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Is mental health still a stigma ?

Shahul Hameed

BENGALURU: "It is not easy to break a person away from the idea of suicide," said Dr Sanjana Bhagavathi, when asked about the difficulties she faced while spreading awareness of mental health.

She is not alone. Countless other medical professionals and activists are coming up against this invisible wall of social stigma that still surrounds any conversation on mental health that could spread awareness about the issue.

"Stigma is when people find it hard to understand or refuse to understand something," explained Dr Manik Singh.

Sanjana Bhagavathi, who is currently pursuing MD in Psychiatry, takes it upon herself to go on various drives to create mental health awareness for patients and their families.

She said families of patients often refuse to even acknowledge mental illnesses and abandon such patients.

Students who pursue medicine go on such drives to places such as schools, societies, and villages to create awareness on a particular health issue as part of their course. They are required to mentally prepare the masses for such awareness.

Aamina Hussain, a second-year post graduate community-medicine student in Chennai, visits various communities regularly to create



Dr.Aamina interacting with students of Mariyernal nagar Government school, Chegapet

Dr.Rasik

health awareness.

She said the difficulty of addressing the public while creating awareness is that the stigma around mental health is a constant.

She said she is often hoarse after an awareness drive. She added that it is important to build a rapport with the person before creating awareness, as this helps bridge the gap and establish trust between the patient and doctor.

Meanwhile, Singh has developed an app named Here For You with a few engineering students to help spread awareness.

It apparently provides a personalised mental health assessment based the answers that users provide to a questionnaire.

Asked about the difficulties he faced while spreading awareness, Singh instantly pointed to the joke where BC and AD are called Before Corona and After Disease now, because schools and offices that refused to allow his mental health awareness drive called him back to spread awareness about it.

He said the very notion about mental health and mental illness is lacking among the people to whom

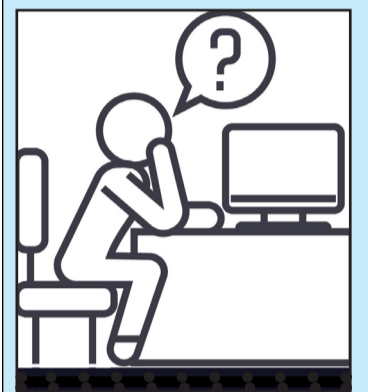
he has spoken. He added that a person, to open up to a counsellor or a doctor, has to overcome three problems: social, psychological and environmental.

He believes that anyone spreading mental health awareness should be aware of the people he is addressing. He said mental health implications of a blue-collar person are different from those of a white-collar worker, but problems like anxiety and depression remain the same.

The difficulty lies in explaining same things differently to people

INSIDE

What Students need during this lockdown ?



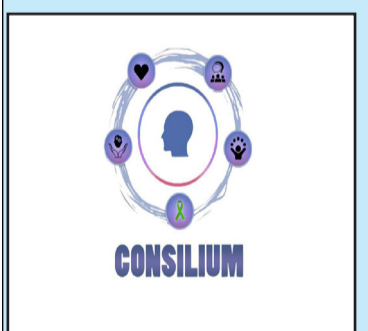
Page 3

Youth seeks non conventional forms of therapy



Page 4

College association helps distress



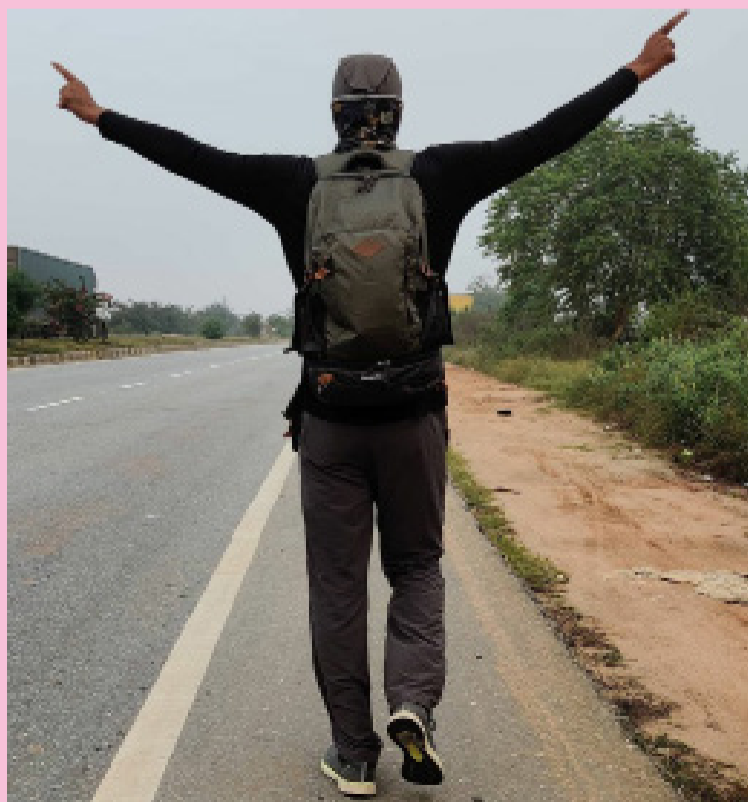
Page 6

Is home the new office & school to work?



Page 8

4000 KM walk for mental health



Ronit pursuing his 4000 km walk

Mustang_rranjan

Shahul Hameed

BENGALURU: Ronit Ranjan goes the extra mile to spread mental health awareness, literally! The 23-year-old life coach is undertaking a herculean task by taking to the highway.

Having dropped out from the National Defence Academy in 2017 due to a spine injury, Ronit went through a dark phase in life where, among other things, he contemplated ending it all. Then he found people suffering as bad as, if not worse than, he was, and decided to become a different kind of soldier.

Ronit has so far covered 2,000-odd km by foot and is yet to cover another 2,000 km in his journey from Kanyakumari to Leh in support of his petition to incorporate mandatory but non-graded mental-health curriculum in all public and private schools across the country.

Ronit Ranjan is a 23-year-old life-coach who is currently touring India to spread awareness about mental health

Ronit feels mental-health awakening is the need of the hour, and should be start at the basic level, which is school. He checked in at Jaipur on February 22 after a 98-day walk that in November 16 last year in Kanyakumari.

He has met people and visited schools, colleges, and government officials along the way, and encouraged them to sign his petition and spread awareness on mental health. More than 53,000 have signed his petition so far.

Youth on writing the stories of sanity

Jesly Pulikoty

BENGALURU: Mathew Thomas K and Prabhsimrat Gill have first-hand experience of mental-health issues, just like other youngsters around them.

However, what sets them apart is that these two have spoken through their writing about the importance of being aware of one's mental health as much as physical health, and more.

Thomas, a university student from London, has had his writing published in *It's Not OK to Feel Blue (And Other Lies)*, curated by popular activist and author Scarlett Curtis.

He was volunteering for an event conducted by Shout, a crisis text-line service in the United Kingdom when he met Curtis and was asked to contribute to the book along with a few other volunteers.

"The book is a collection of stories of people from all walks of life about what mental health means to them. Some of them are contemplative, some inspiring, some absolutely beautiful and some are real tearjerkers. There's something in there for everybody. It also affirms that anyone can struggle with mental health, even if they might be someone we think has it all" he said.

Asked about the process of writing for the book, he said that he wanted his section to be about helping people who are struggling with mental health.

He explained: "I decided to ask people what they wish others knew

when they were at their lowest. The variety of honest experiences and replies showed me just how different a mental health struggle can look like from person to person. I put some of the experiences people shared with me into the essay, with their permission, of course!"

Thomas added that the stigma and lack of conversation around mental health can prove to be dangerous for those who do need help.

"It might make opening up seem like an embarrassing thing to do. However, there's no shame in asking for help, only an admirable regard for one's own well-being and a fearless determination to get better," he said.

"Asking for help when you need it is the bravest and kindest thing you can do for yourself. You're deciding to put yourself first, despite what other people may think, and that's the first step to getting better."

Along with seeking professional help, being around people even if one doesn't want to open up to them, distracting oneself with activities or hobbies of interest such as journaling, listening to or composing music, watching a few episodes of a show, cooking something new, and going out for a walk are some things Thomas considers helpful.

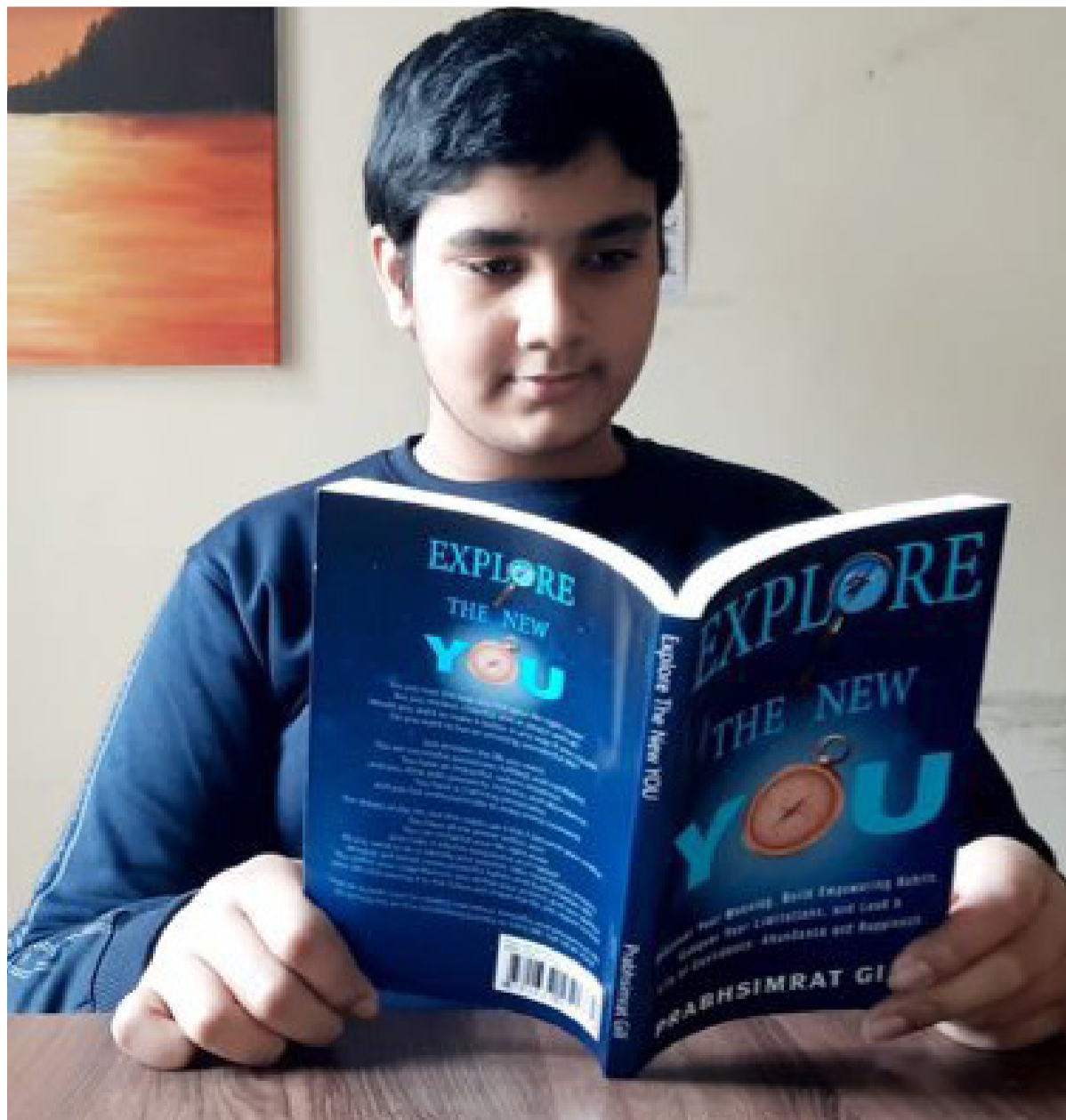
"Mental ill-health, when not looked after, can be as crippling as untreated physical illnesses. It can lead to unemployment, financial struggles, broken relationships, several physical illnesses, and



Twitter.com/scarcurtis

ultimately, even loss of life," he concluded.

And then there's Gill. From wanting to be a motivational speaker and starting a self-help blog in 2019 to utilising the lockdown to compile his thoughts and opinions into a book, this young author of the book *Explore The New You* has come a long way.



twitter.com/prabhsimratg

Jesly Pulikotil

Jesly Pulikotil

This 14-year-old from Punjab is the youngest self-published non-fiction author in the continent, says the Asia Book of Records.

"If something is your priority, you will make time for it. I had to focus on writing a book to inspire people. I made it my priority, and I made time for it. I consciously carved out my after-school hours to work on this project, and my family's support — especially my mom's — has always been a driving factor in keeping me motivated," he explained.

"The book is about finding your purpose and using it to the fullest to unleash your potential. It is

divided into four parts. I explored my thoughts at a much deeper level and learnt more about managing myself and my time by handling my schoolwork and writing the book at the same time! It was a fantastic journey, through which I evolved both my writing and my thought process," Gill said.

He emphasised the importance of open conversations on mental health and well-being, and said this alone would enable communities to achieve growth and excellence.

A strong advocate of self-care, he prefers meditation and journaling to keep a track of his thoughts and enable a peaceful state of mind.

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— Prabhsimrat Gill, Teenager and author of *Explore The New You*, and also the youngest self-published author in Asia

“Asking for help when you need it is the bravest and kindest thing you can do for yourself. You're deciding to put yourself first, despite what other people may think, and that's the first step to getting better.

— Mathew Thomas K, University student in London

What students need during this lockdown

Abhimanyu Sharma

BENGALURU: As educational institutions grappled with striking a balance between providing a healthy and productive learning environment and not comprising on their quality of education during the Covid-19 pandemic, students found their own dilemmas when coping with online learning.

As Communique learnt, it was apparently a matter of different perspectives.

“We basically started with our online classes as soon as the lockdown began. We thought it would be a lot more relaxed schedule, but instead it turned out to be the complete opposite. I wish our college were a bit more lenient with the workload,” said Sahaj Marwah, a student of BSc at Career Point University at Kota in Rajasthan

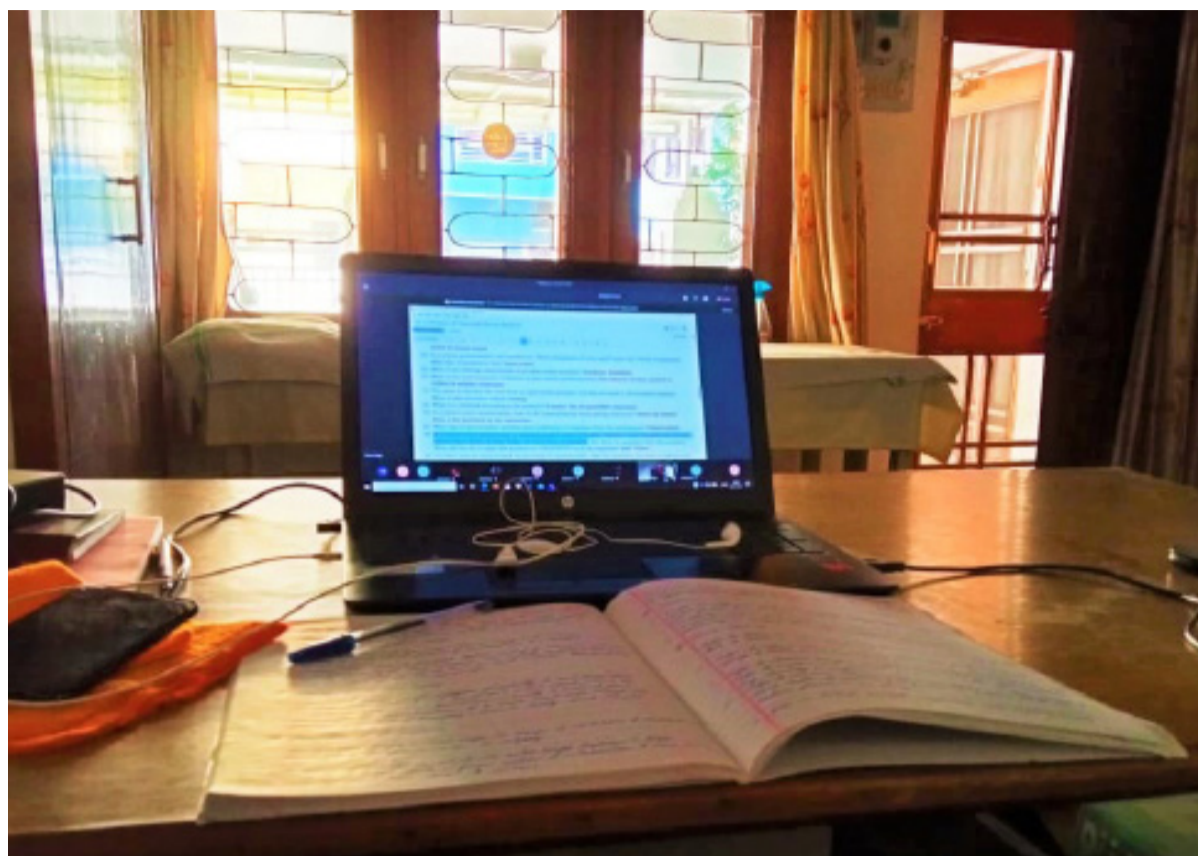
Students also said they felt overworked, overburdened and under-rested, which resulted in

catastrophic effects on their mental health.

“My college was fairly cooperative and understanding. I just felt it was one of those issue of perspective where our teachers had a different outlook and students had a different outlook, which sometimes resulted in problems,” said Swapnil Kaushik, a student of BTech in Lovely Professional University in Punjab.

The battle of perception was a constant issue that classrooms seemed to face.

“I believe teachers and students were both trying their best, but for some reason it didn’t feel okay. I felt I was always doing some assignment or had one pending. I think what we needed was for the college to understand that just because we were at home didn’t mean we were always free,” said Akshat Arora, a student of Jaipur Engineering College and Research Centre (JECRC) University in Rajasthan’s capital city.



Representative image

Abhimanyu Sharma

Simple steps to deal with mental health problems

Suhas S Kashyap

BENGALURU: With the Covid-19 pandemic taking a toll on the mental health of people — young and old alike — here are some common mental health problems and how counsellors and mental-health professionals suggest we should deal with them:

Problem: Changing classrooms, learning difficulties, developmental changes, overscheduled plans and work pressure may affect students’ behaviour and confidence.

Solution: Approach parents, teachers or friends in the comfort zone and express concerns. Parents can also observe certain changes in behaviour, which should be addressed with openness to understand the problem. If the problem seems extreme, professional help should be taken immediately. However, teachers and parents are the first treatment solutions.

Problem: Stress during college days and difficulty in coping with the fast-moving life.

Solution: These kinds of issues may seem very common and are generally neglected, which may lead to serious issues with behaviour and developing of complexes. Most college-going students face this but usually neglect it.

Nowadays, most colleges have a counsellor on campus and it is suggested to get help from them. Support and encouragement from peer groups, teachers and parents do help.

This problem may be recognised through a lack of patience, weird eating patterns, and anxiety in people.

(Saakshi R, Mental Health Counsellor)

Counsellor Sakshi R and Dr Vadiraja HS give solutions to some of the biggest problems people may face during the pandemic

Problem: Metal disturbance due to the lockdown and home confinement.

Solution: It is very normal to have mental disturbances due to sudden changes in the lifestyle, but it can also get very serious in some cases. Keeping oneself involved in various activities, or learning a new skill, practising a hobby will surely help.

It is highly recommended to talk to people and seek help. If ignored, it may lead to issues with complex and behaviour. Yoga, meditation, and listening to music, among other activities, will also help.

Problem: Hormonal changes and development have an effect on mental health.

Solution: Hormonal changes are very normal and their effects on mental health are usual, and need not be worried about. This does not really require medical attention. Maintaining calmness and concentrating more on work will help. Medications for complicated hormonal imbalances are available. Yoga, meditation, sport activities, etc, help in managing mood swings and behavioural changes.

(Dr Vadiraja HS is a research officer at Central Council for Research in Yoga and Naturopathy, New Delhi.)

Self-help techniques to help students

Abhimanyu Sharma

BENGALURU: Here are some self-help techniques that learners may use to cope with the challenges that they may face while dealing with Covid-19, whether it is in their immediate vicinity or among family and friends who are away from them.

Focusing on the present

When you are by yourself at home in front of your computer and drowning in assignments, it is very easy to lose yourself and dwell on thoughts of “what if”.

It becomes crucial during this time to keep reminding yourself about what you are doing “right now,” so that you are able to concentrate on the job at hand and not on the outcome of it in the future.

Prioritising and time management

You can’t do everything at once. The best way to ensure that you achieve your objectives is to make them daunting yet realistic, without compromising the other items on this list and the things you can accomplish.

Managing your time wisely will give you the structure you need to handle your academic and personal to-do list when studying online, from waking up early and prioritising tasks to avoiding distractions and setting goals. It’s a tip for stress management that takes some time to learn, but one that will improve many facets of your life for years to come.

Sleeping hard and well

Teaching yourself how to cope with stress starts with something very basic: having enough sleep. A good night’s sleep is important not just for the success of online learning, but also for maintaining manageable stress levels.

For people both younger (18–25) and older (26–64), the National Sleep Foundation in the United States recommends seven to nine hours of sleep. Find the correct number for you, and try to stick to it. Make sure to stay from any schoolwork just before your bed time.

It has been seen and proven multiple times how blue light emitted from the display screen can cause drastic and harmful effects to not just your eyes but also your circadian rhythms.

Self compassion

When you are pursuing some form of higher education, whether it is online or offline, the tension can creep up on you.

Sleeping issues, a fast heartbeat, anxiety, poor concentration, are just some of the signs that your stress levels are on the rise.

Take a moment and check in with yourself frequently to assess how you feel, physically and emotionally, and implement the methods of stress management that work best for you.

Self compassion

Exercise does not always fit easily into your schedule, regardless of whether you receive your degree online or are overly busy, but for a reason: It works; it’s a time-tested way to relieve stress.

Even a 10-minute brisk walk will raise endorphins (the feel-good neurotransmitters of your body), improve your mood and more.

While treating yourself to high-fat, sugary “comfort foods” is enticing, these foods actually reduce your energy and academic performance.

Feed yourself an organic, high-fibre diet, including fruits, vegetables, protein, and whole grains, for online education. Your body and your scores will thank you.

Youth seek non conventional forms of therapy

Nandita Narayanan

BENGALURU: Does attending multiple sessions of psychotherapy or counselling sound too daunting for you? Here are some non-traditional forms of therapy for you to try out!

Art Therapy: This form of therapy allows you to express your thoughts and emotions through painting or drawing. One does not have to be an exceptional artist. Rather, this helps a person gain a deep understanding of their mind. It helps people face or get over trauma, depression, anxiety, and coping with living patterns. Through professional help, people are given specific art products according to their therapeutic goal. Through art, they are able to reflect on themselves and this can help in self-development and cognitive abilities. Art therapists are trained to pick up any abstract meaning or metaphors from the client's painting and will be studied accordingly.

Dance and Movement Therapy: Also known as DMT, this focuses entirely on the movement of the body. It helps in the overall psychotherapeutic development of emotional and motor functions. The programmes in this therapy

range from basic stretching to subtle forms of yoga and even fluid dance. DMT helps strengthen muscles, and increase flexibility and coordination. It can also help reduce stress and anxiety. Dance therapists can help people let go of themselves, and boost self-esteem and overall cognitive development.

Music Therapy: This form of therapy focuses on employing music to develop emotional and cognitive needs of the individual. This technique, however, must not be confused as just simply listening to different genres of music that appeal to a particular mood. Instead, certified, trained therapists create their own music along with people. It could also include song improvisation and composition. Therapists may also help people open up and share their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and ideas through music.

Aromatherapy: Also known as essential-oil therapy, this entails natural plant-extract oils with medicinal benefits being used to help heal the body, mind and soul. The treatment is done through the sense of smell, by either using products like diffusers, inhalers, and facial steamers, or rubbing aromatic body oils, creams, and



Representative Image

Creative commons

lotions. Aromatherapy is believed to help with insomnia, reduce stress and anxiety, soothe migraines and improve immunity. Some popular aromatherapy oils are lavender, lemongrass, tea tree, peppermint, and clary sage.

Horticulture Therapy: As the name suggests, this technique follows gardening or using flowers

to improve mental and physical health. Therapists usually assign people as caretakers of gardens. This essentially helps develop motor skills and brings about an overall calming effect due to people being in constant contact with nature. Those undergoing therapy have also been known to feel more self-control, which helps boost their

self-esteem.

Laughter Therapy: Considered one of the most common forms of non-traditional therapy, laughing can help boost the flow of endorphins and combat stress or other mental and physical issues. People are asked to either read a funny book or watch a funny movie or anything that would make them

Breaking traditional therapeutic practises



“I was dealing with severe anger and anxiety issues and decided to attend a couple of counselling sessions. However, it was just a one-on-one process where they would just give a solution to your problems and ask you to practice meditation. I felt even more isolated doing so. Fortunately, I discovered dance and movement therapy (DMT) through this non-government organisation (NGO) I was a part of. DMT helped me a lot: mentally, emotionally and physically. It helped me reduce my burdens. As a lover of dance, I found the sessions highly therapeutic. It was also when I realised that I was able to discover my own problems through this technique, and overcame them. It helped me become a new version of myself. levels by a considerable

Neena Haris (21, Managing Director of Luft Ventures)

“Since I work in the corporate world with a 9-10-hour job, it is no news that I face a lot of pressure and am prone to feeling exhausted due to the taxing work hours. I attended two-three sessions of counselling, but wasn't able to continue on a regular basis due to work commitments. I was also living alone at the time, and exploring my artistic abilities. I was able to turn my hobbies like baking, painting, and gardening into therapy as it allowed me to take some time off for myself to focus on my emotions and thought processes. The activities reduced my stress levels by a considerable

Soumya Susan (22, Investment Banker at JPMorgan)



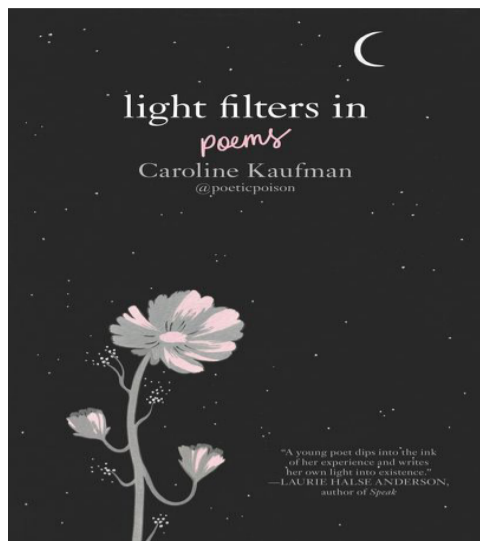
“I was dealing I practise mindfulness for my anxiety. It's basically focusing on one task at a time. If you are eating, you give your full attention to that activity and not allow yourself to be distracted by music or your phone. It has made me feel less anxious about the past as I focus on the present. Sometimes, formulating a timetable gives the day a structure and can help beat anxiety or stress. Journaling also helps releasing pent-up frustrations. I note down thoughts and feelings that I feel are difficult to communicate, and it gives me a sense of relief

Sameha Shroff (22, student)



Bookworm's corner

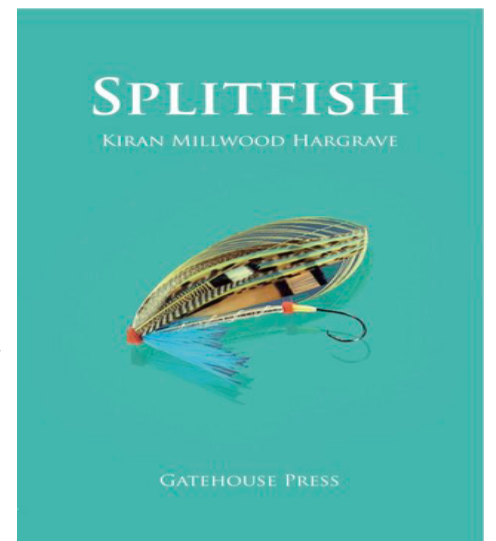
Here are some books by young authors that throw light on mental health issues



Credits: goodreads.com

Title: Light Filters
Author: Caroline Kaufman
Form: Poetry
Synopsis: Kaufman, more popularly known as the Instagram sensation @poeticpoison, compiles her poems into this book featuring new verses on mental health and some popular ones from her account.
Trigger warning: There are references to topics like self-harm.

Title: Splitfish
Author: Kiran Millwood Hargrave
Form: Poetry
Synopsis: Splitfish is divided into four parts. It dives into aspects of violence, mental illness, recovery and improvement. Hargrave's writing is elaborate, sharp, and very unusual.



Credits: goodreads.com

Title: Under Rose Tainted Skies
Author: Louise Gornall
Form: Fiction
Synopsis: Gornall talks about a teenage girl named Norah who battles Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), agoraphobia and anxiety. She takes us through Norah's life with a witty yet sharp storytelling approach, telling us how it feels to live with a mental illness.



Credits: goodreads.com



Credits: goodreads.com

Title: Note to Self
Author: Connor Franta
Form: Poetry, Biography
Synopsis: The book was written while Franta was attending therapy sessions for depression in 2015. It comprises of poems, photographs, diary entries, personal essays, stories, letters to past and future selves, etc, which focus on his experiences of living with depression, social anxiety, coming out to the society, and lost love.

Title: Start Where You Are (2015) / Made Out Of Stars (2018) / Create Your Own Calm (2020)
Author: Meera Lee Patel
Form: Self-help journals
Synopsis: Self-motivation, nurturing creativity, and mindfulness are some of the things addressed in the interactive journal called Start Where You Are. Patel includes writing prompts and activities as well as inspirational quotes to creatively encourage self-reflection. Her second journal encourages readers to understand the importance of self-care. The latest one helps readers understand their everyday worries and becomes a safe space for happiness, clarity, and awareness.



Credits: meerlee.com



Credits: meerlee.com

"It's okay to not be happy and positive every single day. You have to give yourself a break and allow yourself to feel whatever you are feeling. Go easy on yourself."

Note to Self, Connor Franta

Online counselling a solution



Webinar meeting taking place

Anna Mariam Ittyerah

BENGALURU: College counselling has been one of the crucial survival kits for students, especially during and after the pandemic time as they faced plenty of changes, not the least of which was online classes. With the discussion of mental health gaining further ground, here is what St Joseph's College (Autonomous) has to offer students.

Nisha Rao, assistant professor from the college's Department of Psychology, said, "Mental health everywhere, in all spaces, has taken a beating, but this has also resulted in a realisation about the importance of paying attention to one's mental well-being."

She explained: "A lot of us had unhealthy coping mechanisms during the lockdown. Afterwards, some were not even extreme but merely just avoidance, due to which

there is a greater need right now for taking care of our mental health."

She said online counselling and therapy have advantages such as travel-time consumption being taken care of because all you need at the end of the day is a virtual meeting for an hour. "But in terms of education, I feel online mode of teaching is not ideal. However, the choice of attending classes or not has always been up to the students," she said.

It's a very nuanced topic, but yes, there has been a lot more talk about mental health right now, especially in the Gen Z and Millennial generations, according to Madhav Menon, one of the counsellors from the department.

"During the pandemic, I did get a lot of students who wanted to talk, and in between there was a University Grants Commission (UGC) mandating that all colleges should require a helpline for

Here's everything you wanted to know about the counselling services that St Joseph's College (Autonomous) has to offer to its students

students to reach out," he said.

He also mentioned that there are two associations as part of his department — Sumana and Consilium — and both have been doing great things online once the pandemic hit.

"I think our college is doing as much as it can right now in terms of providing a space for their students to come seek help/therapy," he said.

College association helps distress

Anna Mariam Ittyerah

BENGALURU: Consilium, an association under the college's Department of Psychology, aims to provide a safe space and helping hand while advocating positive mental health on campus.

"We started with the green-ribbon campaign, where we used our platform to encourage people to talk more publicly about their mental health. We received a lot of positive response on Instagram stories, and they are all up on our page," said Venet Correa, the convenor of Consilium.

"We also organised webinars on topics such as anxiety, enduring difficult times, and suicide awareness.

Awareness on mental health issues is one of our main agendas,

"they do justice when it comes to promoting mental health, and it's nice to be a part of something that strives to bring happiness in people"

so that is just one half of it," he explained.

The other half was trying to practically do something so students could de-stress. For that Consilium organised activities that included people getting creative and showcasing their talents.

It conducted open mikes, art challenges, a movie night, and even an unwind session where people just sat back and listened to music.

"Creating these safe spaces has been our priority, and we keep working hard so more people feel less lonely and understand that they have a support system in our association to get through this pandemic if they ever need one," said Correa.

So, did it help? Roshal Robert, a first-year BA student, explained how the members of the association were the first friends she made in college.

"They do justice when it comes to promoting mental health, and it's nice to be a part of something that strives to bring happiness in people," she said.

St. Joseph's College (Autonomous),
Bangalore

CONSILIUM

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELLING

WEBINAR ON

ENDURING DIFFICULT TIMES

BY

SOWMYA PUTTARAJU (Ph.D)
MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

13TH MAY, 2020

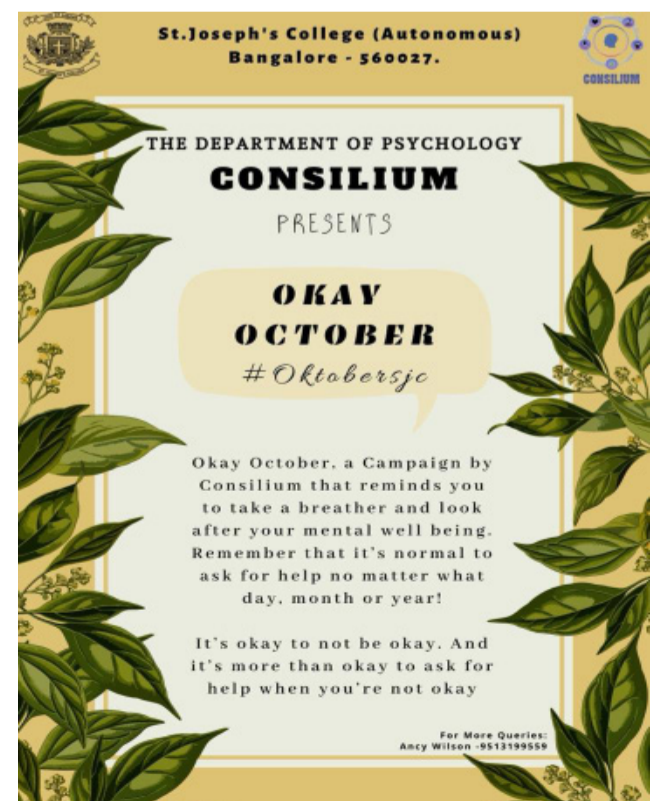
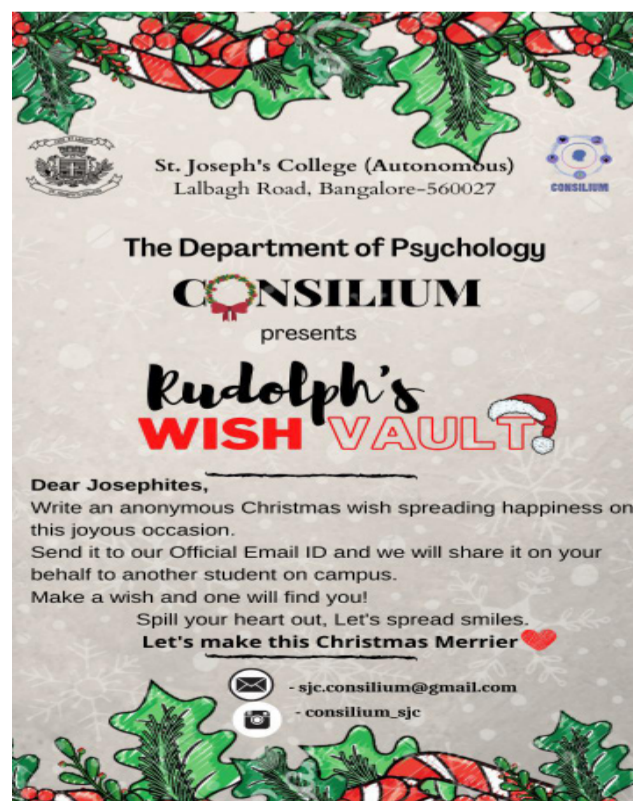
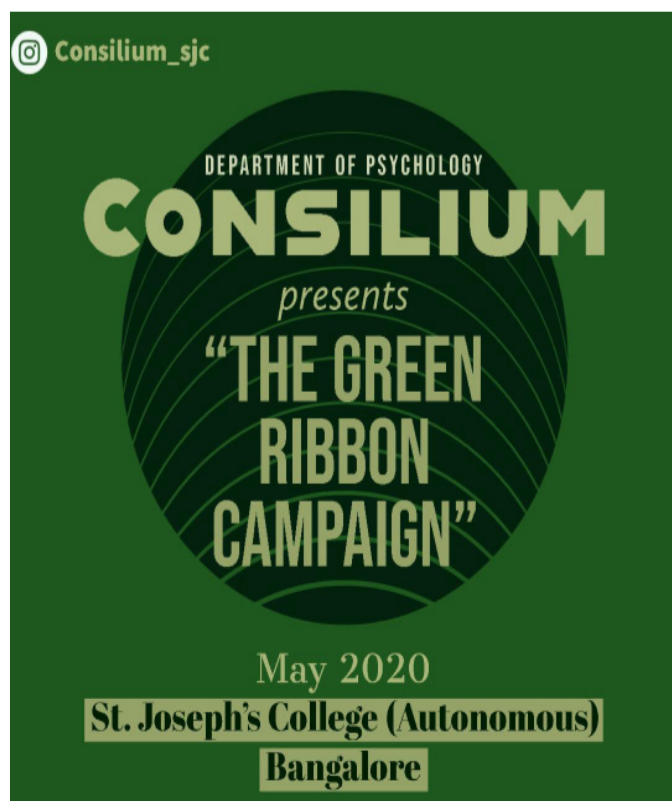
WEDNESDAY,
2-3 P. M.

E-CERTIFICATES WILL BE GIVEN OUT TO ATTENDEES

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Posters of events by the consilium association



Posters of events by the consilium association

Social media creativity on a rise during lockdown

Varsha Benedict

BENGALURU: The Covid-19 pandemic caused a major loss of jobs and business profitability around the globe. However, youngsters turned this into an opportunity that not only helped them kill time but also earn a few bucks: They became young entrepreneurs.

According to a survey by The Accountancy Partnership among those aged 16 to 25, about 44 percent thought starting their own company was more appealing and a more viable option after the pandemic.

It was discovered that a quarter of these young people would prefer to work for themselves rather than for an organisation, while 62 percent agreed that doing so would give them more autonomy over their future. Thus, it was that teenagers and youngsters in their 20s started their own businesses and content creation mostly out of boredom, which resulted in many to not only succeed but also gain fame and their pockets.

Communique interviewed Tanisha Chincholkar and Apoorva [full name], who are amongst many of the youngsters like Agasthya Shah, Shrishti Shivdasani, and Taneesha Mirwani, who turned Instagram influencers.

“I had this page before the pandemic happened, but stopped working on it because I felt like it wasn’t working out. However,

with the lockdown, I had hardly anything to do and decided to invest my time on my page instead,” said Tanisha Chincholkar, the owner and founder of Tyxiie Cosmetics.

“I woke up daily and worked on the products I made, and in no time realised that I actually loved doing this. Only this time I was getting the reach I knew I deserved. Fortunately, my Instagram audience too loved my products and word spread fast,” she explained.

“I started with 200 followers, and today I have a total follower count of 4,491 and my own website: Tyciie.xo,” she said.

Chincholkar also said: “I have successfully shipped over 2,000 orders till date. I am very thankful for the year and the lockdown. If it wasn’t for that, I wouldn’t be where I am.”

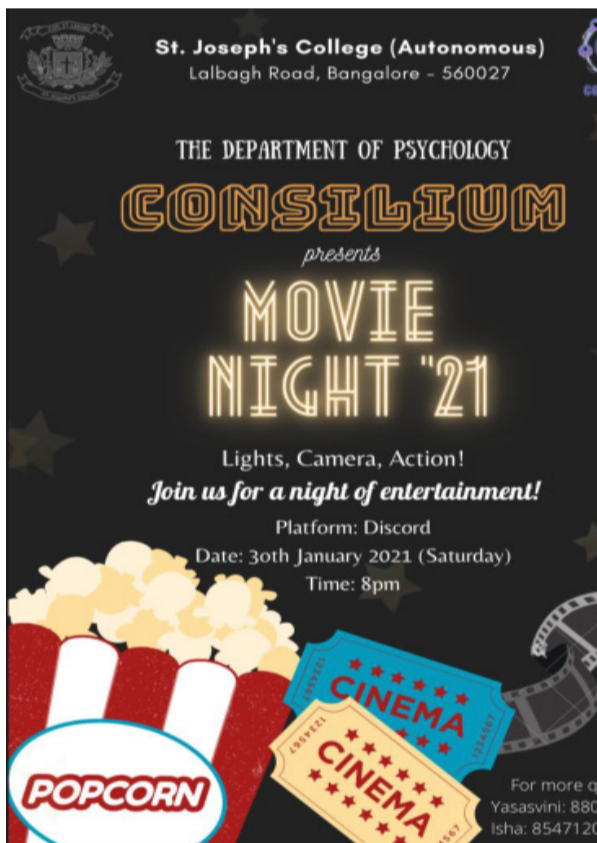
Another Instagrammer, Apoorva+, said 2020 had been the best year for her because today she can afford to take her family for a trip. “Looking back a year ago, if someone told me I would have 2.85 lakh followers on Instagram in less than a year, I would have laughed at them, because I wasn’t really into makeup or fashion as much. However, I was surprised how my sense of humour got me this far,” she said.

“Although, none of the students from my college and my year follow me,” she quipped.



Working from home, during pandemic

Freepik



Posters of events by the consilium association



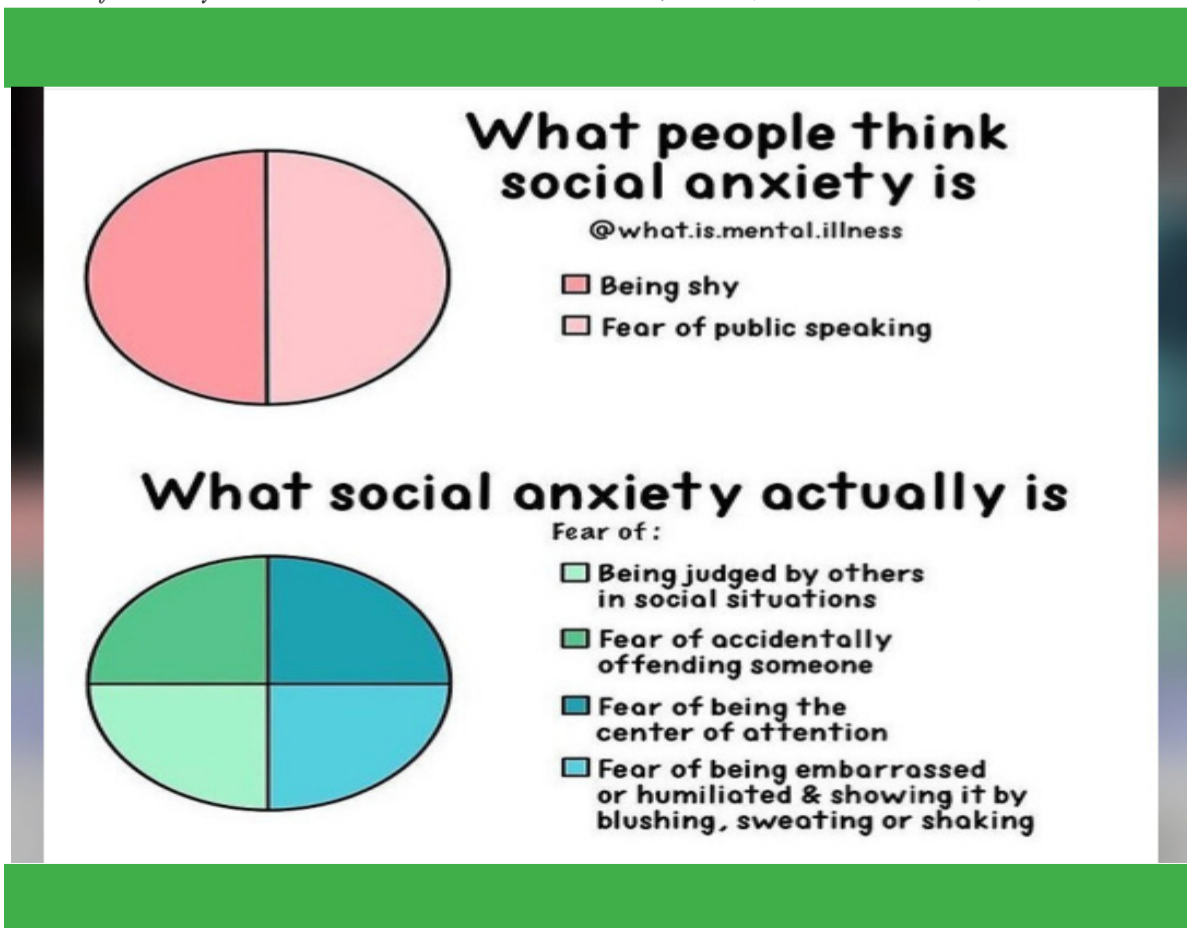
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Experts guide for mental health care

Riya Joseph

BENGALURU: Physically, people distanced during the pandemic. Emotionally, their brains did the distancing for them, leading to mental illnesses that are only now beginning to surface. Communique got in touch with individuals from the field of mental health to get their expert opinion on identification of mental health problems — especially among students — and the road to recovery.

“The boundary for mental illness is not well defined,” explained Veena Ganesh, an independent psychologist from Kochi. She said: “Symptoms can manifest differently in different individuals. This is due to the fact that not everyone will share the same experience and as their experience varies so will the effect of the illness.”

She went on to add: “The American Psychiatric Association provides a framework which describes various illnesses. It lists the symptoms of these illness and mental health professionals use this when diagnosing patients.” She also explained that while this is only a benchmark for diagnosing patients, symptoms can vary depending on the situation.

“The initial step in dealing with



Remedies for better work

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mental health issues is to first identify the cause of the problems,” said Nisha Mary George, a counsellor from Bright Public School.

She explained: “You need to find out where your anxieties or fears are rooted. What exactly causes you to feel this way? And then focus

on what you can do to change that situation. That way, you will be able to overcome feelings of anxiety or fear.” She added that providing a shoulder to lean on goes a long way in helping someone who is mentally vulnerable.

Ritika Mallick, a psychologist with Mind Solace, echoed this

sentiment. She said it is important for a person suffering from mental health problems to have a space to talk about it. She stressed the need for students to have a good community to provide support and an open environment to talk, should they choose to do so.

Leeyir Ete, an assistant professor

in psychology from Rajiv Gandhi University, shared her experience of what she noticed among her students during this pandemic through their online classes. She said the move to online classes was indeed challenging!

“Even if students have a doubt or know the answer to a question, they don’t speak up. In regular classes, if I see the student, I can judge from their non-verbal behaviour — through their body language or facial expression — if they have understood something,” she explained. “But in online class, that is almost impossible to do.”

She said students not being used to the lack of interaction and communication when learning leads them to feel demotivated. She added that frequent absences from classes and declining academic performance are tell-tale signs of mental issues in students.

She also said: “If you get down to the basics, stress results from overburdening of information. When you have a lot of obligations, worries, and tensions coming from all sides of your life and that gets out of your control, that is when you feel stressed.”

She said it becomes easier to manage stress if you break down things and prioritise your work.

Is home the new office & school to work?

Worinphi Ronra Shimray

BENAGALURU: The home today functions simultaneously as a school, an office and a living space, thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic locking us in. Students and parents suffered equally, having to multitask at a level no one ever imagined or thought of.

“It isn’t easy for me to explain and make them understand the lessons. They spend more time on screens, so trying to keep them away from this is a very difficult task.”

“The hard fact is that I could not meet my friends and relatives or stroll around without the fear of getting Covid-19. My eyes were getting strained because of the magnitude of tasks that I’ve had to do in front of the white screens. Constant depressing thoughts and



Home-school as the new normal

Worinphi Ronra Shimray

regrets of the time wasted which I could’ve utilised to do something productive, and of course, the unclear future after the lockdown

only added to my stress,” said Praveen Singh, a student of Delhi University.

Sanyaola Kapai, a mother of two children, said: “I have to be a tech savvy (because of online classes and class project). I need to be up-

to-date with their lessons and also keep them physically active inside the house alongside daily chores. She explained: “Keeping them in touch with their school friends and managing their school project with the minimum available resources at home was one of the most challenging tasks.”

Themchuiton Zingkhai, a Standard VIII student, said: “Staying home 24x7, locked up within, every day being the same with no activity apart from daily house chores made things tedious and dull, and I found it hard to focus on anything I did.”

Soso Shimrang, a mother of three children, said: “My kid being at home makes me busier as they are too playful. When it comes to education, I have to manage time to teach them. I have to learn the syllabus and guide them accordingly as well, which is a job of teachers. And it isn’t easy for me to explain and make them understand the lessons. They spend more time on screens, so trying to keep them away from this is a very difficult task.”

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