Good morning respected sir and dear friends! My name is Vidhi Shah and my topic for today’s extempore speech is our mental health.

To start with, let me define mental health. Mental health refers to cognitive, behavioural, and emotional well-being. It is all about how people think, feel, and behave. Mental health can affect our physical health, social relationships and basically everything that is important to is in our day-to-day lives. Sounds very important right? We should take utmost care of our mental health. But this was a technical definition. According to most of the people we talk to and what we were taught while growing up, mental health is an excuse for being lazy and pitying yourself. I am sure most of you would have heard this – “Just get up early and work. Everything will be solved.” Avoiding and ridiculing mental well-being is so deep-rooted in our nature that most of the times we don’t even realise consciously that we may be hurting someone’s mental well-being. Due to peer-pressure we forget to respect a person’s boundary for fun in the fear of being termed “uncool”. That’s why we use gender to call someone weak or use it as an insult. It needs to be stopped. I am sure almost everyone here would have at least said once “Why are you crying like a girl?”, “Why are you behaving as if you are gay?”. I know it feels like a boring lecture when I say all this. But these things do hurt people deeply. It makes them doubt themselves and self-doubt is the most crushing and difficult to overcome.

For example, let me talk about what happened when the result for 2021 12th board exams came out. Most of us present here would have heard the phrase “Ha! You passed without exams. Did you really learn anything? There should be just COVID written on your report card not marks.” There were memes floating around and what not. Did anyone realise that we may need someone to talk to. We were locked in our homes. We were not able to meet our friends. We were not able to go out and play sports or do things that we loved or do things that proved to be stress-busters for us. We lost our social skills and those of us who couldn’t score well due to stressful environment lost our self-confidence all together. It was all meant for fun is always the excuse. But sometimes we forget the boundary between fun and hurtful.

Things are getting better. Awareness on mental well-being is definitely increasing. Simon Biles of Team USA is the best example. Nothing is more important than your mental health. Not even Olympic medal for your country. But incorporating this thought in our day-to day lives is the thing that is important. In conclusion, I would like to request you all to remember that what you may consider as joke could have dire consequences for someone else. Especially in this social media led era we need to be extra careful with our words and actions.

Thank you!