



APPROACHING TEENS



IAP DELHI State Social Initiative
(A concise book highlighting teenage issues.)



About the Author

“When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years.”

~ Mark Twain



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Index

| | | |
|-----|--|-------|
| 1. | INTRODUCTION..... | 3 |
| 2. | PRIMARY PROBLEMS FACED BY TEENAGERS..... | 5-11 |
| | • Health related problems | 5 |
| | • Dealing with peer pressure | 6 |
| | • Dealing with parents’ expectations | 7 |
| | • Dealing with academic pressure | 7 |
| | • Emotional and physical bullying | 8 |
| | • Substance abuse | 9 |
| | • Premature sexual activity | 10 |
| | • Social media malaise..... | 11 |
| 3. | SECONDARY PROBLEMS IN TEENAGERS..... | 12-13 |
| | • Anger | 12 |
| | • Fear and Anxiety | 12 |
| | • Depression..... | 12 |
| | • Suicide | 13 |
| 4. | WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO HELP THEIR TEENAGERS..... | 14 |
| 5. | MANAGING PROBLEMS IN DIGITAL ERA..... | 15-17 |
| 6. | EMPOWERING TEENAGERS | 18-21 |
| 7. | CONCLUSION | 22 |
| 8. | REFERENCES | 22-23 |
| 10. | TEENAGE DAY 2020 | 24-25 |
| 9. | IAP DELHI OFFICE BEARERS 2020 | 25-26 |
| 10. | AHA DELHI OFFICE BEARERS 2020 | 27 |

Introduction

Teenage, in literal terms is the age group between 13-19 years. It is usually associated with adolescence which is a transitional phase of physical and psychological development occurring during the period from puberty to adulthood.

When you think of the word 'teen' the words that may come to your mind are immature, confused, rebellious, self-absorbed, fascinating, lit, GOAT* and what not. Since there is no one way of describing teenagers, this children-turning-adults' period is a highly misunderstood age group.

Teenage is a crucial period in life with tumultuous physical and emotional changes. These 'not so kids or adults' face a lot of challenges and if they are left to their own whims and fancies, there is a high chance of them getting derailed in life.

It is challenging to tackle this age group even though every adult has gone through it. This book is an attempt to throw light on some of the major problems faced by teenagers and serve as a useful guide for parents, teachers and teens to manage them.

**LIT and GOAT are some of the terms used by present day teenagers which too may not be understood by adults. Lit: Exciting/Excellent GOAT: Greatest Of All Time.*

Primary Problems Faced By Teenagers

Health Related Problems

The teenage phase is a time where in addition to emotional troubles, children undergo a lot of physical changes. These changes have a huge impact on their physiology because this is the time they are building a self-image and coming to understand their own sexuality. Some health related issues are:

Sudden Change In Body Image

Teenagers perceive a sudden change in their body due to physiological changes in them. Living in a society with such firm stereotypes entrenched in our psyche, teenagers find it difficult to accept any other image i.e. girls with long hair, fair and thin built and boys with tall, macho, chiselled built. Along with others, they judge themselves based on these stereotypes and succumb to body shaming.



Hormonal Changes

A sudden spurt of hormonal activity leave teenagers fighting problems like acne and unwanted facial hair- hirsutism. These hormonal changes exacerbate teenage problems of body image and self-confidence.



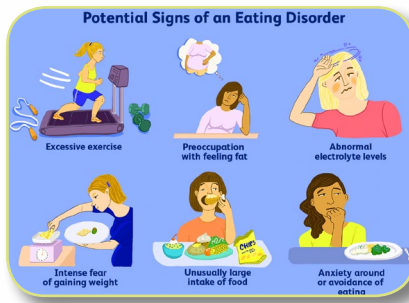
Eating Disorders:

To achieve a “wrapped” body image, teenage girls and boys go on fashionable and unhealthy diets without seeking proper consultation and in severe cases may develop eating disorders.

Girls in a bid to look slim starve themselves. Some may develop Anorexia nervosa or Bulimia nervosa. Being “healthy” is considered as being fat, especially in the Indian household. Gaining some weight is a part of normal growth and it is unhealthy to restrict it.

Primary Problems Faced By Teenagers

Boys, on the other hand, in an attempt to bulge up start taking supplements. This manifestation is known as Bigorexia (or Reverse anorexia). Both these lifestyles are harmful and can lead to nutritional deficiencies, weak bones and muscles, decreased immunity etc.



Anorexia nervosa: an eating disorder, characterized by low weight, food restriction, fear of gaining weight and a strong desire to be thin.

Bulimia nervosa: an eating disorder characterized by binge eating followed by purging. Binge eating refers to eating a large amount of food in a short amount of time. Purging refers to the attempts to get rid of the food consumed. This may be done by vomiting or taking laxatives.

Bigorexia: It is the delusional or exaggerated belief that one's own body is too small, too skinny, insufficiently muscular, or insufficiently lean, although the individual's build is normal or even exceptionally large and muscular

Dealing With Peer Pressure

Stress of doing things and behaving in a certain way under the influence of friends is a major cause of anxiety among teenagers. In a scenario where they derive their image from how they are perceived by their friends, teenagers today are vulnerable to illegal and unsocial behaviour because of peer pressure.

Here are some out of character actions teenagers dealing with the issue of peer pressure take:

1. Teenagers try alcohol or other drugs for peer acceptance and get addicted to it.
2. A daredevil challenge taken up just to make a point may prove to be life threatening for teen.
3. Rash driving to establish a cool persona and to show off might take a turn for the worst.



Primary Problems Faced By Teenagers

Parents' Expectations

Parents often put undue demands on their children to excel in every walk of life and lead the life of a moral and model citizen. With such expectations, a child is most likely to fail and disappoint parents. Some examples are:

1. Constant pressure on teen to top the class in every subject.
2. Some parents expect their children to be the best in every field like academics, sports, extracurricular and teenagers suffer from major self-esteem if they fail to do so.
3. Parents want their child to be at their best behaviour at home, school and socially, leaving no scope for any harmless fun for the child. Restricted environment and constant expectation of parents leads to a lot of teenage issues like social anxiety and lack of self-confidence.



Academic Pressure

Pressure of studies on teenagers is more than what it was decades ago due to so many boards and professional opportunities and it adds to the baggage of performance pressure.

Competition is cut throat high among students and that “the best will survive” is wrongly taught by elders. Feeling of mediocrity has led to an alarming rise of depression related issues among teenagers.

Such constant pressure and the feeling of “guilt” when not studying may lead to them missing out on more enjoyable years of their life and the important experiences and life skills that aren’t otherwise taught.

Some of the key issues are:

1. Long number of hours that teenagers spend on their studies, affect their physical and emotional health negatively.
2. Pressure to get in to the best college leads them to suffer from anxiety and it is a major cause of depression among teenagers.
3. At one end there may be a rebellious teenager refusing to study under the pressure of parents and on the other end there may be a hardworking teenager who cuts off from society. Both are damaging situations.

Primary Problems Faced By Teenagers



Emotional & Physical Bullying

Teenagers are emotionally still developing and tend to be sensitive towards any remarks. When these remarks and jeers become targeted, mean and offensive, emotionally and physically traumatising, it is called Bullying.

Teenagers tend to believe that bullying is a custom, a normal behaviour they need to exhibit with other teenagers. It can be a coping mechanism for those who have been bullied or they may do it to look “cool” among their peers.

Bullying is often considered a norm by the parents which is supposed to toughen their children up but can take a malicious turn in teenagers’ lives. These teenagers may become bully as adults and the vicious cycle goes on.

Bullying is one of the leading causes of suicide among the Indian teenagers. Here are some incidents which fall under the category of bullying:

1. Derogatory and offensive remarks about physical appearance.
2. Derogatory and mocking remarks about sexuality.
3. Physical ragging and making them do chores and assignments.
4. Unkind comments by teachers on performance or physical appearance in front of peers.



Primary Problems Faced By Teenagers

Substance Abuse

A significant public health problem, it refers to use of psychoactive substances, licit or illicit drugs which are not medically indicated (commonly used are alcohol, tobacco, marijuana).



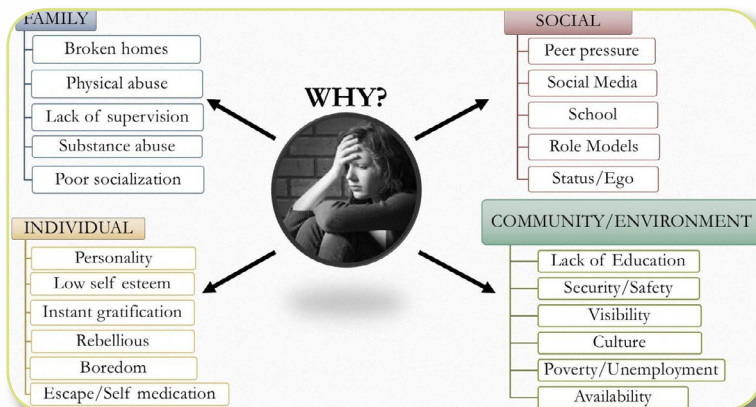
Teenage period is the time of maximum experimentation and formation of identity. It is estimated that, in India, by the time most boys reach ninth grade, 50% of them have tried at least one of such substance. It can be classified under both

primary (e.g. Out of excitement) and secondary (e.g. Due to academic pressure) problems of teenagers.

There could be many factors for this problem. Some are mentioned below:

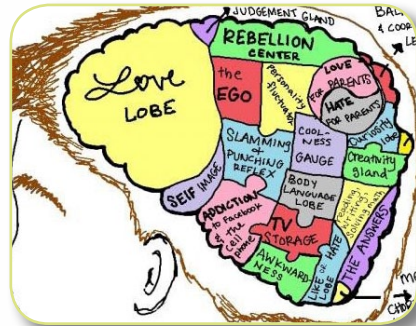
Following are the red flags that a parent, teacher or a treating physician should suspect in a teenager with the problem of substance abuse:

1. Avoiding eye contact and hug by parents.
2. Efforts to mask the smell as evidenced by frequent rinsing and washing of hands, use of perfumes, deodorant or chewing mint.
3. New set of friends (seniors)
4. Social isolation and loss of interest in activities which the teenager was enjoying earlier.
5. Scholastic deterioration
6. Poor hygiene, altered appetite and sleep pattern



Primary Problems Faced By Teenagers

7. Changed preference for movies and music which depict high action and drug abuse.
8. Spending extra time in toilet
9. Stealing money/valuables from home
10. Unexplained irritability and increasing conflicts with parents and teachers.



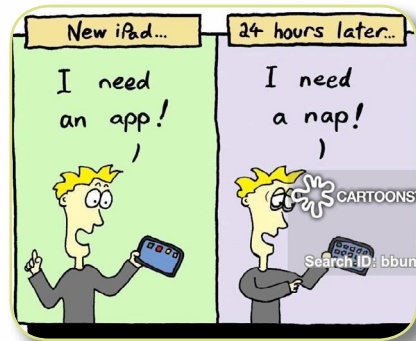
Premature Sexual Activity

A certain level of sexual curiosity about their own bodies and towards others is natural and healthy for teenagers. Indications of unhealthy sexual activity in teenagers are:

1. **Premature sex:** Exposed to an overload of information from the internet or wrong group of friends, teenagers tend to become sexually active at an early age and risk themselves to unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Risk of early sexual experimentation is associated with other high-risk behaviours in adolescence, including sexual abuse, drug abuse, and emotional adjustment
2. **Unsafe sex:** It is defined as sexual activity where precautions are not taken to reduce the risk of spreading sexually transmitted infections. Misleading or incomplete information on contraception leads to multiple problems.

Social Media Malaise

A new age issue which is the root cause of many teen problems is over exposure to various gadgets and easily available information over the internet has led to increase in screen time.



Teenage issues related to Social media are:

1. **Cyber Bullying:** Being body shamed for their pictures or made fun of on social media platforms open to everyone, has an extremely traumatic impact on teenagers' psyche.

Primary Problems Faced By Teenagers

2. Easy access to pornography sites and over exposure to violence on the internet videos and games fuels aggressive and anti-social behaviour in teenagers.
3. Preferring to spend so much time on the internet and compromise with their outdoor and physical activities is a major cause of increasing obesity and other related metabolic problems.
4. **INTERNET ADDICTION DISORDER (IAD)** Also known as problematic internet use is generally defined as problematic, compulsive use of internet that results in significant impairment in an individual's function in various life domains over a prolonged period of time.

Given their vulnerable age, the overuse of Internet may be considered a risky behaviour and may lead to Internet addiction. Research shows that 92% of teens are online daily and 24% of teens report they go online almost constantly.

Here are some of the warning signs to look out for:

- Excessive or problematic use. Spending most of the time of the day on the internet.
- Checking phones even without purpose.
- Lack of focus on academics or extracurricular activities.
- Anxiety, depression and irritability when access to smartphone, tablet or laptop is taken away.
- Disregard for personal hygiene
- Change in eating or sleeping patterns.

Addiction to gaming has been described in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), which is used by mental health professionals and it is included in International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11). Classification of Internet addiction under addiction/mental disorders is a subject of much debate and a growing body of research.



Secondary Problems in Teenagers

A teenager may face one or more problems as mentioned previously. If those issues are not dealt with properly, it may lead to a higher set of problems which will be difficult to treat and may require the intervention of a Health Professional. Some of these are discussed below:

Anger

Anger can be a challenging emotion to tackle. It often occurs as a result of being a victim to any of the problems mentioned previously or due to prolonged reaction to a certain event experienced by the teenager. Adults must carefully identify the underlying cause of the anger.

Anger must be dealt with as early as possible as it has a future tendency of developing into serious forms of violence and self-harm.

Fear & Anxiety

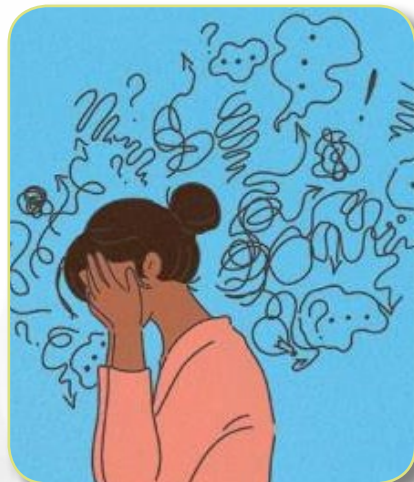
Anxiety is a normal human reaction that serves as an important survival mechanism. However excessive forms can point out towards deeper problems such as Phobias, Generalised Anxiety Disorder, Panic Attacks, Obsessive Compulsive Disorders (OCDs), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD).

Depression

According to a study conducted by WHO in 2017, one in four Indian children in the age group of 13-15 years, suffers from depression. Given the fact that India has the largest population of adolescents in the world (21.8%), these numbers of depression among the teenagers are extremely alarming.

Some signs of depression are:

1. Lack of motivation, constant fatigue and lethargy
2. Constant unexplained body ache.
3. Lack of concentration
4. Sudden and frequent emotional outbursts
5. Melancholy and isolation
6. Loss of interest in activities that were previously enjoyed.

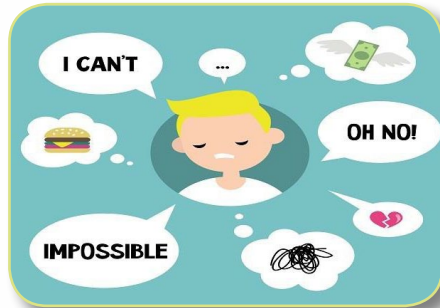


Secondary Problems in Teenagers

Suicide

India has the highest rate of suicide among the youth i.e. 35.5 per 100000 population (Lancet2012).

Every hour, one student commits suicide in India. Students comprise 6.4% of those who committed suicide in in India in 2015. Self-harm is the most common cause of adolescent mortality in India. (Global Burden of Disease Study 2013). Most common known causes of teenagers' suicide in India are bullying, family problems, physical and mental illness, school failure, drugs, and sexual abuse (National Crime Records Bureau).



There are few warning signs for suicide in teenagers which can alert parents and school teachers to take urgent remedial action for prevention. These are mentioned as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| VERBALISING | Death wish revealed through talking, writing or texting on social media. Wishing, "I should have never been born. I wish this was the end." |
| ACQUIRING MEANS | Collecting weapons, pills, ropes, maps, train time tables. Searching the internet ways to do self-harm or suicide helplines. |
| FEELING OF HOPELESSNESS | Sense of being trapped, thinking "nothing better will happen" Ending any discussion on, "There is no hope and life has no meaning." |
| SELF HATRED | Guilt, shame, serious dislike for self, disturbed sleep and appetite. Mentioning, "I am a burden to my family or world." |
| GETTING THINGS IN ORDER | Giving away possessions and valuables to friends or siblings. Closing bank accounts and doing charity. |
| "GOODBYE" | Making unexpected visits to friends and relatives, Saying bye as if it is the last one |
| SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL | Isolation from friends and family, deterioration of social relationships. Excessive aggression. Fall in academic performance. |
| HIGH RISK BEHAVIOUR | reckless driving, drug abuse, increased consumption of alcohol and tobacco |

What Can Parents Do To Help Their Teenagers



1. We need to look at ways to help teens, up our parenting skills, stop complaining and take responsibility of our teens.
2. We cannot ignore our parental duties. Even though they are teens, they need us just as they needed us when they were little. Cell phones, computers and other gadgets that they spend time on cannot give them the nurturing they need.
3. Provide a healthy and complete meal whenever you pack it or put on the table. Make vegetables and fruits interesting.

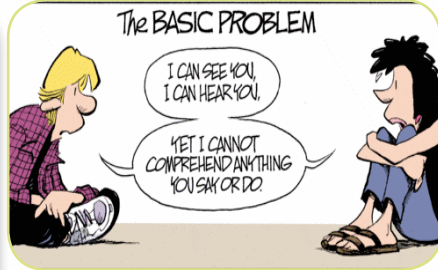
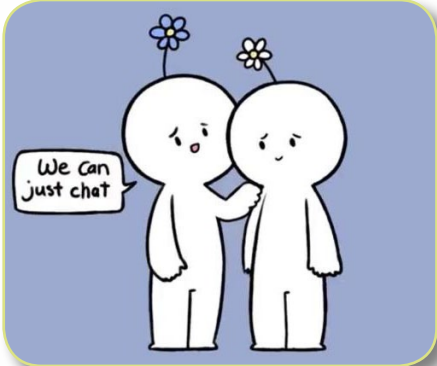
- not as enemies. Communicate positively and avoid commands.
5. Discuss rules of chores, homework, drinking, driving, dating, sex and alcohol use.



4. Build lines of communication that are so strong that your children always look up to you as allies and

6. Let them know that you don't always have answers and you are not always right. Listen to their opinions and offer help when needed.

What Can Parents Do To Help Their Teenagers



- 7. Be graceful enough to thank, appreciate and love them at every possible occasion.
- 8. Punishing teens does not really work but disciplining them does. Make sure your policies are helping instead of hurting.

- 10. Fear of failure is one of the greatest reasons for stress, so help them manage their anxiety and self-esteem. If teenagers show signs of anxiety or depression, get them help immediately.
- 11. Give them the space they need. Over indulgence can negatively impact your relationship with your children.
- 12. Most importantly, let them know that you care.



- 9. Be willing to listen to their point of view. Give it a good thought before you trash it. An encouraging and supporting attitude helps.



Managing Problems In Digital Era

Important digital parenting tips are:

1. Be the first one to expose your child to the cyber world. Explore the internet together.
2. Be a good role model of cyber habits. Restrict media use and ensure media free zones and media free time.
3. Put emphasis on the useful contribution of media towards improving knowledge and information and providing recreation.
4. Teach cyber ethics and consequences of hurting someone on the internet. Make the teen aware about POCSO Act (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) mentioning that posting inappropriate text or pics can be a crime or sexual offence.
5. Never reveal personal information on the internet e.g. PAN number, bank account details, mobile number etc.
6. Be vigilant about the teen's cyber circle. Ask about any threats or bullying.
7. WWW approach: Ask the teenager about Who, Where, What they talk online. Educate the child on hazards of talking to strangers.
8. Use of tracking software e.g. Mob safety ranger browser, Famigo, Video Monster. Remember nothing works better than parental vigilance.
9. Do not blame the cyber world for teenagers' worsening behaviour. Be a Web Wise parent.
10. Keep updated with Time And Technology

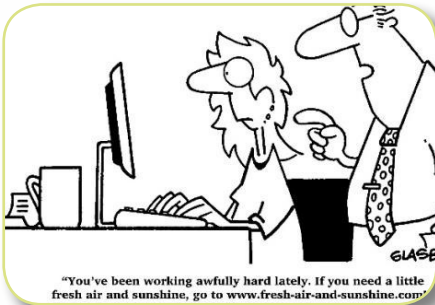


Advice to teenagers on healthy media usage

1. Teens should have consistent limits placed on the time spent on media and the type of media use.
2. Time spent on media should not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviours essential for health. Teenagers should formulate a family media use plan and adhere to it.
3. It is important to designate media free times, such as dinner or driving and media free locations at home such as bedrooms.
4. Teenagers should have an ongoing communication with care takers about media literacy, online safe-

Managing Problems In Digital Era

ty, including treating others with respect. They should not indulge in online offences like cyber bullying. They should confide in their parents and caretakers about any uncomfortable messages on digital media.



5. Teens should not sleep with the electronic devices in their bedrooms, including TVs, computers and smartphones and should avoid exposures to screens for nearly an hour before bedtime.
6. Teenagers should refrain from entertainment media while doing homework.



Empowering Teenagers

Parents and teachers play a vital role in early detection of teenage problems because of close proximity to them at home and school respectively.



Following are the tools and guidelines to help them aim for prevention and early detection of teenage issues:

a. LIFE SKILLS

This training aims at behaviour change designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills. The process is dynamic and skills change with time and growing experiences. Life skills help teenagers to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life enabling them to lead a meaningful life with psychosocial competence. There are

more than one hundred skills which help us survive, sustain and succeed. WHO has clubbed them in to three categories which are-

1. Thinking Skills: Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Problem solving, Decision making
2. Personal Skills: Self-awareness, Coping with stress and emotions
3. Interpersonal Skills: Communication skills, Empathy



Core life skills are discussed below:

1 SELF-AWARENESS:

Ability to recognize one's strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes. Self-awareness is important for being comfortable with oneself and to recognize the ways by which one can handle stress.

2 EMPATHY:

It refers to understanding others' emotional states and perspectives. This helps in having better interpersonal relationships.

3 CREATIVE THINKING:

It is the ability to visualize and analyse things in novel ways. It helps

Empowering Teenagers

in building new perspectives and to think out of the box hence helps in finding new solutions to existing problems.

4 CRITICAL THINKING:

It is the process of analysing a problem in an objective manner. It helps in objective evaluation of information.

5 PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING:

These skills nurture an objective approach towards a problem and facilitate the process of selection of those solutions that are most economical.



6 COPING WITH STRESS:

Identifying triggers of stress, ways to encounter stressors and to prevent distress are important skills for adolescents. Stress management is discussed in a later section.

7 COPING WITH EMOTIONS:

It refers to understanding and responding to one's emotions in an effective way without suppressing or bottling up of emotions. It avoids an impulsive or aggressive response to an emotionally arousing situation.

8 EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION:

Effective communication with family and friends enables problem solving. It also encourages the use of assertive communication (verbally and non-verbally), especially with peer pressure

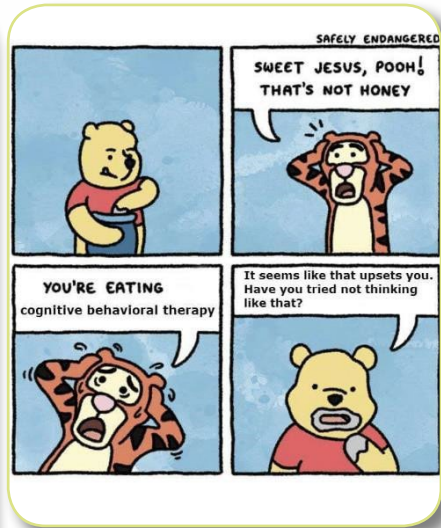
9 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS:

Healthy interpersonal relationships are crucial for mental well-being. Compassion, empathy, emotional reciprocity and effective communication skills are its vital components.

b. Building Teen Resilience

It is the capacity to handle changes or adversities. Resilient teens have high frustration tolerance and can withstand unpleasant situations. Parents and teachers can inculcate resilience in a teenager by being a positive role model, appreciating desirable behaviour, participation in sports and extracurricular activities, giving responsibility and by teaching that failures do occur in this world and it is not the end of life.

Empowering Teenagers



C Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

It is a short term therapy technique that can help people find new ways to behave by changing their thought patterns.

This is based on the triad of thinking, feeling and behaviour. Teens' belief system decides their reaction to adversities. Through this approach caretakers can understand the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviour, identify the faulty self-talk, dispute irrational beliefs and encourage an effective new thinking process to overcome adversities.

It is a collaborative therapy, requiring the individual and counsellor to work together and eventually the person learns to become his own therapist. A parent or teacher must identify early signs and approach a therapist accordingly.

d Positive Psychology

This emphasises the development of positive mental wellbeing with less emphasis on mental abnormalities.

Some strategies include:

- Encouraging optimism: Helping them find positives in an unprecedented setback or difficult situations.
- Identifying self: Knowing one's strengths and weaknesses can help one face the situation with the right attitude. Helping teens identify them can help them learn from their mistakes and prevent future mishaps.
- Promoting kind actions like gratitude, selflessness and finding happiness in little things.

Empowering Teenagers

e Stress Management

Stress is positive as it motivates one to be alert and prepared to face life challenges. But when it takes away positive energy and leads to loss of productivity and poor health, it needs to be managed at the earliest.

A few stress management tips are:

1. Identify the stressor: An adversity could be internal or external
2. Time management
3. Positive thinking (putting up motivational posters in teenager's room may be helpful)
4. Behaviour modification (working on irrational beliefs, being realistic, disputing the self-defeating thoughts, avoiding temptation and making persistent efforts towards the desired goal)
5. Healthy habits, creating work life balance, importance to balance diet, physical activity and recreational time.
6. Relaxation techniques (Adequate sleep, yoga, deep breathing exercises, meditation, pursuing hobbies)
7. Teenagers with SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time bound) are likely to remain focused and thus can prevent harmful levels of stress.



f Mindfulness Approach

These comprise paying attention on purpose, living in the present moment and non-judgementally. This can be achieved through meditation, contemplation exercises and through paying attention to everyday activities like walking, eating, gardening etc.



Conclusion & References

Conclusion

Hopefully, the readers would have realised the vulnerability of teenage period and how important it is to not take these issues lightly. Children are our future and depending on the values they learn and grow upon, serve as a boon or a bane to our society. It is our duty to take control of our present and make world a better place for teenagers.

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Teenage Day 2020



COPING THE LOCK DOWN PANDEMIC COVID-19 & TEENAGERS




October 20, 2020


02:30 - 06:00

PROGRAM

TOPIC : "IMPACT OF LOCKDOWN ON TEENS"

| | |
|---|------------|
| Inauguration | 20 minutes |
| Panel Discussion 1 | |
| • Adolescent coping strategies, Participants - Teenager as moderator & penalist | 40 minutes |
| Guest Lecture : Dr. K Sharda | |
| • Adolescent violent behaviour: Role of Internet addiction and Pornography | 20 minutes |
| Panel discussion 2 | |
| • Health and economy problems during Lock down (by teens, parents and teachers) | 30 minutes |
| Valedictory (involving teenagers time spent activities during lock down) | 20 minutes |

[CLICK HERE TO JOIN THE MEETING](#)

 
October 20, 2020 02:30 - 06:00

Teenage Day 2020

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SPEAKER



Dr. K Sharada
Adolescent expert and Senior Medical Officer at North Delhi Municipal corporation

IAP Delhi Office Bearer 2020

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