. Professor of Psychiatry, LGB Regional Institute of Mental Health	Tezpur (on-site)
Tama Dey	Clinical Psychologist, Youth Wellness HUB, LGB Regional Institute of Mental Health	Tezpur (on-site)

Annexure III: List of the Participants

1. Bhaswati Baruah, Dibrugarh University
2. Juli Hazarika, Tezpur University
3. Rana Das, Bhattadev University, Bajali
4. Bishal Bharadwaj, Bhattadev University, Bajali
5. Dipjyoti Nath, Chaiduar College, Gohpur
6. Manash Jyoti Das, Dibrugarh University
7. Himadri Devi, Tezpur Science Academy
8. Aastha Naina Kashyap, Tezpur Science Academy
9. Usha Keot Bora, Biswanath Commerce College
10. Rajashree Devi, Tezpur College
11. Maibm Baby Devi, Tezpur University
12. Vinit. Kr. Bothra, Tezpur College
13. Debajit Goswami, Tezpur College
14. Tinamoni Borah, ADP College
15. Ankita Saha, Tezpur University
16. Jyotishmita Saloi, Dibrugarh University
17. Kritartha K. Kashyap, Darrang College
18. Abhishek Singha, Tezpur College
19. Priyanka Baishya, Tezpur College
20. Daisy Basumatry, Tezpur University
21. Rijuma Boro, Tezpur College
22. Abhigyam Bhagawati, Tezpur University
23. Samikshya Sarma, Assam Agricultural University
24. Nilotpal Medhi, GIMT, Tezpur
25. Jahangir Alam, Darrang College
26. Mayuri Das, Tezpur University
27. Neeha Saikia, Tezpur University
28. Amardeep Kumar, Tezpur University
29. Mohammad M A Abunahel, Tezpur University
30. Fahad Al Rofi, Darrang College
31. Sucheta Roy, LGBRIMH, Tezpur
32. Adipriya Boruah, LGBRIMH, Tezpur

33. Mayurakshi Goswami, LGBRIMH, Tezpur
34. Gaurav Gautam Saha, Tezpur University
35. Tinam Borah, Delhi Metropolitan Education, NOIDA