

# Developing Mental Health and Coping Skills



## Module 10



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND  
FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION  
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

*Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling five balls in the air. You name them – work, family, health, friends, and spirit – and you're keeping all of these in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls – family, health, friends, and spirit are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged, or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in your life.*

—BRIAN DYSON



# Developing Mental Health and Coping Skills

Module 10



राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्  
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## About the Module

This is the tenth module of the course. It aims at introducing you to mental health and well-being, coping skills and the influence of cultural diversity on adjustment and mental health.

The first unit discusses the concept of mental health and its characteristics. The influences on mental health and the role of institutions like family, school, etc. on promotion of skills needed for adjustment and well-being have been discussed. The second unit on development of coping skills creates awareness of the stresses and challenges of life which affect individual's physical and mental health. The need for acquisition of coping skills has been highlighted. The way coping skills could be enhanced has also been discussed in this unit. The third unit introduces you to the factors inherent in the culture which influence adjustment. The cross-cultural encounters in culturally diverse populations often cause problem of adjustment which have implications for the skills needed by counsellors. The attitudes, values and skills underlying intercultural orientation which are important for the counsellor have been discussed.

There are self-check exercises and activities in every unit which will help you evaluate your progress through the module. Summary given at the end provides an overview of the unit, and references and additional readings give additional sources of information.





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# 1



## Promoting Mental Health and Well-being

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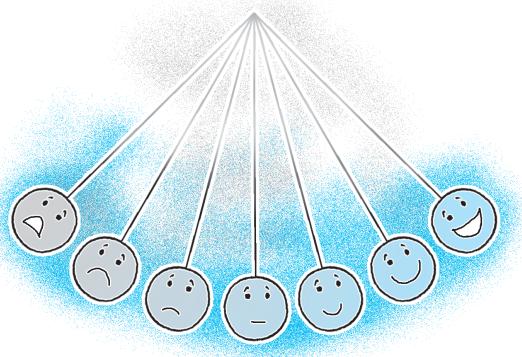


# Promoting Mental Health and Well-being

1

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Childhood is the opportune time when the foundations of personality are laid. Family, the first institution to which a child is exposed, plays an important role in influencing the development of personality. Apart from the family, the school too has an important role in promoting the knowledge and competence of the child, that determines the quality of life as an adult. Lack of awareness among parents and teachers about how they can help healthy personal growth of children may cost a society dearly in terms of human resources. The role of the school, as an educational institution, is important in promoting mental health and undoing any wrongs done to the child's mental health due to an impoverished family environment. But if the school climate is not conducive to nurturing mental health, children are likely to suffer from various psychological problems.



This unit aims at creating awareness about the concept of mental health and describes the characteristics of mental health. The unit also explains that mental health is not an all-or-none affair; rather it is the degree of mental health that is relevant.

The determinants of mental health, and certain ways of promoting the mental health of pupils have also been discussed. After reading this unit, you may develop your own conception of mental health, and visualise your role in influencing pupils positively and creating a healthy awareness among parents so that they too can promote mentally healthy children.

## 1.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- *describe* the concept of mental health based on a medical, normative and psychological approach.
- *identify* the behavioural characteristics of mentally healthy children.
- *explain* the continuum of mental health.
- *state* the skills and competencies necessary for staying mentally healthy.
- *describe* briefly the concept of mental health in both personal and social context.
- *briefly* state the goals of mental health.
- *describe* at least three different applications of promoting mental health.
- *explain* the determinants of mental health.
- *discuss* the role of home, family, school and society in promoting mental health.

## 1.2 CONCEPT OF MENTAL HEALTH

In this section, you will view mental health from three major perspectives. These views are from the medical perspective, the normative perspective and the psycho-social approach.

### 1.2.1 Medical Approach

Traditionally mental health was conceptualised as the absence of mental illness. The people with bizarre and grossly deviant behaviour were categorised as mentally ill. Non-mentally ill people, i.e. those without any gross symptoms, were assumed normal. You must be aware that a label of mental sickness or being associated with a therapist is considered a social stigma. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the mentally sick were confined or even worse, chained up. In many cultures and societies the mentally ill were considered to be possessed by spirits. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were advances in the field of medicine, especially relating to identification of diseases of the nervous system. The investigation into the causes, symptoms and diagnosis of these disorders led to medical treatment for the mentally ill. There still is a number of mental illnesses that do not have any organic causes. Medical treatment of such mental patients continues even today to focus on various behavioural pathologies.

Medical practitioners prescribe drugs which bring about psychological changes and help suppress symptoms of pathology. The individual becomes dependent on drugs. In some cases they may be able to lead a normal life but in most cases drug dependence may result which may even worsen the condition. Psychological counselling however aims at helping the individual to develop greater awareness and thereby control of his life's circumstances that cause anxiety, depression or other abnormalities. Although both are important depending on the diagnosis, condition and circumstances of the patient, use of drugs should be supplemented with psychological help to the extent possible.

### 1.2.2 Normative Approach

Another approach to understanding mental health is normality. Normality refers to both the statistically average behaviour as well as the behaviour expected of the people considered normal by society. Both these criteria fall short of defining mental health as



a positive state of being. Those considered normal by one society may not necessarily be normal in other societies. There are many behaviours which are considered normal in western society such as dating, while in India dating is not quite an acceptable behaviour. Even within societies, there may be differences in the concept of desirable behaviour. The urban and rural, middle class and upper class cultures in India differ in terms of what is considered normal behaviour.

Mental health thus cannot be defined adequately in terms of normalcy. The medical model is based on considerations relating to organic or physiological origin of the mental illness. Mental health defined in statistical terms as average or normal behaviour is based on the social context. The conception of mental health based on the expectations of the society is also a narrow and conformist view. Thus according to normative approach, the cultural context is the ultimate framework for determining healthy behaviour. Non-conformity, creativity, originality in any social cultural context could get labelled as abnormality as it is different from the ways followed by the majority.

The medical model stresses upon identification and diagnosis of the psychological disturbances whereas the statistical model stresses on conformity. The medical model stresses too much on the presence of the pathology rather than health. In the statistical and medical models, too much attention is paid on the absence, presence or diagnosis of the abnormality. The models do not focus on development of the skills, competencies and health of the individuals, their potentials and thus are not positive responses to mental health issue. Another shortcoming of these two models is the underlying assumption that there is some problem with the individual as a result of which s/he is ill. Labelling of the individual as mentally ill may cause shame and stigma. A third shortcoming of the medical model is the emphasis on the therapist and intervention, eliminating the role of environmental, societal and home factors (the individual himself/herself becomes a passive player in the process of therapy based on the medical model). The role of personal and environmental forces is termed as the psycho-social approach. This approach is discussed in the next section.

### 1.2.3 Psycho-social Approach

Nowadays, we are aware that there are many kinds of health problems which at times are not obviously visible e.g. depression, stress, etc. and are associated with behavioural symptoms like complaints of aches and pains, general lethargy, memory lapses, paralysis, etc. Some symptoms like memory lapses or physical symptoms such as paralysis can occur not only due to physical causes but also due to psychological causes. There are other types of mentally ill patients who are not physiologically deficient in any way but show behavioural symptoms like blindness, paralysis or loss of memory, etc. Such patients suffer from emotional disturbances or hysteria. There are categories of pathological behaviours which may not have organic origin and do not merit being called mental illness, such as tension, restlessness, excessive anxiety, nervousness, alcoholism, sexual deviance or immature behaviour. There are still other kinds of behavioural problems which do not make people ill or ineffective but the person may not be leading a healthy and happy life. People with such behaviour may or may not be

mentally or physically ill but their behaviour is grossly inadequate. Though such individuals are not mentally ill, psychologically and socially their behaviour may be far from adequate and may influence their peace of mind and relationships with people. People with such problems are not mentally ill but cannot be considered mentally healthy either. This may be due to lack of social and emotional competencies or the oppressive social environment, which renders them over anxious, tense and poor in self-esteem.

Mental health is not a mere absence of disease or illness. Present concept of mental health has been progressively conceived as a psycho-social process in which the positive aspect takes centre stage rather than average behaviour or illness. The Charter of World Health Organisation (WHO) (1978) and mental health action plan : 2013-2020 (2013) has defined mental health as a multidimensional concept, which involves physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual well-being.

According to the WHO (2001), mental health includes subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, inter-generational dependence and self-actualisation of one's intellectual and emotional potential, among others. Mentally healthy people enjoy life, feel energetic and are not excessively afraid. They are satisfied with their circumstances and achievements, and are generally cheerful and compassionate towards others. Since life is full of problems and conflicts, a healthy person is not free from all tensions and problems. However s/he feels capable of handling the ordinary difficulties and threats of life, and capable of bouncing back to health and tension free state when the crisis is over. Just as physically healthy persons may develop headache or feel tired at times but recover after rest and do not develop any serious ailment, similarly the mentally healthy person is not adversely affected by the challenges of daily life. Let us see some of the characteristics of mental health.



#### Self-check Exercise 1

1. What are medical approaches to mental health?
2. What are normative approaches to mental health?
3. What are psycho-social approaches to mental health?
4. Define mental health according to the WHO.

### 1.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MENTALLY HEALTHY

This section aims especially to enable you to understand yourself better by enumerating the behavioural characteristics of mental health.

Mentally healthy people share the following characteristics to some degree-

- They have a healthy and easygoing attitude towards their own selves and others.
- They have realistic awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses, i.e. while they know the things they can do well, they are not unnecessarily upset over the things they cannot do.



- They are optimistic about life and future.
- They exercise good control over their own impulses, thoughts, habits and emotions in line with the expectations from their environment.
- They have a healthy lifestyle and take care of their physical health, looks, appearance, etc.
- They enjoy life and manage time well enough to relax and work.
- They are capable of getting along with people and develop healthy social relationships.
- They possess healthy social attitudes such as–
  - people are different and all cannot be the same
  - caring and helpful attitude towards others
  - give and take assistance whenever needed
  - not overly possessive about things
- They have a healthy sense of humour; can laugh at their own mistake and shortcomings. They do not make fun of others.
- They are able to solve the problems of daily life, resolve conflicts, and are ready to face challenges.
- They have the initiative to do things and complete their assignments.
- They have healthy work habits and attitudes towards work.
- They work hard and can adapt to the present requirements.
- They seek help when faced with difficult problems.
- They try to learn new things and develop their capabilities.
- They have wide ranging interests, healthy habits and lifestyle.
- They enjoy work, play, entertainment and relaxation/group activities.
- Mentally healthy individuals also have a sense of spirituality in line with their own cultural and religious beliefs.

All the above characteristics are not necessarily found among all mentally healthy individuals. Some may possess more than others. The more the positive characteristics possessed the better will be the mental health of the person. Mental health is like a continuum, the meaning of which is discussed in the next section.



### Self-check Exercise 2

1. List at least nine characteristics of the mentally healthy.

## 1.4 MENTAL HEALTH AS A CONTINUUM

There are people with severe behavioural problems who are not able to manage themselves and are definitely not mentally healthy. Others are not so disturbed and appear to be normal but are not without problems. Frustrations, anger, temper tantrums, disappointments, etc. are conditions prevalent among most of the people who may otherwise appear quite normal. Life is full of challenges and problems for everyone, even those who appears to be very resourceful and powerful. The state of mental

health, described as freedom from tensions and worry, is an ideal state. But there would hardly be anyone without any tensions or anxiety. In the face of problems, some individuals fall prey to their tensions and develop serious abnormalities while others do not succumb to the pressures and manage to return to a happy, satisfied and healthy state. There are people who are relatively more tension free than others. Such people enjoy life better, irrespective of their circumstances like status, achievements or possessions. Even so, the same individual may not remain tension free all the time. Then who are the individuals who can be considered mentally healthy?

Mental health is not an all-or-none situation. One cannot categorically state that one is either mentally healthy or otherwise. It is like a scale on which one could be very low, average, more than average, much more than average or very high. The state of health could be assessed in terms of various levels of mental health. Thus different individuals may be at different levels of mental health. But where exactly the individual will lie be on the scale of mental health depends on his own typical personal-social development. The physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual development of the individual determines the degree of mental health which could be attained by him/her, and also the extent to which s/he could withstand pressures. Status of mental health could be assessed through some indicators. These indicators are discussed next.

### Activity

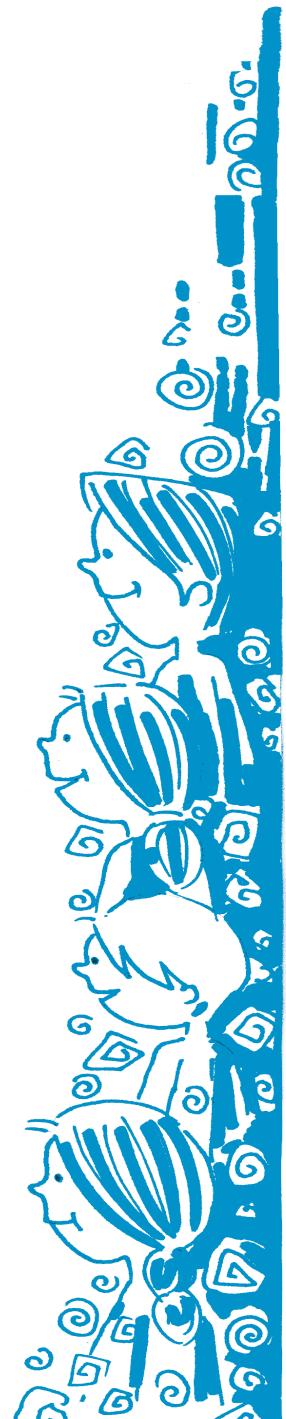


1. Think of two or three persons you look up to in times of difficulty or those you think are mentally healthy. List the kind of skills these people have, compared to the list of characteristics of the mentally healthy. Do all of them possess some skills?
2. Identify the skills and competencies common to these people from these lists.

You may realise that the various socio-emotional skills and competencies acquired by individuals over the years contribute to their mental health. These socio-emotional skills and competencies enable individuals to be healthy. In the next section, you will see what these skills are.

## 1.5 MENTAL HEALTH RELATED SKILLS

Mental health and well-being of an individual are indicated by the level of self-awareness, maturity, and integration of self, the life skills and attitudes, development of a philosophy of life towards work, entertainment, career and morality. These indicators may serve as guidelines of assessing as well as enhancing the mental health related capabilities of individuals. The indicators provide guidance for equipping individuals with the kind of qualities, skills, and attitudes they need to become mentally healthy and happy. The programmes and interventions for promoting mental health could be based on the inputs suggested by these indicators as discussed below.



### 1.5.1 Self-knowledge and Self-acceptance

Self-knowledge is the foremost competency, which determines and signifies mental health. Self-knowledge refers to your knowledge about your abilities, interests, values, resources, the qualities, strengths and weaknesses. This knowledge or awareness about your own self provides directions to the goals and efforts, and ensures success in tasks undertaken. Lack of self-knowledge may result in setting up unnecessarily high goals that may result in failure, frustration and emotional conflicts.

Self-knowledge refers to not only awareness of our strengths and weaknesses but also a positive attitude towards them, especially weaknesses. When we become aware of our weaknesses we can do something about them. For instance, I am poor in maintaining interpersonal relationships of which I am not aware. When others are not friendly to me, I get upset. If I am aware of my own shortcomings I would do something about it. Adequate knowledge and acceptance of one's strengths and weaknesses helps a person to select tasks and activities which s/he will be able to do well. By choosing appropriate tasks one is good at, and accepting where the weaknesses lie, one can ensure success in most of his/her endeavours. The successes may even spur the individual to look at his/her weakness in creative ways. Self-knowledge and accompanying success enables a person to be more accepting towards himself/herself. The greater the acceptance of one's self, the higher is the self-esteem. Self-esteem in a person enables one to respect others as well. Those who are high on self-respect are not offended by small incidents and continue to pay due regard to others. People with high self-esteem are able to accept their own weaknesses and can take a generous view of others' mistakes as well, and do not belittle others for their shortcomings or failures.

On the other hand, when opportunities for participation and achieving excellence in various activities are not available or there is too much criticism, the person who lacks self-knowledge withdraws and loses initiative. This lack of initiative and

motivation, accompanied by criticism, leads to failures, lack of confidence and confusion about self. The confusion and vagueness of one's own self causes emotional conflicts and anxiety, which is detrimental to the personal health and well-being.

An individual's lack of self-knowledge becomes evident in his random approach towards various activities. Non-acceptance of his weaknesses results in denial of his failures or blaming them on others and setting up too high goals for himself.

Family and school both have very important roles in developing awareness among children/youth about their capabilities, interests and strengths.





## Activity 2

1. Ask children to list their self-characteristics under different categories, viz. Physical, Mental, Emotional and Social domains. Go through the list and understand how children/youth think about themselves and which characteristics about their own selves they can share with you.
2. Ask children of your class, your own children, colleagues and other adults around you, what they like in you.

Discussion with children about the characteristics that they can share will reveal what they are aware of and what they are not aware of. Your interaction with children and others will reveal what they like about you and may reveal aspects of yourself which may not even be known to you. Understanding self leads to development of self-control.

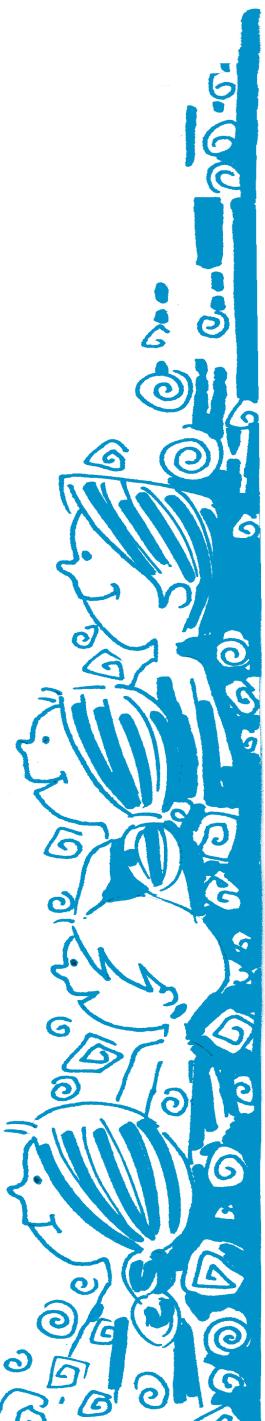
### 1.5.2 Self-control

The first step towards positive self-development is self-control. Let us see how self-control leads to development.

The individual has to gradually learn to control his thoughts, emotions and behaviours in line with the requirements of the family, society and the culture of which he is a part. If anyone fails to develop the self-control required in the family, it invites punishment from the parents and the individual is forced to restrain his behaviour, such as overeating, temper tantrums, emotional outbursts, lack of discipline in study, sleep and enjoyment. Punishment to be used for control of behaviour should not be negative; rather it is absence of rewards which acts as punishment. For example, a child submits his assignments late or does not observe punctuality. In order to control his behaviour, it is not necessary to punish him; rather take away some reward such as the assignment will receive less than 'B' grade even if it is good enough for 'A' or for late coming he may be asked to sit at the back of the class or not allowed to ask questions, etc. Whatever measures are taken, these need to be consistent and not used to humiliate but as deterrent only.

Gradually the individual learns to control himself/herself and to avoid punishment and restraint from outside authority. This is indicative of the maturity and nurtures self-confidence in the person.

The more the children/youth are pressurised to restrain from undesirable acts/behaviours, the more the frustration.





### Activity 3



1. Observe at home as well as in school how children/youth/adults react when others control/direct their behaviour. Note down these reactions for reference.
2. Observe your own reactions to attempts of control or direction by others especially those in authority.

If you have to restrain or teach self-control to others how would you go about it without upsetting them? You may draw a clue from how you would like to be restrained yourself. The process of developing self-control has to be gradual. But, as the individual acquires greater self-control, greater integration of his abilities follows. Integration also leads to enhanced directedness in life.

#### 1.5.3 Integration and Direction

Integration is the ability to give direction to conflicting thoughts and feelings, exercising discipline and control on conflicting emotions and desires, and finding individual orientation toward goals of life, which are in harmony with each other. The goals of small children have diversity and lack purpose. With advancing age, comes a direction in effort and the activities, in line with the broader goals of life. The direction in the goals is based on accurate information, effective discipline and encouragement available in the family and school. If the family and the school succeed in providing adequate and accurate information, which enables the individual to form appropriate goals in life, the direction and integration are automatically achieved.

Appropriate information leads efforts in the right direction and bring children/youth closer to their goals. Achievement of goals and success give happiness and confidence to them. The goals, which are in conflict with each other, and activities, which are not in line with the goals and expectations of family and society, lead to wastage of efforts and this brings about failure. Failure causes loss of self-confidence and self-esteem. The goals have to be chosen carefully.

#### 1.5.4 Values and Social Responsibility

The goals an individual sets for himself/herself also need to be in line with the values which the society and culture holds supreme. These values ensure that the individual's efforts not be at cross-purpose with those of the society of which she is a part. The goals set by the individual need to be inclusive of the welfare of the society, which ensures that he gets cooperation from others. In case the goals chosen for self are contradictory with social aspirations, there will be opposition and conflict with others. The individual must have a sense of social responsibility of the collective goals of the society. The individual, therefore, has to develop a well-defined perspective on the values upheld by the society. The values and principles held high in societal ethics have to be reflected in the goals children/youth set for themselves. They learn these values and principles in the family. Families' failure to teach these values has to be compensated by the school. In case the

individual escapes learning of these values, it will have serious consequences for his/her mental health. When individual's behaviour is not in conformity with the values of the society, there will be hostility, conflicts, and emotional trauma.

### **1.5.5 Sense of Humour and Maturity**

Developing persons at each stage of life are in the process of acquisition of knowledge, skills, competency, and values that are in harmony with socio-cultural demands. During the process of development, the individual may experience frustrations and failures too. Overcoming such failures, and redirecting one's efforts to the worthwhile goals is the sign of maturity. A sense of humour and maturity do not allow these failures to upset the happiness and ability to laugh at oddities. Maturity provides perspective on life to reorient effort and learn from mistakes. Humour keeps the individual energetic by looking at the lighter side of life. But humour is not laughing at others. Mature and quality humour involves laughing with others or laughing at one's own mistakes and redirecting energies to healthy activities.

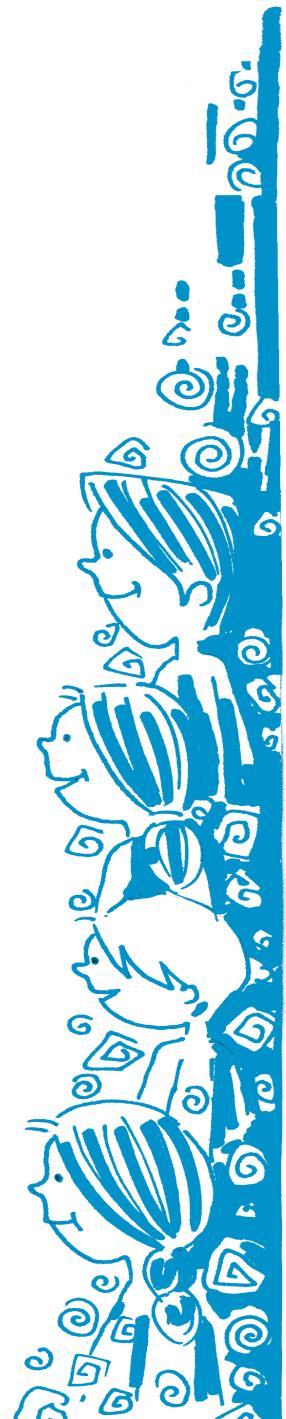
### **1.5.6 Developing Healthy Habits and Lifestyles**

Healthy personal habits are cleanliness, healthy eating regular exercise, etc. which enable the individual to stay healthy. Socio-emotional habits are helping, cooperation and emotional support to others; these help maintain emotional balance and develop satisfying social relationships. Work-related habits include attending to personal tasks, perseverance, hard work, etc. that help to achieve work-related targets. Critical, competitive and defensive behaviour is disabling. Individuals having such negative behaviour focus more on unproductive tasks and feelings.

These healthy habits and lifestyles have a great effect on the mental health of the person. The effective discipline and healthy relationships at home and in school contribute a lot to the development of these habits. Family members particularly play a great role in encouraging such habits. The family climate is also very important when parents encourage and appreciate the child and persuade him/her to follow healthy eating, maintain cleanliness, provide love and care. The child also learns and acquires those habits modelled by parents and family. Family climate itself enables the child to experience rich and intense social relationships. Habitual involvement in work and personal-social activities act as a buffer during stress and crises. He acquires these lifestyles unconsciously. Those families which do not place premium on healthy routines, criticise and blame each other, do not appreciate, rather act very competitively, produce children who behave similarly. Continued involvement in a normal healthy routine enables one to acquire healthy personal habits and face the changes taking place in the environment. They in turn facilitate nurturance of healthy socio-emotional habits.

### **1.5.7 Adaptability to Environmental Change**

Basic learning of personal and social habits, work styles, attitudes, values, etc. take place at home but transition from home to school, work, marriage, and in many other circumstances require new adjustments to be made. Therefore, the very concept of mental health is dynamic in nature. The habits and lifestyles an individual has developed





need to include enough flexibility to meet changed circumstances. The environmental changes and the challenges demand the capacity to adjust to the change. Habits and lifestyles also need to be adapted to prevailing circumstances.

The rigidity of habits may come in the way of mental health in the changed circumstances. For example, you are in the habit of praying or chanting loudly in the morning and you are living in a hostel where others sleep late as they study late. What you need to do is to be flexible in your habit and adjust your routine so that it does not cause inconvenience to others. However, there are certain habits which are valid everywhere, at all times, such as punctuality, hard work, responsibility, honesty, etc. There are certain behavioural patterns that may be healthy in one context but under different circumstances may require flexibility or adaptation. For example, you sleep early at about 9:30 p.m. and get up early whereas others sleep late and get up late. You should try to adjust with others and negotiate rather than make an issue out of such situations.

Points for reflection—

- Can you think of some habits/lifestyle of yours, which needed change due to changes in your environment?
- Was it easy for you?
- Did it cause any inconvenience to you?
- Are you happy to have changed?
- If you did not change, what inconvenience did it cause?

#### Activity 4



Drawing from your own experience with children from different backgrounds, can you think of some behavioural patterns/habits/lifestyles that cause difficulty in adaptation?

#### 1.5.8 Involvement with Work and Entertainment

Entertainment, play and other social activities also give satisfaction and enjoyment. But enjoying work engaged in by individuals also provides them emotional satisfaction and confidence. While it is important that individuals are involved in work, play/environment and other social activities, they must also enjoy the work assigned to them. The greater the range of interests and activities, greater are the opportunities for interacting with a wide variety of people, and exposure to situations. Involvement in such a variety of interactions and activities provides a wide repertoire of behaviour and relieves boredom. The wide ranging behaviours also provide the capacity and opportunities to deal with wide ranging problems and situations, which promotes mental health.

#### 1.5.9 Spiritual Orientation to Life

There are several situations in the life of an individual that may not have any solution, in spite of the high level of competence of the individual for problem solving. Imagine a very hard working and intelligent child who falls sick right at the times of examinations

and has to repeat the class/or does not get selected in the desired course, etc. Such challenging and trying times have to be endured by the individual. S/he has to develop spiritual orientation, within the religious and the cultural boundaries, which helps him/her to look beyond the present and plan again for future with hope and diligence. Spirituality is a very important quality of human beings that not only provides great endurance, but is therapeutic as well.

The concept of mental health has been described above in terms of various behaviours/criteria/indicators, which facilitate its development and assessment. However, in order to grow into a healthy and adequate individual there is a need for environmental conditions (both physical and psychological) to facilitate his development and enable him to acquire skills and competence. Creating that intra-and interpersonal environment will lead to promoting better mental health. Let us look at how mental health could be promoted.

## 1.6 PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH

The application of the principles that promote the development of healthy personalities thereby enhances mental health of the individuals in a society. These are based on a way of life relevant for all, which has implications for the goals or targets to be attained by society for ensuring mental health of people.

### 1.6.1 Goals

The goals that provide guidance for ensuring mental health in the society have to do with the fulfilment of the needs of the various individuals, the need for food, safety, security, love, belongingness, etc. If these urgent basic needs of the individuals are not fulfilled adequately they cannot stay mentally healthy for long. The society, therefore, should aim at providing basic amenities like clean water, food, shelter, etc. to all.

In the developing countries such as India, the basic needs of the children are not met as indicated by infant mortality, female infanticide, and malnutrition, etc. There are areas where drinking water is not available, people are living in constant fear of war, or face natural disasters, etc. The principles for promotion of mental health are aimed at satisfying the basic needs of the individuals such as hygienic conditions of living, security, affection, achievement and recognition. In majority of individuals, the fulfilment of these basic needs itself is difficult. Besides basic needs the psychological needs also create urgency for satisfaction. When basic needs are satisfied, self-actualisation takes place and overall development as a mentally mature individual is ensured. The promotion of mental health aims at ensuring healthy development of all aspects of the individual, viz. physical, mental, emotional, moral, and spiritual. It is important that individuals attain full development of their abilities, and realise the potential inherent in them. It is only human beings who are capable of moral and spiritual development.

The principles for promotion of good mental health are applicable at personal level as well as the societal level. At the personal level the aim is to develop awareness about healthy lifestyle and its importance, developing skills, habits and attitudes associated with healthy life. Individuals' awareness, about healthy habits and attitudes



are influenced by the social environment. It is important that the social environment itself should be consciously oriented for nurturing among children such habits, attitudes and values which are associated with mental health.

The goals for mental health are pertinent for reorganising and enriching social relationships in the home, family, school, work and worship places so as to enable everyone to enjoy positive feelings, happiness, a fulfilling and productive life. In order to create awareness among teachers and school staff about these practices, appropriate inputs have to be introduced in the curriculum and school processes. But without influencing home and community, the effort would not be successful.

### Activity 5



1. Consider people who have good mental health and notice their awareness about skills, competencies, habits, etc. and its association with health and well-being.
2. Compare the awareness levels about habits and attitudes characterising a healthy lifestyle between those that have good mental health and those with poor mental health.

## 1.6.2 Programmes for Promotion of Mental Health and Well-being

There are three kinds of programmes that promote mental health:

- Primary Prevention Programmes:  
Proactive or developmental programmes that are aimed at creating conditions that satisfy basic needs and develop healthy personal-social skills of children/youth (primary prevention).
- Identification and Management Programmes:  
Corrective programmes which focus on identification of those students who are already experiencing mental health related problems and offer interventions to bring them to normalcy (identification and management).
- Follow-up Programmes:  
Supportive programmes which focus on students who had fallen victims to mental illness earlier (follow-up).

You will look at each of these programmes from the perspective of the goals, inputs and agency which could provide the best setting for organising these.

### 1.6.2.1 Primary Prevention Programmes

Primary prevention consists of developing healthy personal characteristics associated with mental health. Nurturing attitudes and habits that characterise healthy lifestyle are important aspects of ensuring mental health in a proactive manner. The goals of primary prevention are to strengthen personality characteristics that impart positive mind set. Healthy personality characteristics could be promoted by ensuring basic need satisfaction of individuals in the family and school, the two basic institutions responsible for healthy development of children and youth. The school has to supplement and

complement the role of home and family in ensuring healthy development of all pupils. The family has to provide necessary nurturance to the child. In the absence or inability of family to discharge its responsibility, the school, society or state, has to ensure that needs of children are fulfilled, as it is society that ultimately suffers. The mid-day meals provided in schools are one such example of proactive care in India.

The school also has to take care of security, love, recognition and affiliation needs of the children. It has to ensure that teachers are not harsh, curriculum provides opportunities for achievement and recognition of all kinds of talents, and also educate parents for ensuring maximum need satisfaction and healthy development of children. The school must organise programmes for developing children's awareness about their own habits, attitudes and skills for healthy, hygienic communication, decision-making, career development, etc. These two institutions of family and school have to ensure that the values, attitudes, norms and practices acquired by pupils are in conformity with a healthy lifestyle. Of these two, the school has to take active role, having access to information and knowledge. Teachers have to take responsibility for holistic development of pupils rather than only their academic achievement. The stress on academic outcomes has unbalanced holistic development which results in anxiety and aggression. Teachers' own personal development should also be enhanced by the school through staff development programmes and counselling. Mental health among teachers is essential for healthy school organisation. The role of local welfare organisations, charity clubs and parents cannot be overlooked in this context.

#### ***1.6.2.2 Identification and Management Programmes***

The remedial aspect of promoting health has to do with the early identification of problematic behaviours. Intervention should occur for in school those pupils, characterised by pronounced behavioural disturbances or maladaptive lifestyle. Identification of such cases is very important so that therapy or individual counselling may be offered to them. The awareness and referral of individuals is an important aspect of promoting mental health and well-being. Early intervention can often lead to a management programme that allows the individuals to regain their mental health.

According to Vranda (2015), suicide death rates in India are among the highest in the world. Most of the risk taking behaviours and problems among children and adolescents emerge during adolescent period which can be prevented through school-based mental health programmes. It is important, therefore, that risky behaviours are identified and appropriate referrals are made. For minor problems, counselling services should be made available in schools.

#### ***1.6.2.3 Follow-up Programmes***

Follow-up programmes are aimed at emotionally supporting those individuals who are vulnerable or have received treatment, or show mild symptoms of emotional upset or any other symptoms like behaviour disorder, addiction, etc. so that their condition does not worsen or they do not relapse into mental imbalance or addiction, etc. These programmes in the school aim at providing a secure environment to such children. The teacher could allocate a front seat where s/he can observe the child and engage him/her or associate some volunteers from the class with them.



Another strategy could be that the environment could be reorganised so that facilitating social settings are available to such individuals. A teacher's role in school is significant in providing such facilitation to the disturbed students who are borderline. For instance a child who is used to delinquency may be associated with another child who stays close to his/her home so that both could come and go together. The company of another child would provide emotional support, so that the fear and the thoughts that prompt him/her to run away could be prevented. Without much effort, a little change in the seating arrangements, peer involvement, judicious flexibility in discipline and emotional support by the teachers can go a long way in preventing the imminent mental health problems among pupils.

The therapy or counselling should be provided to the individuals to bring them back to normal state but they may need emotional-social support to stay healthy. The new ways of behaviour or attitudes learned during therapy need to be consolidated in real life. Preventive conditions like company of those children who are friendly and caring may help recovery of the child who has received treatment or is slightly vulnerable. These kinds of arrangements must be made for such individuals so that relapse does not occur. Locally formed alcoholic anonymous groups, drug-addiction groups, etc. are a few examples of how those in therapy may continue to be connected and provide support to each other.



#### Self-check Exercise

Fill in the blanks with the following alternatives—

- a. physiological
- b. proactive
- c. psychological
- d. supportive
- e. dynamic

1. Fulfilment of \_\_\_\_\_ needs facilitates mental health.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ programmes focus on students who had fallen victim to mental illness.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ programmes aimed at creating conditions which satisfy the basic needs develop healthy personal-social skills of the children/youth.
4. Concept of mental health is \_\_\_\_\_ in nature.

## 1.7 ORGANISING ENVIRONMENT FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Mental health is a learned adaptive response of an individual to challenging circumstances. Underlying such learned or habitual ways of behaving are a number of internal and external conditions and experiences. These conditions and experiences are essential determinants of good adjustments resulting in positive mental health. Conditions prevailing during the early developmental period play a crucial part in establishing strong adaptive behaviours.

The adaptive behaviours which are prevalent among mentally healthy children must be nurtured among all children right from early age, and it is both the personal factors and the environmental conditions that nurture such behaviours. The environment has to be encouraging, appreciative, for instance, when parents/teachers themselves are critical, aggressive and do not model cleanliness and other healthy behavioural styles, the child too would emulate such behaviour and develop unhealthy habits. Similarly the child must be well looked after as far as his physical health is concerned. His physique and temperament too influence the way s/he be interacting with others in his/her environment.

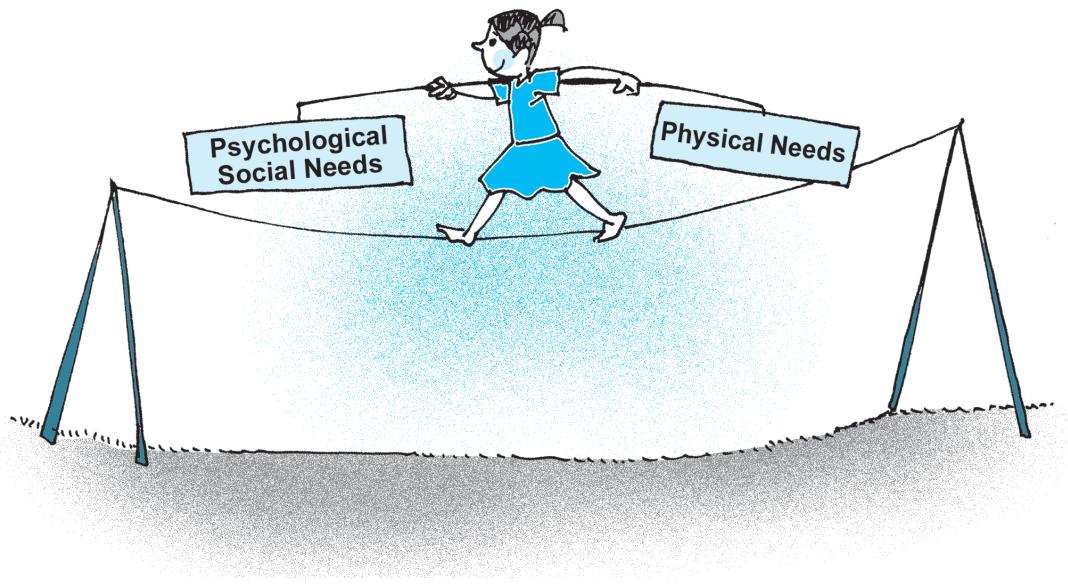
### 1.7.1 Personal Conditions

Mental health depends on adequate and regular satisfaction of an individual's basic needs in socially desirable ways. There are two important personal conditions for mental health-

- (i) Adequate and regular satisfaction of basic needs, and
- (ii) Using socially acceptable means to satisfy those needs.

#### 1.7.1.1 Satisfaction of Needs

You may be already familiar with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The basic needs are of two types, physiological and psychological. The physiological needs are the needs for food, air, water, shelter. The psychological needs are the need for love, affection and security, and are equally important to the physiological needs for the healthy development of a person. The family holds the primary responsibility for satisfying the physiological as well as the psychological needs of a child. Tension and anxiety occur if these needs are not routinely and adequately met.



Continuous stress and tension prevents growth and development. Therefore basic physiological needs for food, water, love, affection, appreciation are important before the need for achievement and self-actualisation could be experienced by children.



Among psychological needs, the needs for love and affection are stronger than needs for achievement and recognition. If the person's basic needs for air, water, food and safety, etc. are not satisfied adequately during childhood, the need for security and other higher needs are not even felt. For instance, an individual who is hungry for a long period may indulge in behaviour harmful or dangerous for himself and others. He may even eat bad food, and will not bother about love and appreciation from others. A child who has not been loved and cared for does not think of achievement. All his behaviour is oriented towards ensuring love. Only when the need for love and affection is satisfied, the next higher needs are felt, i.e. need for achievement and success. Love and care during childhood helps realises his/her inherent potential.

The family and parents provide the love and affection needed in the early stages. However, later the child must learn to ensure love and care from teachers, peers and others. This requires learning of skills of politeness, obedience, respect, restrain, communication, etc. which ensure such experiences. It is the family where the child learns these skills and competencies. If parents fail to teach those skills due to their own inability and lack of time, etc. the responsibility for teaching these skills falls upon others who take care of the child.

After the family, the school has to share the responsibility for the child's learning. In school some children even sacrifice their study to ensure love and affection of other students or the teacher. They will do anything for the teacher or peers. Those are the children whose need for love and affection or recognition have not been adequately satisfied. There are adults too who are starved for love and affection so much in their family and immediate environment that they try to adopt socially maladaptive or ineffective ways to ensure love and affection from others. The maladaptive behaviour reduces tension temporarily but not adequately and regularly. For instance, children will offer to do errands for the teachers when they should be studying. They would be willing to do anything for peers just to ensure their company. This would be harmful in the long run for their achievement.

Inadequate satisfaction of the basic needs slows down the individual's development physically as well as psychologically. When lower order needs are fulfilled, higher order needs guide the behaviour. Mature ways of behaving have to be learned to ensure love, affection, appreciation or other higher needs for achievement and recognition. It is only an adequate satisfaction of the lower order needs that higher needs like realising one's potential, philanthropic and spiritual needs, etc. are experienced by the individual. However, health is a very important factor which may facilitate or hinder efforts put in by the child. Fruition of efforts is also important for health and well-being.

#### **1.7.1.2 Health and Physical Development**

Constitutional factors such as health and temperament, etc. play an important role in influencing mental health. The over reactivity of temperament, ill health, nutritional deficiency, etc. adversely affect the mental health. Physical illness, poor health and weak constitution may cause feelings of inferiority, persistent self centredness, self pity, which affect the self concept and well-being of the individual. Thus physical

factors and deficiencies have great potential in making or marring mental health. Skin problems, late development of sexual maturity and secondary sexual characteristics, etc. are such problems which could cause concern among children and youth.

### Activity 6



Please list from your experience the physical factors which influence mental health among children and youth especially in view of the cultural demands on children/youth in your area/country.

#### 1.7.1.3 Intellectual Development

Development of intellect also influences the mental health of person. Development of the mental capabilities, awareness, reading and acuity of intellect, though not directly related, contribute substantially to mental health. Mental capabilities help a person to acquire information and process it effectively to understand his environmental context. Understanding their environment help people to respond adequately to it. Intellectual development leads to capabilities for emotional management which help the persons to respond in an objective manner and stay balanced in the face of hostile and difficult circumstances.

The maturity of capabilities and emotional balance are influenced by the opportunities for learning provided by the environment. If the environment is impoverished and hostile, the learning of the children and youth will be limited. This limitation will also effect their self-concept and emotional maturity.

#### Case Study 1

Ronny was the student of Class VIII. During class periods the teachers would often find him day-dreaming, especially his language teacher whose period was planned just after the lunch break. The teacher would get annoyed with him for not paying attention and lack of participation in the class.

During the mid-term examination, she found Ronny to be amongst the top three in class. She was impressed by the boy's performance and talked to him gently as to why he does not pay attention in the class. The boy, visibly moved by her concern, told her with great hesitation that during the break a gang of bullies of the school tease him, make fun and once even tore his notebook. The teacher understood that the reason for the distracted look was tension and worry rather than disinterest in studies.

What do you think would have happened if the teacher did not realise that Ronny was a high achiever? What would have happened if she did not ask the reason for disinterest in the language class? What do you do when you come across a boy like Ronny in your class? What do you think could be other possible causes of such behaviour and its effect on mental health of the students?

The above case study illustrates that pressure of hostile social conditions may cause tension and anxiety, which prevents learning and maturation. The social environment may act as facilitator by providing necessary emotional-social support.



Psychological development is facilitated if learning experiences and socially stimulating conditions are provided to children and youth, which lead to further motivation and quality adjustments, and the environment is made congenial.

### 1.7.2 Environmental Conditions

The social and environmental enrichment available in family or society or neighbourhood have implications for learning healthy lifestyles and practices. They work in a preventive manner and ward off the negative effects of the hostile environment.

#### Activity 7



1. Identify the possible influences on the students at home/in schools which may be the source of tension for them. One clue relevant to Indian culture is given below–
  - Excessive emotional concentration/expectations for achievement by parents.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
2. In a group discuss the practices in the school/culture, which could exert a preventive influence on the tensions and anxiety during the process of growing up.

The responsibility for creating conditions which produce anxiety or balance rests with the family, parents, school and society. Let us see how these agencies or people influence mental health.

#### 1.7.2.1 Home

The home one lives in has a great influence on mental health. If home is very small, congested and lacks healthy environment such as light, cleanliness, air, facilities for playing, etc. the health of the child may be affected. Noisy and disorganised homes cause poor concentration and listening skills. Disorganisation in personal belongings and daily routine gives rise to habits which have negative consequences for hard work, perseverance, organisation and efficiency in carrying out work.

Even the locality of the home has a great potential to influence mental health. The locality determines the exposure to activities, friends and facilities, which may promote development or expose them to unhealthy personal social influences. These factors should be understood by teachers and counsellors so that they do not write off those non performing students coming from such localities, rather they should compensate for the experiences which have been derived.

### **1.7.2.2 Family**

The family of the child provides the first social environment. It is the first institution and a very important one as it contains a whole society within as there is authority (parents), laws and norms (discipline), peers, subordinates and superiors (siblings), work (home chores), etc. It is in these relationships and the nurturance provided that the foundations of a healthy personality are laid.

Family provides food, nutrition, security, love and care right from birth. Even during the prenatal stage, the type of environment available to the mother may give an edge or disadvantage to the child's development. The type of food the mother eats or emotions she experiences all contribute to mental health.

The quality of parental discipline available in the family influences the healthy emotional development, the attitudes towards authority, the initiative and motivation among children/youth. The warm and healthy discipline represented by firm handling of bad/undesirable behaviour, insistence on learning healthy habits through persuasion and encouragement, etc. ward off failures and frustrations. Strict and unhealthy discipline characterised by too many do's and don'ts, or use of violence, and aggression produces fear, emotional conflicts and laziness in the child. The child must learn to take responsibilities, carry out instructions, postpone immediate fulfilment of his desires.

Acceptance of the child and focus on his strengths by guardians as against pointing out weaknesses, helps him develop into a healthy individual with self-esteem and confidence. Rejection of the child or overprotection, both cause harm to the child's personality and motivation. Parental expectations are important, as these are the goals which the child adopts for himself/herself. If these are too high for the child to achieve, he gets frustrated, too low expectations make him over confident, and adequate level of expectations help him to maintain a high level of motivation and feeling of success.

The other characteristics of the family include marital relationship between the parents, adjustment with siblings, size and constitution of the family. Single parent family and small family may not provide opportunities to learn the social skills needed to interact with persons of different gender, younger or older than oneself. The marital conflicts between parents may produce emotional conflicts in children which harm the healthy development of attitudes towards gender and problems of life.

The habits, interests, personality characteristics of the parents such as styles of decision making, conflict resolution, religious orientation can also influence the development of healthy lifestyles and habits among children.

### **1.7.2.3 School**

School, being the second most important institution in the life of a child, needs to complement the role of family in the child's development, and may even have to take the responsibility to undo the harm done by the unhealthy or impoverished family environment.



School provides opportunities for expression of the abilities, attitudes and skills already developed by the child. The child develops awareness about the effectiveness of these abilities and skills, and gets opportunities to learn new skills and attitudes. This process has to be supported by the teachers through appreciation and recognition for appropriate behaviour, and not placing too much emphasis on ineffectual learning. Focus on punishment, ridicule and criticism leads to emotional conflicts and poor self-esteem.

Teachers provide satisfaction of the needs for information, enrichment, recognition and appreciation. Achievement can be promoted by concentrating on successes and ignoring the errors and failures. Basically, the school environment and teachers should focus on promotion of learning rather than evaluation, emphasise strengths rather than weaknesses, provide opportunities for expression of the wide variety of the talents of the children rather than concentrate only on academics. The school curriculum, co-curriculum and examinations philosophy may be inspired by these principles, promoting mental health. It is the success experience that motivates; failures and criticism rob the child of all initiative and do not serve any purpose. School may provide cultural and life skills related education which facilitates future integration of child in the society.

#### **1.7.2.4 Teacher-Pupil Relationships**

Teacher-pupil relationships have a great significance for the mental health of the children as well as the teacher. The teacher is a very important person in the life of almost all children. Therefore, a teacher's own personality is very important and his/her relationship with pupils exerts growing influence on both of them. Teachers who are cheerful, patient, unbiased, democratic and firm in dealing with children are preferable to those who are critical, have favourites, are impatient, either too strict or too lenient; such teachers are not liked by pupils. The teacher's warmth, communication and listening skills help him/her to relate to children effectively and help them express and resolve their problems.

#### **1.7.2.5 Cultural Influence on Mental Health**

'Cultural attitudes' inspire the family and school environment, and set the stage on which the child has already sharpened his skills, competencies and attitudes. Normally, the individuals who are effectively socialised, which means learning of the necessary social skills, social roles and norms prevailing in the society, are better adjusted. But if the region/subculture to which a person belongs, and values he/she learns, are different from the cultural traditions of the broader society, there is need for relearning and readjustments.

Healthy cultural values, beliefs and practices which promote independence, decision-making, peaceful resolution of conflicts, personal habits, and social relationships, enhance mental health. The different organisations, clubs and religious/cultural institutions existing in the society also provide opportunities of learning effective coping skills and enhance mental health. It is important that those in charge of younger children/youth facilitate children from alienated or different communities to make adjustments rather than ridicule or criticise them.

## Summary

This module introduced you to the concept of mental health in holistic perspective. The medical approach, the statistical or normative approach, the psycho-social approach and the latest concept of mental health as psychological well-being, as defined by the WHO, were discussed. The characteristics of mental health as tension free, easy going, and physically, emotionally and socially healthy individuals were presented. The characteristics which impart mental health are not an either-or-none affair but people possess different degrees of healthy behaviour; accordingly mental health can be visualised as a continuum. The skills and competencies required by the individual to ensure state of mental health such as self-control, integration and directedness of behaviour, sense of humour and creativity, etc. have been discussed. The different approaches for promotion of mental health and well-being, and goals of mental health also have been discussed. The role of personal and environmental factors, and organising these for fostering mental health have been discussed.

## Self-evaluation Exercises

1. “Mental health as a continuum.” Do you agree or disagree with the statement? Give arguments in support of your answer.
2. Describe the attitudes and values that promote mental health.
3. Describe the different ways in which homes are responsible for promoting mental health.
4. What can the schools do for promoting mental health?

## Answer Key to Self-evaluation Exercises

1. Mental health is a continuum; health is not absolute. Those who are healthy vary the extent to which they can resist the tensions, anxiety and other problems while dealing with day-to-day disappointments and frustrations. Even those who are already anxious and stressed do not always succumb to the pressure of abnormal symptoms.
2. Elaborate on the following–
  - Self knowledge and self acceptance
  - Self control
  - Integration and direction
  - Value and social responsibilities
  - Sense of humour/maturity
  - Adaptability to environmental change
  - Involvement with work/entertainment
  - Spiritual orientation to life

- 
3. Noisy and disorganised homes cause poor concentration and listening skills. Disorganisation gives rise to habits which have negative consequences for hard work, organisation and efficiency. Locality of the home determines the exposure to activities, friends and facilities.
  4. School provides opportunities for expressions of the abilities, attitudes and skills. This has to be supported by teachers through appreciation and recognition for appropriate behaviours. Teachers should stress on promotion of learning rather than evaluation. School may provide cultural and life skills related education.

### Answer Key to Self-check Exercises

#### *Self-Check Exercise 1*

1. Refer to Section 1.2.1
2. Refer to Section 1.2.2
3. Refer to Section 1.3.3
4. WHO (1978) defined mental health as a multidimensional concept, which involves physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual well-being.

#### *Self-check Exercise 2*

1. Refer to Section 1.3

#### *Self-check Exercise 3*

1. c
2. d
3. b
4. e

### Suggested Readings

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# 2



## Developing Coping Skills

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- 2.3 Sources of Stress
  - 2.3.1 General Sources of Stress
  - 2.3.2 Sources of Stress at Work
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  - References
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## Developing Coping Skills

2

### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

The modern world, which is said to be a world of achievements, is also a world of stress. Often achievement and success do not come without challenges. This unit discusses the challenges and the associated stress as both sources of inspiration and detriments to achievement. One finds stress everywhere, at home, in an educational institution, or any business or social organisation. Stress is something that is hard to avoid. The term stress occurs not only in our daily conversations but has also attracted widespread media attention. Different people hold different views about it as stress can be from a variety of sources. For example, you may ask the opinion of three different people and you are likely to get three different definitions. The businessperson views stress as frustration or emotional tension; the air traffic controller (ATC) sees it as a problem of alertness and concentration; the biochemist thinks of it as a purely chemical event. This unit starts with explaining the concept of stress. It also discusses the various sources of stress. Further, the consequences of stress are described under three broad categories, i.e. psychosomatic, psychological and behavioural. Finally, this unit explains the concept of coping styles and ways of enhancing coping capabilities of children, and implications for teachers.



### 2.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- *describe* the meaning of stress.
- *identify* the different sources of stress.

- *explain* the consequences of stress.
- *discuss* the specific strategies for coping with stress.

## 2.2 WHAT IS STRESS?

The concept of stress was first introduced in the life sciences by Hans Selye, a pioneer in stress research. Derived from the Latin word *stringere*, stress was popularly used in the seventeenth century to mean hardship, strain, adversity or affliction. Normal connotation of stress is pressure or strain exerted on a person which tends to destabilise him/her in many ways physically, psychologically and emotionally. The pressure or strain could be caused by a number of factors. In physiology, the various changes in the physiological functions in response to evocative agents denote stress. These physiological changes can be measured and often these measurements are used as indicators of the psychological stress that a human undergoes. In psychology, stress refers to a particular kind of state of a human resulting from some interaction between him/her and the environment.

In order to understand stressful experience, consider the sequence of events that lead to a stressful experience –

- a demand is made upon us
- constraints that limit our capacity to meet that demand make the demand seem greater
- the demand and the constraints create pressure
- available supports help us to meet or manage that demand, and
- the effect on us is stress.

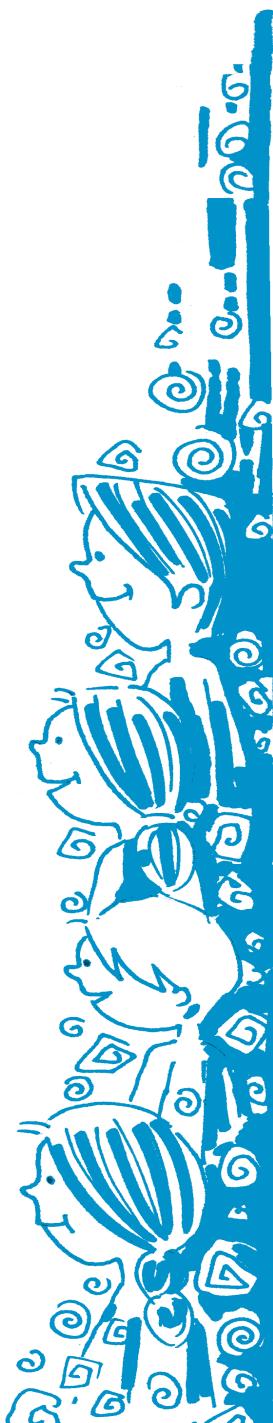
Each person will see the situation through his/her own eyes. It is the individual's perception of the demands and his/her ability to meet them, that determine whether there is a feeling of stress. Individual responses are influenced by other factors that relate to the situation causing stress. The same situation may or may not lead to stress for a particular individual at any given point of time. Therefore, stress is essentially a response to the perceived demands and ability to cope. For example, one child who fails to pass may feel that he could do hard work, take help or put in extra effort and pass in the next year whereas another child may feel depressed that he has failed and try to commit suicide. Different individuals have different kinds of experiences.

The relationship between stress and external factors are as follows–

High demand + few constraints + lots of support = little or no stress

High demand + many constraints + little support = high stress

For example, consider students who are preparing for a forthcoming competitive examination. The stress increases closer to the day of the examination and is probably at the peak when the students enter the examination centre. The demand here is the need to score well in the examination. There are many constraints, i.e. extensive syllabus, anticipated difficult questions, pressure to get selected against limited seats in the university, time limit to complete the examination, etc. The outcome is important as it determines

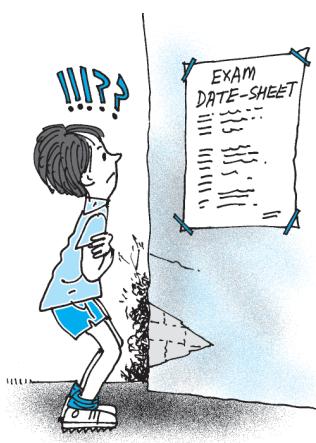


what career the students will take up in future. At the same time, the outcome is uncertain. Much depends, however, on how individuals perceive the outcome. Depending on how important they perceive the outcome to be, some would be quite stressed while others may not be stressed at all.

### 2.2.1 Definition of Stress

There is much confusion and a lack of consensus regarding the definition of stress. The term “stress” has been approached in at least four different ways—

- as the stimulus or external force acting on an individual
- as the response or changes in the physiological functions and other symptoms
- as the interaction between an external force and resistance, and
- as a comprehensive phenomenon encompassing all the three above.



In stimulus-oriented approach, stress is regarded as an external force which is perceived as threatening. Some view threat itself as stress. For instance, threat of teachers beating children for one kind of lapse is stressful. The response-oriented approach describes how people reacted to and how they function under stress. Different individuals may react to stress differently. For instance some may react by low energy levels while others may get over activated. The way it is presumably experienced is inferred from the response made to it. Selye's work falls under the stimulus-oriented approach. According to him, any external event or any internal drive which threatens to upset the individual's balance is stress.

Selye (1974) defined stress as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it”.

Stressors can be classified as distressors (negative and causing damage) and eustressors (positive and challenging to promote action). We are familiar with the term ‘distress’, i.e. stress due to an unpleasant event such as punishment, failure, fight with a friend, an accident or divorce. However, even a happy occasion such as long stay with friends in a party or playground, or selection for a competition, etc. produces the same physiological reactions as distress. Such happy occasions lead to ‘eustress’, which is good for the person.

Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) has been widely held as a comprehensive model to explain the stress phenomenon among all organisms, particularly humans. It is a three-stage model that states when an organism is confronted with a threat, the general physiological response occurs in three stages—

1. **Alarm Reaction Stage:** The first stage consists of two phases: (i) an “initial-shock phase” in which resistance is lowered and (ii) a “counter-shock phase” in which defensive mechanisms become active. Alarm reaction is characterised by autonomous excitability; i.e. adrenalin discharge, increased heart rate, muscle tone and blood content, and gastrointestinal ulceration. Depending on the nature and

- intensity of the threat and the condition of the organism, the periods of resistance vary and the severity of symptoms may differ.
2. **Resistance Stage:** Maximum adaptation occurs during this stage. The bodily signs characteristic of the alarm reaction stage disappear. Resistance increases to levels above normal. If the stressor persists, or the defensive reaction proves ineffective, the organism deteriorates to the next stage.
  3. **Exhaustion Stage:** When adaptation is not possible and the organism feels exhausted, signs of alarm reaction reappear and resistance level begins to decline irreversibly. This results in the collapse of the organism.

The conceptualisation of stress by Selye is a physiological one in which the stress response is seen as a necessary adjunct to the organism's fight for survival. By causing various body changes, the stress response prepares the individual for any exigency, giving him/her extra resources to "fight" the emergency or take "flight" from it.

Stress has been defined as a "real or interpreted threat to the physiological or psychological integrity of an individual that results in physiological and/or behavioural responses" (McEwen, 2000). There are three different viewpoints or approaches to stress: medical, psychological and sociological. The medical approach describes stress typically as a defensive bodily response to environmental demands and involves physiological components, such as the breathing becoming fast, or heart beat becoming fast when they encounter threat. The psychological approach places greater emphasis on the cognitive appraisal (mental picture) of threatening environmental conditions and the ensuing coping process. How the individual views the stressful situation determines stress reactions. If a child does not care for parents, anger, any situation is stress free or if s/he feels very sensitive to any adults reaction, even a minor reproach will be stressful to the boy or girl. The sociological approach analyses stress as the resultant of stressful societal conditions.

Considering the definition just given, you will look at what constitutes the stressors or the sources of stress, and then consider the stress response.

## 2.3 SOURCES OF STRESS

It has been said that stress results from a lack of fit between environmental demands and personal adequacies to meet these demands. However, management of stress is not possible unless the individual is aware of the specific sources of stress. Stress can emanate from a variety of sources. The sources of stress are located in the social systems to which we all belong. These are two such systems: the primary systems such as family (for example, relations among family members, marital adjustment, socio economic status, economic problems, etc.) and religious, regional and linguistic groups (for example, tensions, discrimination and group conflicts, group pressure, etc.); and the secondary systems to which we relate, such as neighbourhood, schools (for example, competition, parental expectations, peer pressure, etc.), colleges, technical institutes and work organisations. It may be noted that the needs, requirements and expectations of other members in these systems differ, and the demands made on the individual in

one system have their effects on his/her performance in the other. Moreover, resources and support of relationships from one system can also be invested in the other system to take care of the problems arising in it.

### 2.3.1 General Sources of Stress

There are three important sectors of life in which stress originates. These are: (a) job and organisation, (b) social sector, and (c) intrapsychic sector. The first, namely, job and organisation, refers to the totality of the work environment, i.e. task, atmosphere, colleagues, compensations, policies, etc. The social sector refers to the social/cultural context of one's life. It may include religion, caste, language, dress and other such factors. Sometimes the society in which the individual lives also creates stress. Each culture produces its own unique sets of stressors. For instance, stress experienced by those living in the Sahara desert is likely to be significantly different from those living near the bank of the river Ganga. Cultures vary not merely in climatic conditions but in terms of their political, social, economic and environmental conditions, each exerting their own set of stressors. Acts of terrorism, political instability, war, etc. influence even small children tremendously, although they are often not able to articulate their fears and anxieties. Also, cultures vary in terms of their value systems. The intrapsychic sector encompasses those things that are intimate and personal, such as temperament, values, abilities and health. It is contended that stresses can originate in any of these three sectors or in combinations thereof. In a balanced state, the magnitude of stress emanating from the three sectors of life is in consonance with the stress tolerance limit of the individual.

There is another perspective on stress offered by Brown described below which takes into account the incremental stress accumulating in the life of the individual. Both these perspectives together enable us to understand sources of stress.

Brown (1984) proposed following five sources of stress-

- (i) Customary anticipated life events (any major change in life), such as beginning or ending of school, marriage, children leaving home and retirement.
- (ii) Unexpected life events (any major life event which occurs suddenly), for example, a major accident, becoming aware of a terminal illness, unexpected bereavement and sudden loss of job.
- (iii) Progressive, accumulating situational events (any continuously recurring problems in life's activities) like daily hassles, school stress and competition, and family stress.
- (iv) Personality characteristics that create social problems, for example, poor communication, low self-esteem, insecurity, lack of confidence, poor decision-making and fear of failure.
- (v) Value dependent traits (circumstances generating thought-feeling conflict), for instance, moral dilemmas such as cheat or fail, peer pressure vs. personal conscience, and broken homes.



This system of categorisation is also amenable to the measurement of stress. For example, one of the earliest scales for the measurement of stress called the Schedule of Recent Experiences (Holmes and Rahe, 1967) is related to stressful life events, life stress. These are concerned with situational encounters and the meaning that a person may attach to such events. The stressful life events are implicated in a variety of undesirable effects on our performance and health. The assumptions behind these ideas are (a) life changes require adaptation on the part of the individual and are stressful, and (b) persons experiencing marked life changes in the recent past are susceptible to physical and psychotic problems.

In today's fast changing world, one is under constant tensions and anxieties related to work and non-work life and this leads to stress which affects both the quality of work life and quality of life. The counsellor trainees must be aware of the stresses generally associated with work so that they can deal with not only the ordinary stresses related to their work but particularly counselling work. Counselling work demands a person to be healthy without any stresses themselves. The following section presents sources of stress at work.



### Self-check Exercise 1

Fill in the blanks with the following alternatives-

- a. initial-shock phase
- b. physiological
- c. environment
- d. resistance stage

1. Stress is a state of the organism resulting from interaction between him/her and the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In \_\_\_\_\_, resistance increase to levels above normal.
3. Resistance is lowered in \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Selye's Model of Stress is \_\_\_\_\_ in nature.

### 2.3.2 Sources of Stress at Work

Stress in an organisation has been defined in terms of lack of fit between a person's skills and abilities, and the demands of his/her job. Regardless of how one job may compare to another in terms of stress, it is helpful to recognise that every job has potential stress agents. Researchers have identified the following six major sources of stress at work. Although common to all jobs, these sources vary in the stress they could produce in each job.

1. **Factors intrinsic to the job:** These are related to poor working conditions such as lack of facilities like bathrooms, refreshment, common room etc., long hours, lack of technology skills and training, and work overload.
2. **Role in the organisation:** When a person's role in an organisation is clearly defined and understood, and expectations placed upon the individuals are clear and non-conflicting, stress can be kept to the minimum. Three critical factors – role ambiguity,





role conflict, and the degree of responsibility for others – are seen as major sources of stress.

3. **Relationships at work:** The working relationship that one has with people working in the same organisation can also be a major source of stress. There are three critical relationships at work – those with superiors, those with subordinates, and those with peers. Each set of relationships can produce its own stress.
4. **Career development:** A number of issues such as fear of job loss, retirement and performance appraisals also contribute to create pressure and strain.
5. **Organisational structure and climate:** Just being part of an organisation can present threats to a person's sense of freedom and autonomy. People working in organisations have often complained that they don't have a sense of belonging and that they lack adequate opportunities to participate; they feel that their behaviour is unduly restricted and that they are not included in office communications and consultations. All these have been found to be major sources of stress.
6. **Non-work factors:** Other factors, apart from work, that cause stress in an individual are family problems, economic problems or health problems, etc. Such external work factors often impact work performance and can lead to increased work stress.

All the work related stressors discussed above need not be equally stressful for all. The experience with general sources of stress discussed above, particularly the personality factors and stressful life events, put individuals on the threshold. This renders some work related stressors more threatening to those persons altering their capacity to tolerate stress.

### 2.3.3 Psychological Sources

People already on the threshold of stress due to the accumulated stress from their previous experience are particularly prone to break down in the face of otherwise not so severe stressful factors. These experiences may originate in the health, family structure (e.g. single parent, dominating parents, influence of outsiders/reletives), financial conditions of the family, strained relationships, lack of interpersonal skills, or diverse cultural environments. For example, some children who have been frequently beaten at home are scared of teachers more than other children and run away even after the smallest indication of punishment.

Thus stressors may not be severe in themselves but these become psychologically threatening.

Some work stressors are examples of psychologically threatening events. These have the following common characteristics–

- They have stress value not because of their objective ability to do harm, but because the person perceives them as threatening. For example, the usual playful remarks of children or casual remarks of teacher are taken very seriously by some children and it hurts their self-esteem and relationships resulting in depression.
- Stressors impact different individuals differently due to their in ability to cope with such perceived stressors.
- Personal appraisal of stress by an individual makes it threatening in different degrees to different persons.

- Psychological stressors are the same as physical stressors in the effects they cast on the physiological systems, i.e. a child who is afraid of a peer who does not physically harm but simply threatens can have similar fear and physiological depression from a violent peer.

It is clear that stress is a personal response to certain variations in the environment. It is, therefore, possible to conceive that the same set of stressors can be differently perceived depending on—

- the nature and magnitude of the stressor,
- the importance of the stressor to the individual,
- the perception of a threat element as a component of the stressor,
- the personal and social support systems available to the individual, and
- the involvement and willingness on the part of the individual to do something about the state of stress.

Sources of stress lie not only in the environment, whether it is general environment or work, but also psychological factors that are unique to the individual, these factors also influence and alter the response or the consequences of stress among individuals.



### Activity 1

Identify and list the potential stressors in the organisations (e.g. family, school, college, etc.) you are associated with. Explain why you consider them stressors using examples.

## 2.4 CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS

Stress is unique in the category of diseases. It has no biological carrier such as a germ or virus. Rather, it is the result of how our mind and body function and interact. It can be a major contributor to disturbances in one's emotional, social and family life. It inhibits creativity and personal effectiveness, and exhibits itself in a general dissatisfaction. The short term effect of stress could be intention, irritability, indigestion, anxiety, palpitation, etc. As a result the person is not able to attend to the task in hand efficiently as his attention as well as general health gets affected. This further contributes to his own irritability, dissatisfaction, and others also get impatient with him/her. If the situation remains un-intervened, prolonged exposure to stress has been shown to cause a variety of serious psychosomatic, psychological and behavioural consequences.

You will look at each of these consequences in turn below.

### 2.4.1 Psychosomatic Consequences

The term “psychosomatic” consists of two words – psyche (mind) and soma (body) – suggesting thereby that though the symptoms are physical, the causes are mental. A high percentage of diseases afflicting mankind are psychosomatic and their primary causes are our thoughts, attitudes and beliefs.

There are many examples of psychosomatic diseases which are directly related to stress. These include ulcers, bronchial asthma, common cold, headache, chest pain,



constipation, etc. Many physical illnesses and disorders, such as coronary heart disease (CHD), hypertension, gastrointestinal disorders (e.g. peptic ulcer and irritable bowel syndrome), skin problems (e.g. eczema and acne), and cancer are said to be associated with stress. Most of these occur at some point after a stressful event.

It is still not known why one organ system is affected by stress and not another. Certainly, genetic factors, diet, and physical conditioning are involved, but the key lies in one's mental structures. In other words, it can be said that stress is at the root of all psychosomatic diseases regardless of the organ system involved.

### 2.4.2 Psychological Consequences

Stress manifests itself in the form of many psychological problems. For example, researchers have found that stress is associated with anxiety, depression, hopelessness, anger and helplessness. It has also been reported that stressed people are more likely to be psychologically distressed than those who are not. They have a lower tolerance level and a slight provocation may cause extreme anxiety, depression and emotional outbursts of anger. Some of the other common indications of psychological effects are –

- becoming unnecessarily over-emotional or aggressive in conflict situations
- loss of interest in personal appearance, other people, social events or previously enjoyed activities such as a favourite sport
- poor concentration, difficulty in remembering and an inability to make decisions
- sadness, guilt, fatigue, apathy and a pronounced feeling of helplessness or failure
- loss of confidence in personal ability, often coupled with a lack of self-worth.

### 2.4.3 Behavioural Consequences

The third category of consequences is purely behavioural which is easily observable. A high degree of stress may make people adopt behavioural symptoms as gluttony, obesity, or the opposite of this could be not feeling hungry or the sight of food turning them off. Other behavioural symptoms could be sleeplessness, excessive smoking and drinking. Stress can turn an occasional smoker into a chain smoker and the social drinker into an alcoholic. Some of the other commonly seen behavioural effects are –

- arguments and fights over relatively trivial matters
- overdependence
- uncommunicativeness
- unreasonableness
- lack of interest/over interest in sex.

Individuals weakened by chronic stress are far more susceptible to other illnesses and terminal conditions because their immune systems are weakened. The most common symptom of stress is that people do not feel well and medical practitioners find no medical reason. In short, the negative effects of stress can be highly visible such as absenteeism, smoking, alcohol abuse, etc. but can also be less visible in the form of bad decision-making, reduced creativity and apathy.

Although stress is an inevitable part of human life yet it can also yield positive effects.. People's systems are equipped with certain innate "stress alarms" that allow

them to function effectively in many situations. Without stress, there would not be constructive or creative activity. What we need is to reduce the amount of negative stress (distress), and enjoy and appreciate the positive stress (eustress). Moreover, it is natural and healthy to maintain optimal level of stress to achieve success and higher productivity. However, when left unchecked and unmanaged, stress can create problems in performance and affect the health and well-being of a person.

You have just read that many ailments from which individuals suffer are not purely physiological disorders but can also be psychosomatic, or psychological or behavioural in nature. The cause of such disorders may lie in stresses generated in the family, schools or society. Apart from knowledge about sources and consequences of stress it would help to know how to enhance individuals' capacities to deal with stress in order to minimise its harmful effects. The next section describes different coping strategies which have been used to manage stress.

### Self-check Exercise 2

State whether the following statements are True or False:

1. Role ambiguity in an organisation can be a major source of stress.
2. Stress is a personal response to certain variations in the environment.
3. Individuals weakened by chronic stress are less susceptible to illnesses.
4. Skin problems are not associated with stress.

## 2.5 COPING WITH STRESS

Individuals cannot remain in a continuous state of tension. Even if a deliberate and conscious strategy is not adopted to deal with stress, some innate strategy will occur. For example, to leave the conflicts and stress to take care of themselves is one simple strategy used in avoidance behaviour.

### 2.5.1 Coping Styles

The word 'coping' is frequently used to describe ways of dealing with stress, or to modify or elevate the conditions causing harm, threat or challenge.

Coping responses can be active in nature and oriented towards confronting a problem, or they can be strategies that entail an effort to reduce tension by avoiding dealing with a problem.

The first category involves facing the realities of stress consciously, and taking some action to solve the problems at the individual level or with the help of other people. These styles of coping with stressful situations are functional. On the other hand, the second category consists of persons who decide to suffer from, accept or deny the experienced stress, or put the blame on somebody (self and others) for being in that stressful situation. These are avoidance styles and are dysfunctional styles of coping with stressful situations.



There are seven styles of coping that are used in attempts to reduce stress-

- **Avoiding the stressor:** This style involves identification and active avoidance of stress causing situations, individuals, activities, etc. This is functional but not very effective.
- **Blaming others or the system:** This style is also not functional as the person avoids dealing with the issue, its cause or effective action to reduce stress. Focus is on blaming self or others rather than resolving stress.
- **Asking others for help:** This is an effective strategy that focuses on the real issues underlying stress by talking to others, seeking suggestions, resources, etc.
- **Engaging in indirect stress reducing activities:** This involves indulging in activities that reduce stress. However the stress causing factors are not directly identified or dealt with.
- **Collecting information:** This involves collecting information about stressful situations and one's own capacity to deal with stress. This is a higher level coping style as it involves not only identifying the stressor but also enhancing one's own capabilities and strengths.
- **Acting the opposite of the way one feels:** This is not a very healthy style although it does relieve the person of stress and anxiety immediately. However, the underlying problem is not dealt with adequately.
- **Minimising the importance of the stressful event:** This is also a useful way. However, this cannot be relied upon very frequently. Rather than working on stress and enhancing the capabilities to deal with it, minimising the importance could lead to accumulation of factors.

It may be mentioned here that the above styles are not intended to suggest that people use one kind of coping process or other exclusively. Rather, it is common knowledge that different persons employ combinations of different strategies underlying these styles to deal with the same kind of stress. The strategies of dealing with stress vary from person to person and in the same person from time to time.

Research has also shown that social and emotional support available to the person helps him/her to cope effectively with stress. Persons maintaining close interpersonal relationships with friends and families are able to suggest and facilitate use of more approach strategies. Social support includes both material support (providing resources) and emotional support (listening to the person and encouraging him/her). For example, during times of stress supportive friends and family can reassure the individual that one is loved and cared for. However, studies have also reported that unsolicited support may have negative consequences as individual's own initiative may become minimal, making him/her dependent, or the failure of the advice or support may not succeed, causing reprisal.

### 2.5.2 Enhancing Coping Capabilities

It is important that schools make efforts to enable young children and adults to cope with stresses which are accumulating in them. Family itself which was a source of comfort and security, in modern times has become a source of stress due to

competitiveness spurred on by parents. The strategies which could enhance coping abilities of youngsters have been discussed in this section.

However, when the stress inducers could not be identified or there is actual underlying organic problem, drug therapy may be used. But other supportive coping mechanisms also must be suggested for use.

The non-drug or supportive methods of coping are more advantageous and much safer. Some of the non-drug methods, which an individual can undertake to cope with stress, are—

(i) **Exercise**

Physical exercise is necessary to keep the body healthy, both physically and mentally, and is the best antidote for stress. Emotional strength is a by-product of regular exercise, and self-confidence is a natural consequence. Exercise eases nervous tension and anxiety by providing an outlet for pent-up feelings of aggression and hostility. One of the best exercises is walking.

(ii) **Yoga**

It involves various *asanas* or body postures and breathing exercises. Among these, *shavasana* or the corpse posture is the best. It brings not only mental calm and relief from stress but better health, more vigour, and a more alert mind.

According to yoga, we are unconscious of those mental/emotional/perceptual processes which habitually create stress. Yoga involves a systematic method by which we can begin to expand our awareness of these processes and thus begin to gain control over them. So, in a very practical sense, yoga gives us the tools and techniques by which we can expand our conscious awareness into the unconscious parts of the mind in order to become aware of the patterns and habits which lead to stress.

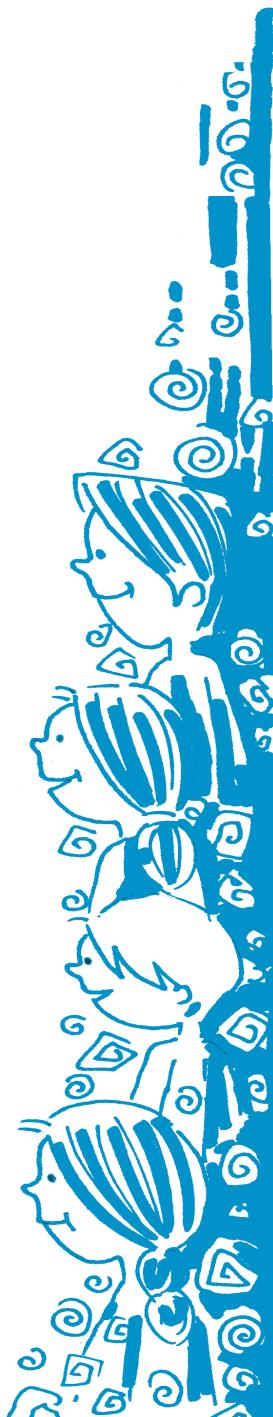
(iii) **Meditation**

Meditation is of far greater importance than medication for whatever afflicts mankind today. Meditation is the only process by which awareness is systematically expanded under one's direct control. It is not a state; it is, rather, the means through which we can achieve a particular level of awareness. Meditation is a practical, systematic method which allows one—

- to understand himself/herself at different levels of being
- to understand his/her environment completely
- to eliminate and prevent inner conflicts
- to obtain a tranquil and peaceful mind.

It has been reported that the practice of meditation—

- reduces many problem behaviours
- increases emotional and physical health, and psychological well-being
- reduces the frequency of negative thoughts
- reduces substance abuse
- generally improves the quality of life.





(iv) **Recreation**

Recreation provides an opportunity to let oneself go, become uninhibited, thus reducing tension and stress. There are various forms of recreation like music and entertainment, painting, gardening, dancing, etc. These recreational pursuits are important for the prevention of the damaging effects of stress.

(v) **Communication Skills**

These are very important set of skills that children lack causing stress accumulation. Teachers can organise programmes for communication skill enhancement, play games where children listen to each other. Some of the communication skills have been discussed in Module-2 on ‘Counselling Skills and Strategies’.

(vi) **Relationship Building and Peer Counselling Activities**

You have been exposed to these in Module -2 on ‘Counselling Skills and Strategies’. It involves developing capabilities of children and understanding the importance of relationships for mental health. Details can be found in Module-9 on ‘Special Concerns in Counselling’.

Besides the above mentioned strategies to overcome stress, there are certain safety valves (Veninga and Spradley, 1981), which serve at least two important functions : enable one to escape the direct pressure of work stress, and counteract the biochemical and psychological changes that occur when mobilised to deal with stress. Some safety valves are—

- **Changing Gears**

It involves shifting ‘from’ work ‘to’ something else. In order to change gears, one has to try activities that capture one’s interest. The pursuit of any non-work project or hobby can reduce stress. Although there is no single best strategy for helping someone to recover from stress or job burnout, sometimes an effective beginning is to help the person regain control over leisure time. If used well, leisure can help one to stay on an even mental keel. It is a change in setting and pace from the highly competitive world of work and can become a form of relaxation that is indispensable to emotional stability.

- **Pamper Yourself**

Most of us know how to pamper other people when they experience a crisis. Sending flowers to a friend in the hospital is just one of the many ways in which we pamper others. Such special attention helps people cope with stress. Pampering oneself can have the same effect. The key object here is to break the routine.

- **Warm up Slowly**

One can often get control of a tense, pressured workday if one changes the way it begins. If an individual’s day begins with a sudden rush of activity or a mad scramble on some crowded metro, it will add to the stress. The most important two-hour period in one’s day is prior to starting work. The little things one does in the morning prepares one for the tensions encountered during the day.

Tubesing and Tubesing (1982) contended that stress affects the whole person. Stress management approaches should cover all aspects of human experience.

More than one coping style may be used in any stressful situation. None of these styles is inherently good or bad. How well the styles work depends on the situation, how they are used, and the degree to which they are used.

It is not advisable to use drugs continuously to cope with the stress-related ailments like headaches and backaches etc. When the stress levels increase too much to be handled by an individual himself and these affect his/her health and physiological process it is advisable to consult a therapist.

### Activity 2



Give any one situation that you often find stressful. What strategies would you use to cope with that stress in your life? Explain why it is a successful coping mechanism for you. If you don't think that it is very successful as a coping mechanism, describe what alternative strategy you could use in that situation and why it might work better.

## 2.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS AND COUNSELLORS

Whenever a teacher or counsellor notices that a child is lagging behind in studies or absenting himself/herself from school, or frequent emotional outbursts are seen without any discernable cause they may be alert and look out for symptoms of stress due to various factors enumerated earlier in this unit.

In such situations, it will help to talk with the child and listen to his/her difficulties. However teachers may be cautious that many a time children are not able to articulate their own stress. The teacher must enquire about the family, friends and other relationships of the child to identify the sources of stress and suggest some strategies for enhancing coping capabilities. They may even give suggestion to the parents to ease out the stress by giving emotional support or taking care of medical problems, if any.

### 2.7 Summary

A stress-free life is not possible in today's environment. All that we can manage is to reduce our stress to a reasonable level, even to the level where it can play a positive role rather than adversely affect our health and well-being.

This unit has dealt with the concept of stress. The initial sections tried to offer a definition of stress. It has also discussed the various sources of stress, i.e. general sources as well as sources of stress at work. Every individual needs a moderate amount of stress to be alert and capable of functioning. However, an excess of stress can make a person dysfunctional. The threshold of stress varies for each individual. The consequences of stress have been described under three broad





categories: psychosomatic, psychological and behavioural. Finally, the unit explained the concept and forms of coping, and discussed some strategies to cope effectively with stress at school level. Implications for teachers/counsellors have also been outlined.

### Self-evaluation Exercises



1. What are the three approaches to stress?
2. What are the three main sources of stress? Explain with suitable examples.
3. Describe any three consequences of stress.
4. What is coping? Describe any four coping styles used to deal with stress.

### Answer Key to Self-evaluation Exercises

1. Elaborate on the following three approaches:
  - (i) Medical
  - (ii) Psychological
  - (iii) Sociological
2. Explain with examples the following three main sources of stress:
  - (i) Anticipated life events
  - (ii) Unexpected life events
  - (iii) Progressive, accumulating situational events
3. Describe the following consequences of stress:
  - (i) Psychosomatic
  - (ii) Psychological
  - (iii) Behavioural
4. Coping is the way of dealing with stress. Describe any four coping styles:
  - (i) Avoiding the stressor
  - (ii) Blaming others or the system
  - (iii) Asking others for help
  - (iv) Engaging in indirect stress reducing activities
  - (v) Collecting information
  - (vi) Acting the opposite of the way one feels
  - (vii) Minimising the importance of stressful events

### Answer Key to Self-check Exercises

#### *Self-check Exercise 1*

1. c
2. d
3. a
4. b

### Self-check Exercise 2

1. True
2. True
3. False
4. False

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# 3



## Managing Cultural Diversity for Adjustment

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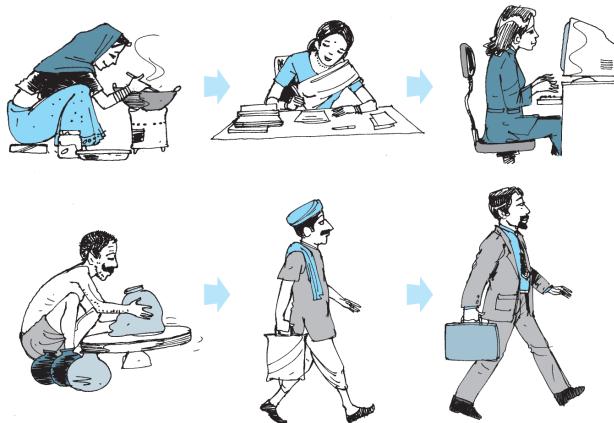


## Managing Cultural Diversity for Adjustment

3

### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

Previously the development and adjustment of individuals, as influenced by various internal factors and external environmental factors such as family, peer group, and school, were discussed. The external factors, however, vary across social groups. There are influences even beyond the immediate environment—geographical, economic and sociological in origin—that affect the process of adjustment and development across a life span. There may or may not be visible effects of these factors on the adjustment and development across a life span. These factors also interact with the local neighbourhood, family, school and work environment, and their effect on the individuals could be altered. These tangible or intangible influences are referred to as culture by sociologists. Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs and other capabilities acquired as member of a social group. The large social group that shares culture is also referred to as societies. These capabilities are the product of socialisation. With increasing globalisation and migration of work forces around the globe, it is becoming very common to find people from diverse cultural backgrounds working together. Different ethnic, cultural and racial groups encounter each other, which causes problems of adjustment. There is diversity within social groups. The needs, goals and aspirations of these social groups sometimes clash with each other and give rise to conflicts of various kinds. Problems of adjustment arise due to these conflicts.





This unit will introduce you to the concept of culture and its characteristics. The implications of culture for socialisation and adjustment are discussed. The way culture influences various social norms and practices prevalent in the society, that in turn influences the psychological adjustment are discussed. There is also description of conflicts among individuals that arise at various levels due to differences in socialisation of cultures. This unit will also familiarise you with ways of dealing with cultural diversity and the attitudes and skills that impart cross-cultural orientation to counselling.

### 3.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- *understand* the different characteristics of culture.
- *explain* the relationship between culture and socialisation practices.
- *understand* the role of cultural norms and practices in the society for promoting adjustment.
- *explain* the implications of cultural diversity for adjustment.
- *list* the important skills for adjusting to culturally diverse environments.

### 3.2 WHAT IS CULTURE?

Culture is the description of the way people live in a certain geographical area. It is adaptation of the individual to the unique environment prevailing in the area. Therefore, culture is created by people and passed on to the following generations. As a way of life, it includes styles of eating food, dress, language, sculpture and other art forms as well as attitudes, beliefs, values and goals that are learned through socialisation. These are often transmitted from one generation to another and provide certain degree of continuity of the social life. Due to sharing of common ways of living, people inhabiting a certain area are also referred to as a society. Ecological and climatic conditions shape cultures and place certain limits on the cultural lives of people, which in turn influence the development patterns and personality of the people. For instance, those geographical regions where severe weather conditions prevail, most of the socio-cultural activities get organised around spring. In addition to the climate, technology and economic conditions too have their influence on culture. Therefore, before we can discuss the role played by culture, it is important to understand some characteristics that define a culture.

#### 3.2.1 Characteristics of a Culture

Culture is the result of learning beliefs, attitudes and values that are considered appropriate. Sometimes, even after the people have moved to another place, these attitudes continue. These attitudes and beliefs dictate about how one should behave in public and private life. These rules indicate that everyone accepts them as good practice and enforces them. These cultural rules are agreed upon and time tested ways of being, passed on and accumulated over the years. Although cultures continuously evolve, it is a slow and invisible change. Only over a long period of time change could be seen. The change is apparent if there is a recorded history.

- (i) **Culture is learned** – Culture is a way of life that is acquired during the process of growing up. It structures a person’s attitudes, values, beliefs and habits. The family is generally the first institution where transfer of cultural characteristics to a child occurs. Parents model the culturally approved behaviours and attitudes. The family ensures learning of cultural ways by use of rewards and punishment so that a youngster’s behaviour conforms to the cultural norms. This process of transmitting culture from one generation to the next is learned through socialisation. One learns socially appropriate ways of satisfying one’s needs. Although the biological needs of humans are same—food, shelter, self-defence, etc—each culture determines in its own way how their needs will be met. These different ways are learned.
- (ii) **Culture determines the way needs are satisfied**—Culture lays down conditions and rules as to how one satisfies needs like eating, enjoying leisure hours, nurturing of children, maintaining relationships, etc. It also determines aesthetics, ethical, and social standards of behaviour of the group. The way women should dress or the kind of hair considered attractive is exclusive for each culture. Even ethical ways are quite unique to culture. For example, in India, giving alms could be right but it may not be so in other countries/cultures which consider begging unethical.
- (iii) **Culture is collective and shared**—It is the outcome of the shared expectations of all members of a group about their quality of life. It is a social practice to which allegiance is desired by a majority of the members of the group. Although there may be deviations, these are tolerated within a certain range only; beyond that the group will apply sanctions. The beliefs about women’s freedom or dress are shared members. There may be variations but generally all conform to these belief.
- (iv) **Culture is the sum total of social heritage**—Culture is linked with the past. The past endures because it lives in the present culture. It is passed from generation to generation through traditions and customs. The socialisation processes connected to a particular culture ensure its transmission to the next generation. However, the changes acquired over the period are an essential feature. These changes don’t appear as discontinuities, as the process of change is slow and invisible. It is only after a long interval that some changes become visible. Cultures are perceived to be social heritage passed on from the past, even though there are changes in it.
- (v) **Cultures evolve into forms that are more complex**—Since culture is the outcome of adaptation to climatic and geographical realities over a period, the progress of culture proceeds through greater specialisation and interdependence. Division of labour which develops special skills is an important characteristic of societies. For example, technical revolution brought about by increasing mechanisation, first the spinning wheel and later more complex machinery, led to the task of preparing cloth getting diversified. The farmers growing cotton were confined to it. Others engaged with dying, processing and still others in sale etc. Therefore, climate for growing cotton, availability of machinery and space for dying etc. determined the role of each section of society.

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- (vi) **Culture is an integrated system**—The attitudes, beliefs and values that are characteristic of the culture are its response to the realities experienced by the members. The attitudes and beliefs are all part of a whole interconnected system rather than discrete qualities. These stem from an ideal conception of society, which lays down an integrated system of behaviours, with its supporting ideas and values. In a highly integrated culture, all elements fit harmoniously together. The adoption of modern technology by traditional societies brought about changes in their traditional culture. In places where girls began to ride bicycles, the dress they wore was suitably altered. The expansion of office and the cost of living luxurious life in cities drove women to work.
  - (vii) **Language is the chief vehicle of culture**—The most symbolic aspect of a culture is its language. The wisdom of the past could not possibly be handed down through generations unless a language is available. Language makes possible this continuity of the culture and belongingness. Language is so intimately tied up with culture that every new addition to a group's cultural heritage involves additions to the language. In order to know a group one must learn to speak its language. Cultures produce language, but language helps or hinders the spread of culture. Those who speak a particular language also subscribe to a set of attitudes and beliefs inherent in the language. As one learns a new language one is bound to be affected by the beliefs inherent in it.

You can identify a culture as a separate entity through an analysis of its characteristics. Based on these characteristics, a culture guides the way an individual's needs are satisfied. Society has provision for sanctions if individuals do not comply with its cultural norms in fulfilling those needs.

The next section will discuss the norms and standards that a culture may ascribe to ensure its own continuity.

### 3.2.2 Social Norms and Standards

Cultural norms regarding behaviours in different situations have to be followed. These are often specified according to roles and expectations of individuals. Also, the ways of expressing emotions are culture-specific. Expression of pleasure and displeasure often varies across cultures. Expressing grief and mourning is done in many ways. Gender differences are also linked with culture. For instance, in India men are expected to be strong and women as weak, shy and soft-spoken. Culture defines the expected behaviours for various roles within the family. Customs, religious practices, and rituals that are culturally shaped play an important role in determining and organising human behaviour. The members belonging to a culture share beliefs, values and norms for conducting their day-to-day affairs. It is expected that members of a culture have similar assumptions regarding how people should think, behave and communicate.

Society has norms set for most of the individual's behaviour in public and private life. There are standards for almost all occasions. In India marriages are solemnised by priests and there are regional variations as per the socially approved way. For instance, generally the men remain in their house after marriage and it is the bride who goes and

lives with the husband; in certain communities it is the groom who goes to live with the brides' family. Similarly, there are norms that guide all other kinds of social interactions.

Most members of a culture strictly follow the social norms, however, there are deviations. These deviations from norms are tolerated to a certain degree by all societies but there are limits beyond which such deviations are dealt with sternly. Many deviations though are not illegal but still individuals do not cross the dictates of society.

There are sub-cultures within many societies that vary substantially from each other. For instance, in India, the way people in north India live is very different from south India or east India. The language, dress and the economic conditions too are different. However, economy and availability of technological advancements, or urban-rural characteristics of a society also change the lifestyle and the social norms. In rural areas, for instance, the dress, education of girls and their role expectations vary substantially from those of the urban areas.

Each culture ensures that children learn behaviour considered appropriate for them. Thus, learning takes place through socialisation within families, which is discussed in the next section.

### 3.2.3 Culture and Socialisation in Families

The conformity to socio-cultural mores by individuals is the result of socialisation within families. Family ensures a child's obedience to the cultural norms.

All societies ensure that individual members are aware of the cultural norms and standards, acquire appropriate attitudes and values and behave in socially desirable ways in line with society thinking ways. Socialisation process which begins in the family ensures nurturance of these attitudes, values and behaviours. The family promotes learning of their norms by persuading children, by withholding rewards and modeling appropriate behaviours. As the children grow out of the family and enter the school system, the teachers apply sanctions and encourage behaviour in line with society's expectations. Their peers, friends, community, and other organisations where the individual moves through also help monitor the attitudes and values, and ensure conformity to social norms.

These relate to the following aspects of individual behaviour—gender appropriate behaviour and sex-role learning, and moral development.

Although in most cultures women are considered emotional, nurturing, and less aggressive than males, but how exactly these traits find expression in different cultures differs. For example, western society places high value on independence including the independence of women.

Moral development is another very crucial characteristic of culture. Each culture has well defined do's and don'ts. If these are not adhered to, there would be criticism and sanctions. However, societies marked by a diverse cultural climate often find contradictory situations existing side by side. For instance, in Asian communities, taking responsibility for old parents is morally correct while in Western society, living away from parents is an accepted norm.



### 3.2.4 Variations within and Across Cultures

Largely all the members fulfil the expectations of the society about the approved behaviour in line with its norms and values. Societies use sanctions against members who deviate from the norms. However, not all the members conform to the standards completely. In spite of the fact that the most of the people most of time conform to the rules, there will be members who are very high or very low, and still others would be average in their conformity. Another source of variation is the degree of conformity to the societal norms as caused by the very nature of the norms. There are core values and standards, the norms which are enforced very strictly. For instance, there are codes about covering the body but the kind of dress one wears and how revealing it is may not be strictly sanctioned. Although there are unspoken or implicit norms, these are not strictly enforced. Thus, not all norms of the society are equally enforced. These deviations lead to differences in adherence to rules by different people. These deviations have implications for adjustment of the individuals and their quality of life, particularly whenever there are interactions among individuals from different groups.

#### 3.2.4.1 Adjustment or Variation

As children grow, the requisite values, attitudes and behaviours become internalised and form the moral framework against which they judge theirs and other's decisions. Any deviation from these accepted and internalised ways of behaving may meet with criticism and disapproval.

Conflicts arise because of the variation in the learning of the acceptable norms in attitudes and values' and determining the flexibility in practising those norms. For example, often people express outrage when youngsters do not adhere to the accepted dress code or language or other social behaviour.

When individuals from different cultures or sub-cultures within a society are in social contact, prejudices are born which are reflected in rejection and isolation of the other. Sometimes these may not result in direct conflict but biases can remain hidden in the form of social structures that are disadvantageous to those in a minority. Minority groups often do not possess the essential resources and means to promote their own welfare, education or health, etc. The majority group, having access to power, generally manages to control the resources, opportunities, and dominates the other groups. Thereby the majority culture becomes instrumental in destroying the quality of life of the minority group. In schools when children mix, if they keep minority children out, the latter may harbour deep anguish towards the community. The good practice would be to help both interact and understand each other.



#### Self-check Exercise 1

1. Define culture.
2. List seven characteristics of culture.
3. What are cultural norms and standards?
4. How do cultures get perpetuated?

### 3.3 CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON ADJUSTMENT

People adjust to their own cultures by assimilating all of the norms of that culture. It becomes more difficult when a society must accommodate multi-cultural influences forcing individuals to both recognise and choose between differing norms. You have just looked at the adjustment an individual makes within a particular culture. That adjustment is supported and influenced by family and a close society that surrounds them.

Cultural evolution poses a second influence on the adjustment of a person. Cultures evolve through various changes brought about by such influences as technology, migration of worker or trade, which cause the mixing of cultures and blurring of cultural boundaries or norms. Let us see how all these three factors influence adjustment.

#### Activity 1



Think about a situation where you had the feeling of being lost because you were seeking a host of new things, people, etc. from your past experience. It can be about a new work culture or study environment with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Mention any five aspects that you felt or you faced in the new environment.

#### 3.3.1 Information and Technology

The world is moving towards a new era in which information and technology are key players. The various spheres of life, i.e. family, health, business and education are organised around information. Information changes the way one behaves, it influences attitudes and behaviours. Youngsters who are exposed to ways of other cultures and societies are changing. It is leading to good practices like learning of new languages, adoption of gadgets for making life comfortable as well as some negative practices like teenage pregnancies and alcohol consumption at an early age. We are now living in a world in which technology is the guiding force for most of the activities. Youngsters are more adept in the use of these technologies and thereby possess more information than older members of family and even those on the job. The decision-making efficiency of youngsters, due to their access to information, poses challenges to authority and power relationships. Fast working powerful technologies have changed the experience of time and space, and people need to adjust. For example, look at the ways in which the cell phone has influenced current lives.

#### 3.3.2 Pace of Life

Lifestyles are changing very fast. Traditional lifestyles have given way to new and more practical ways of living. These new ways too have a short life span. Constant change creates instability, confusion and induces a feeling of being lost. It also puts pressure on people to adapt to rapid change by learning new skills and ways of life. For instance, the emerging new jobs like call centre operators require not only new technical skills but also a different daily routine and social environment. Middle class youth get employed



at an early age, work late in night shifts and young men and women earn more money than parents. Suddenly from the protection of parents they are independent, thus causing complications in their emotional lives as seen by the increased love affairs, stress, etc. There is need for learning better self management skills too.

The change in technology also brings people from different cultural backgrounds in touch with each other, which requires sensitivity towards others' views, expressions and emotions. In the absence of skills to handle changes in cultural experiences, conflicts are inevitable.

### 3.3.3 Social Reorganisation

The organisational structures are changing in many ways. The entry of women to new areas of work force is another change. This requires major skill in attitudes and beliefs of men towards them as co-workers. There is a shift for men to consider their wives as equal members of the family. These basic cultural changes can cause conflicts unless the individuals adjust to the new standards. The working of both the spouses has lead to crèches, old age homes and other institutions to take care of family members. The lack of known social group members is leading to marriages bureaus. The greater stress of adjustment has also put pressure on marriages leading to problems of divorced daughters living with family. On the organisational front the jobs specialisation has created placement agencies.

### 3.3.4 Changed Living Styles

The traditional institutions of family and kinship, characterised by stability and deep emotional bonds, are challenged by the demands of new lifestyles. The instances of both husband and wife working are on the increase. This presents problems for traditional child rearing. Multigenerational and joint families are being replaced by nuclear families. These changes can cause stress and anxiety in the lives of people involved in the transition. Sick parents, children, etc. are being left alone at home due to absence of grand parents.

The breaking down of traditional social institutions that had earlier helped health and healing has adversely affected modern professional health services.

### 3.3.5 Intermingling of Cultures

Mobility of people is increasing. Migration of people to different places in the world has changed cultural composition within countries. Different cultural groups living together has led to changes and modifications in their style of life, religious practices and language, and traditions. Research indicates that the majority has been found to be enjoying better social conditions than minority groups who are likely to be oppressed, disadvantaged or discriminated against. As a result, sometimes the minority groups take on the characteristics of the majority which had been termed the process of *sanskritisation* in India. The values of consumerism, competition and ostentatious living have become dominant. Unlimited aspirations are receiving priority over traditional social concerns of interdependence and cooperation. The dominant concerns become of majority acquiring social status of life. The sort of support necessary for health and well-being is decreasing. This is creating loneliness and depression.

On one hand there is competition to become similar to dominant group; on the other hand there is social economic status prejudice and biases towards culturally different. These biases remain hidden in the form of social structures and practices maintained by majority which are sometimes disadvantageous to the minority groups. The minority groups get isolated. The dominant cultural group is perceived hostile as it controls jobs, information and opportunities. The minority groups tend to stick together and violence erupts whenever there is interface or provocation. However, even in the absence of overt violence and conflict there is hostility which remain invisible. There is need for intervention to promote positive attitudes.

Understanding individuals of other cultures as real individuals rather than as a group sharing similar characteristics helps reveal cross-cultural similarities between individuals. The understanding of other cultures requires developing positive attitudes and skills that promote cross-cultural understanding. The tolerance for cultural diversity and positive attitudes create harmony among culturally diverse populations.

### 3.4 MANAGING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Developing multicultural orientation requires development of communication skills to understand others. Communication skills refer to listening and attending others efficiently individuals from different when cultures come together, their capabilities of attending and listening attentively will help in developing positive relationships and managing differences.

#### 3.4.1 Cross-cultural Communications

While communicating with people from other cultures it is necessary to keep their cultural background in mind. In a situation where you have to speak or write to a person from a different culture you may understand the message on the basis of the assumptions of your own culture. The receiver of the message may understand the message as per the assumptions of his or her own culture. In this process the meaning may be distorted or lost. In order to bridge the cultural differences successfully one may have to develop self-awareness and the skills of cross cultural communication.

These cross cultural communication skills facilitate development of a multicultural identity. Multicultural identity is the product of the following.

#### 3.4.2 Cultural Awareness

This refers to an awareness of typical attitudes and beliefs that characterise a person of your own culture and how these differ from that of other cultures, and the way these attitudes and beliefs alter your own conception of different social situations. Understanding of socialisation processes which ensure that people adhere to these beliefs may help you to overcome dysfunctional ones. Self-awareness develops as a result of efforts to understand other cultures and explore your own attitudes. In order to develop self-awareness, a counsellor has to explore other cultures with an attitude of understanding them.

Developing knowledge of multicultural issues and reading about them also facilitate development of multicultural orientation.

What are the hurdles that come in the way of living in a multicultural environments in different parts of the world? How do cultural interactions give rise to misunderstanding of each other and discriminatory or prejudicial behaviour?

### 3.4.3 Familiarity with Other Cultures

It is important that those dealing with culturally diverse populations try to develop as much knowledge about their cultural practices, customs, traditions, etc. as possible from all sources like stories, newspapers, anecdotes or art.



### 3.4.4 Sensitivity to Culturally Different

Sensitivity to the other cultures means that when you are with them you try to show respect and concern for the customs and practices which are different from yours, and try to understand them. It also means you do not ridicule or belittle others even if they look irrational from your cultural perspective. It is in this zone of extending acceptance that people forge bonds and change tools.



#### Self-check Exercise 2

1. Which of the following is an attribute of culture?
  - (a) language
  - (b) ethnic group
  - (c) gender
  - (d) all of the above
2. Which of the following is not a way to improve listening skills?
  - (i) empathise with client
  - (ii) argue with client
  - (iii) ask questions
  - (iv) make judgments

### 3.4.5 Communication Skills

Listening is perhaps the most important communication skill that a culturally sensitive counsellor should master. You already know that the meaning of a message may change depending upon the way a receiver interprets the message received. If one has no knowledge of other cultures, then the meaning of the message or gesture is most likely to be misinterpreted. It is important that one has the right attitude which can be acquired through self-awareness and listening. Some important tips for improving listening skills are as follows—

- Attend to the listener
- Show respect for the person you are listening to
- Show the person that you want to listen

- Focus on what he or she is saying
- Use appropriate non-verbal cues and paraphrasing to show that you are paying attention
- Remove distractions
- Be patient
- Empathise with the client
- Hold your temper
- Instead of argument and criticism, ask questions
- Don't ask excessive questions
- Avoid judgmental remarks like stupid, callous etc.
- Try to understand what the client means.

Counsellors need to be aware of their own cultural biases as discussed above before they can successfully overlook or work with the cultural biases of their students. Listening skills will help you improve your insight into where your student is forming their opinions and perceptions.

### **3.5 ROLE OF CULTURE IN COUNSELLING**

Culturally sensitive counsellors engage in actions or create conditions that maximise the optimal development of client. The multicultural counselling competence, therefore, involves acquisition of awareness, knowledge and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic society. To this end communication skills are essential. With this in view we may discuss important aspects of intercultural communication. Such communications will be beneficial if the cultural differences in social values, roles and status, decision making, customs, concepts of time, concepts of personal space, cultural context, body language, social behaviour and manners, and patterns of legal and ethical behaviour are recognised.

#### **3.5.1 Intercultural Communication**

Communicating with culturally diverse groups can improve if the communication respects the following rules.

##### **Acceptance of cultural differences**

1. Adjust communication to client's educational level.
2. Encourage client to openly discuss their culture's customs so that differences won't seem strange.
3. Recognise and overcome ethnocentric reactions and stereotyping.
4. Help to stamp out negative or stereotype labels by noticing how people identify their own groups.

##### **Handling oral and written communication**

1. Repeat the information frequently to emphasise important points.
2. Use familiar words wherever possible.
3. Don't overload by covering too much information at one time.
4. Be specific and explicit, using descriptive words and examples wherever possible.



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5. Give clear reasons for following a given procedure and explain what happens if the procedure is not followed.
  6. Reduce barriers caused by language differences.

#### **Assessing how well you have been understood**

1. Be alert to facial expressions and other non verbal signs that indicate confusion or embarrassment.
2. Observe how clients use the information you've provided, and review any points that may have been misunderstood.
3. Try to understand the non verbal reactions of other cultures so that you're prepared to spot the more subtle signs of misunderstanding.

#### **Offering feedback to improve communication**

1. Offer feedback in terms of behaviors and conditions, not judgements about the person.
2. Be supportive when giving feedback and reassure the client.

### **3.5.2 Implications of Ethnocentrism for Counselling**

People often exhibit the tendency to like their own culture and are critical of the others' culture. This is a common phenomenon called *ethnocentrism*. Let us try to understand it. In a way all of us in India are multicultural beings. We belong to a culture that is shared by the people who live in the same country. But we also belong to other cultural groups including an ethnic group, a religious group, or a professional group. However, while dealing with people of a different culture we tend to consider our own culture as the standard or yardstick for judging other cultures. This reflects ethnocentric behaviour. Ethnocentrism is a stumbling block in understanding other cultures. In order to reduce ethnocentrism we must learn to appreciate the best that humans have produced, no matter where it was developed. We must learn to analyse cultures objectively. While dealing with culturally different groups, a counsellor must assume differences. The emphasis should be on the description rather than interpretation or passing judgment or evaluation. Finally, counsellor should not interpret other culture: rather should explore and become aware of other practices.

When a client and counsellor come from different cultural backgrounds, it becomes difficult to establish a quickly effective relationship.

### **3.5.3 Qualities of a Culturally Sensitive Counsellor**

In ethnically diverse societies, mental and physical health services have to be offered to a wide range of groups. So, in order to become a culturally sensitive counsellor, the following qualities are desirable—

1. **Awareness of oneself in the cultural context**
  - (a) be aware of your own values and assumptions regarding human behaviour
  - (b) read about instances of racial and other forms of social oppression
  - (c) become aware of the cultural differences
  - (d) try to explore from a client's point of view how cultural values influence their

- specific behaviours such as attitudes towards women, child rearing, or discipline practices
- (e) be willing to develop warm and deep relationships with culturally different individuals
  - (f) be willing to self-disclose that others may also feel that they can express themselves freely
- 2. Skill building**
- (a) be open to and accepting of their own values and beliefs
  - (b) accept personal responsibility for your own behaviours
  - (c) do not engage in cultural oppression
  - (d) be eclectic in approach and draw from a variety of techniques suitable to the client's lifestyle.
- 3. Understanding the worldview of the culturally different client**
- (a) their negative emotional reactions toward other/different groups
  - (b) their stereotypes and preconceived notions about other groups
- 4. Knowledge and information about others**
- (a) the group they are working with
  - (b) how race, culture and ethnicity, etc. may influence personality formation, vocational choices, manifestation of psychological disorders, and help seeking behaviours
  - (c) socio-political influences that impinge upon the life of different cultural, racial and ethnic groups
  - (d) should familiarise themselves with relevant studies on mental health and mental disorder of various ethnic groups
  - (e) are capable of involvement with minority individuals outside the counselling setting.
- 5. Developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques, attitudes, language and beliefs of the clients**
- (a) respect client's religious and/or spiritual beliefs and values about physical and mental functioning
  - (b) respect indigenous helping practices and help giving networks
  - (c) value bilingualism and do not view another language as an impediment to counselling.
- 6. Nature of intervention**
- (a) Knowledge of the generic characteristics of counselling and therapy and the way they may clash with the values of different groups
  - (b) Knowledge of institutional barriers that prevent minorities from using mental health services
  - (c) Awareness of the potential bias in assessment instruments, and use procedures and interpret findings in view of the culture characteristics of clients.
  - (d) Understanding of family structures, hierarchies, values and beliefs of different cultures

- (e) Knowledge of discriminatory practices against specific cultural groups at the social and community level.



### Self-check Exercise 3

Fill in the blanks from the following alternatives.



1. \_\_\_\_\_ is a process of achieving match between the demands of environment and capacities of a person.
  2. Material culture is represented by \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. Subjective culture is represented by \_\_\_\_\_.
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ acts as a stumbling block in the process of understanding other cultures.



## Activity 2

1. List down the ways in which your values/language/rituals etc. are similar as well as different. Discuss these with a friend.
  2. Choose any three of your friends from different regions and cultural backgrounds. Discuss with your friends what they think about their culture and the culture of others i.e., about language, food habits, family, festivals, etc. Note it down and compare the perceptions of the culturally different groups.



## 3.6 Summary

Contemporary societies are changing very fast and new challenges are posed to one's adjustment. These challenges include communication revolution, technological advancement and the connection across cultures. The meaning of self and adjustment varies across cultures. Cultural diversity is something that is present in a large number of societies. Culture is shared meaning and practices. The counsellor should be sensitive to culture. People who are in the helping professions, therefore, should learn more about cultural variety and its influence on human functioning. The culturally skilled counsellor has to develop competencies by refining their attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and intervention strategies. They need to know their own culture as well as the culture of clients. The ethnocentric view needs to be replaced by respect and sensitivity for other cultures. Communication skills play a major role in this process. The nuances of intercultural communication need to be attended to and appropriate skills have to be evolved.

1. Write 250 words explaining culture. Why should a counsellor be sensitive to cultural aspects of their client?
2. What are the challenges caused by cultural diversity faced by mankind in today's world? What are the impacts of these challenges?
3. Write a paragraph explaining ethnocentrism. Elaborate the concept of ethnocentrism by giving an example.
4. What should be the role of a counsellor in dealing with culturally different groups?
5. Is it necessary to achieve intercultural communication? Why? Give five instances of cross-cultural communication.
6. What qualities are required to become a culturally sensitive counsellor?

### Answer Key to Self-evaluation Exercises

1. Elaborate on the following points:
  - Elaborate on the different aspects of culture and how it creates continuity of social life. Also mention about other factors that give shape to culture.
  - Cultural aspects involve various values, styles and norms which influences one's life. Only if a counsellor knows about these, can adjustment be influenced by one's culture.
2. Elaborate on the following points:
  - Various challenges faced like the information technology revolution, constant change in society, new forms of organisations – MNCs, BPOs etc. – and changing lifestyle of people.
  - Elaborate on the changes brought about by each factor, e.g., how it brings anxiety, stress, and how it creates instability, confusion, and feeling of loss.
3. Elaborate on the following points:
  - Elaborate on the meaning of ethnocentrism and give an example for the same.
  - Make a note on the drawbacks of ethnocentrism and the ways to reduce ethnocentrism.
4. The main concern should be on the way a counsellor handles a culturally diverse group. Emphasis should be on description and not on interpretation, evaluation or passing judgment. Counsellor should have awareness about cultural practices and explore it rather than making his/her own interpretation.
5. Elaborate on the following points:
  - Intercultural communication helps in bridging cultural differences. Elaborate on how the meanings of messages are distorted or lost.
  - Elaborate on what the cross-cultural studies of communication indicate.
6. A counsellor, in order to be culturally sensitive, should learn more about cultural variety and its influence on human functioning. A counsellor has to develop competencies in terms of communication skills, listening skills, and should refine their attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and intervention strategies.

## Answer Key to Self-check Exercises

### *Self-check Exercise 1*

1. Refer to Section 3.2
2. Refer to Section 3.2.1
3. Refer to Section 3.2.2
4. Refer to Section 3.2.3

### *Self-check Exercise 2*

1. d
2. d

### *Self-check Exercise 3*

5. c
6. a
7. d
8. b

### Suggested Readings

American Psychological Association. 1993. Guidelines for providers of psychological services to ethnic, linguistic and culturally diverse populations. *American Psychologist*. 48, 45–48.

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# NOTES

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## List of Course Material

### 1. Course Guide

Major inputs include objectives, scope, rules, syllabi as well as procedures for admission, transaction and evaluation for all the three phases of the course.

### 2. Course Modules\*

- i. Module- I : Introduction to Guidance
- ii. Module-II : Counselling Process and Strategies
- iii. Module-III : Guidance for Human Development and Adjustment
- iv. Module-IV : Career Development-I
- v. Module V : Career Information in Guidance and Counselling-I
- vi. Module VI : Assessment and Appraisal in Guidance and Counselling-I
- vii. Module VII : Basic Statistics in Guidance and Counselling-I
- viii. Module VIII : Guidance in Action
- ix. Module IX : Special Concern in Counselling
- x. Module X : Developing Mental Health and Coping Skills
- xi. Module-XI : Career Development-II
- xii. Module XII : Career Information in Guidance and Counselling-II
- xiii. Module XIII : Assessment and Appraisal in Guidance and Counselling-II
- xiv. Module XIV : Basic Statistics in Guidance and Counselling-II

\* Each module consists of number of self-learning units.

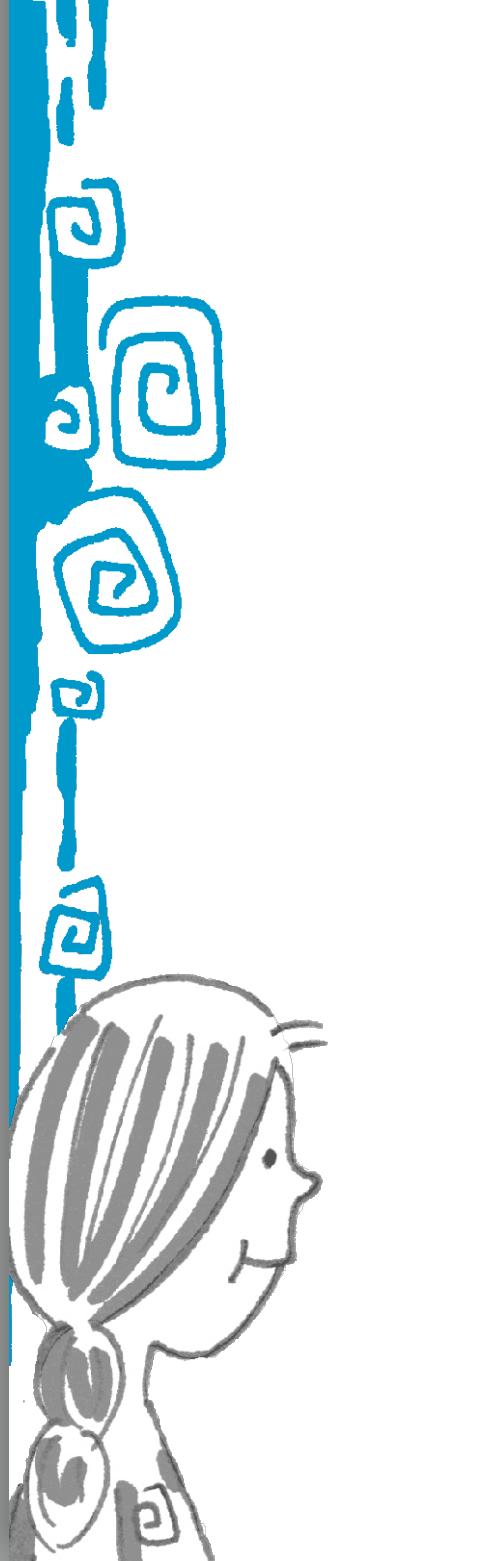
### 3. Practical Handbook

Provides areas and strategies for conducting and undergoing practicum, field experience and internship.

### 4. Tutor Guide

Lists guidelines for tutors, supervisors for course transaction and evaluation during all the three phases of the course.





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विद्या ५ वर्षमासीन



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