



— संतुलन —



THE MENTAL HEALTH BULLETIN

**Peer support in
Overcoming
Addictions**

**Youth, Addiction &
Crimes In India**

**Promoting Healthy
Coping
Mechanism**

**Mentorship
Excellence**

अपनों का साथ

**Empowering Hearts,
Recognizing Signs**

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Confronting Youth Addiction: A Call for Awareness and Action



Substance addiction is one of the major issues challenging today's youth. The seriousness of the problem is evident from a United Nations report, which has found that 13 percent of drug users in India are below the age of 20. This alarming statistic highlights the urgent need to address the root causes and find effective solutions to this pervasive problem.

The devastating impact of drug addiction on a promising student's career can be illustrated through a real-life story. A batchmate of mine, Rahul (name changed for privacy), was once a bright, studious, and attentive student. I vividly remember him raising his hand when the teacher asked who had scored the highest marks in a particular subject. He consistently engaged in academic discussions with peers and professors. Besides his academic prowess, he excelled in sports. His dedication to academics, combined with active participation in co-curricular activities, made him an inspiration for many—a perfect dream student.

However, as a few semesters passed, things began to unravel. Rahul started smoking, drinking, and consuming various drugs. Some believe he indulged in these activities to seek social validation and gain acceptance among a peer group known for smoking. Initially, he received cigarettes and vapes for free from friends, but as his addiction grew, he began buying them himself. His academic performance plummeted; he lost focus, missed classes, and failed vivas. The financial burden of purchasing expensive vapes and liquor led him to frequently ask friends and even seniors for money. Eventually, he was barred from exams due to extremely low attendance.

From personal observation, teens often start using vapes, cigarettes, and other intoxicants mainly due to peer influence. They perceive these habits as cool and fashionable. This notion is reinforced by media, particularly social media. Popular platforms like Instagram and YouTube often showcase influencers or actors smoking, portraying it as masculine or badass. The glamorization of smoking and drug use in media is a significant factor contributing to the normalization of these behaviors among young people.

When confronted, smokers frequently downplay their habit, describing it as a coping mechanism. Scientifically, it is proven that smoking, drugs, and various intoxicants temporarily increase dopamine (the "happy hormone"). However, the detrimental effects of long-term dopamine resistance due to prolonged substance use are well documented. Continuous use of such substances can lead to severe health problems, addiction, and a decline in mental and physical well-being.

Efforts must be made to promote healthy coping mechanisms since stress in college and the workplace is inevitable at times. Peer groups, often viewed negatively due to their influence on substance use, can also provide a positive support system and motivation to avoid intoxicants. Schools and colleges should focus on creating awareness about the dangers of substance abuse and the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Educational institutions can organize workshops and seminars where experts can discuss the adverse effects of addiction and the benefits of alternative coping strategies.

Alternative coping mechanisms should be explored, such as engaging in sports, watching movies, or simply having a good chat with friends. Participating in sports and physical activities can be a great way to relieve stress and improve overall well-being. Watching movies or engaging in creative hobbies can provide a much-needed distraction from daily stressors. Having open and honest conversations with friends and family can also help individuals feel supported and less isolated.

Thus, De-addiction may seem like an insurmountable task initially, but with proper family and peer support and an enabling atmosphere, it is very much possible today.

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Peer Support in Overcoming Addictions



Addiction, a chronic and complicated disease, presents substantial problems to both individuals and society as a whole. It can be a solitary and isolated experience, and people frequently encounter stigma and criticism from the community. Medical therapies, psychotherapy, and institutional rehabilitation have all been part of traditional addiction treatment regimens. However, Peer support is the practice of providing and receiving nonprofessional, nonclinical assistance from others who share comparable illnesses or situations in order to achieve long-term recovery from psychiatric, alcohol, and/or other drug-related disorders. This essay explores the role of peer support in overcoming addictions, its impact on mental health and well-being, benefits, etc.

The Role of Peer Support in Overcoming Isolation and Stigma

Being an addict may be a very lonely experience. People frequently feel alone and ashamed of themselves, thinking that no one else can relate to what they are going through. By placing people in touch with others who have gone through comparable problems, peer support can make people feel less alone. It offers a secure environment where people may talk about their experiences, worries, and difficulties without worrying about being judged or stigmatized. This awareness and sense of connectedness has the potential to be immensely empowering and therapeutic.

Peer support is grounded in the principle that individuals who have experienced addiction can provide unique insights, empathy, and practical advice to those in the early stages of recovery. This support can take various forms, including one-on-one mentorship, group meetings, and community-based programs. The primary goals are to foster a sense of community, reduce stigma, and empower individuals to actively manage their recovery journeys.

The Advantages of Peer Support in Overcoming Addiction

Peer support can enhance the effectiveness of traditional treatment modalities by providing continuous, personalized, and empathetic support. It can reduce the burden on healthcare systems by promoting self-efficacy and preventing relapse, thereby reducing the need for repeated,

intensive treatment. Additionally, peer support can help address social determinants of health that contribute to addiction, such as isolation, unemployment, and housing instability. By fostering a supportive community, peer support helps individuals rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society.

One of the key advantages of peer support is the sense of hope and motivation it provides to individuals on their recovery journey. When individuals connect with others who have successfully overcome addiction, they see that recovery is possible. They gain inspiration from hearing stories of resilience and transformation, which can be a powerful source of encouragement. Peer support also offers practical advice and guidance on navigating challenges and obstacles. Peers with comparable experiences might offer helpful insights and resources for recovery by sharing tactics that have worked for them.

The Influence of Peer Support on Mental Health and Wellness

Addiction has a negative impact on mental health and wellbeing, frequently resulting in stress, anxiety, and sadness. Peer support can significantly improve mental health by lowering these distressing feelings. People who interact with others who have conquered addiction find hope and optimism for their own road to recovery. Their perception that they can conquer their obstacles helps lessen their anxiety and depressive symptoms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, peer support, which attends to both the emotional and social components of addiction—is essential to the recovery process. In addition to offering a supportive network that supplements conventional therapy, it lessens stigma and isolation. Peer support lowers healthcare costs, increases treatment efficacy, and fosters self-efficacy, all of which contribute to relapse prevention. In addition, it addresses societal problems including unemployment and social isolation, facilitating reintegration. Peer support has a significant role in improving mental health by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression while promoting optimism and hope. As aspiring attorneys, we should promote the financing and inclusion of peer support in addiction treatment programs because it can result in more comprehensive and successful treatment plans that benefit both patients and communities.

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Empowering Positive Role Models: Cultivating Mentorship Excellence

Historically, the main strategy employed by mentoring programs to improve the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes of kids involved has been to emphasize the relationship between the mentor and mentee. Research also suggests, though, that other critical relationships, such as those inside the family play a crucial role in fostering favorable outcomes for young people. In order to examine family interactions as a potential mediator of youth mentoring outcomes, this article adopts an ecological approach.

The significance of family bonds, which are critical for fostering youth psychosocial outcomes, is one aspect that is rarely considered as a potential moderator of mentoring's impacts on youth. Families play a crucial role in both supporting and impeding the developing capacities of young people, particularly for children from historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups. These shifts are thought to be influenced by a variety of family relationship factors, such as family values and conduct.

Family beliefs are the values that a family shares. These beliefs can be developmental (e.g., kids ought to follow their parents' instructions regardless of the situation), deviant (e.g., physical violence is acceptable), or universal (e.g., families are important and should stick together). The patterns of interactions between family members that suggest rules for the family are conceptualized as family behavior. Family cohesion (e.g., feeling connected to one another), support (e.g., helping others when they're angry), communication (e.g., understanding one another), and organization (e.g., being clear about roles within the family) are examples of behaviors.

Adolescents' social competence and good values are demonstrated to increase with supportive family interactions and positive family communication. Numerous school-related outcomes for adolescents, such as student achievement, perceived competence, sense of relatedness to peers, and academic effort, have been demonstrated to be predicted by high levels of family cohesion and parental warmth. Over the course of a person's life, the psychological, behavioral, and physiological processes that affect well-being can all be influenced by the quality of familial ties. The establishment of independence is a crucial developmental job during adolescence; nevertheless, the best results for kids typically occur when this independence is developed in the context of a supportive home environment. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that resilient people have strong familial ties, which are characterized by higher levels of support, communication, and shared beliefs.

The impression of family on youth mentoring results has only been the subject of a few number of empirical studies. A significant meta-analysis of research on the effectiveness of adolescent mentoring revealed that when parental engagement was included in the mentoring program, the beneficial effects on the youth were larger. Another study

discovered that the relationship between mentorship and several good youth outcomes, such as grades, school value, and global self-worth, was partially mediated by changes in parent-child interactions. The dyadic, mentor-mentee paradigm of mentoring remains the primary focus of the great majority of youth mentoring research, despite these favorable findings.

Over the past ten years, qualitative researchers have been interested in examining family engagement in mentoring using the systemic model of mentoring. They have discovered that program personnel, mentees' families, and mentors all want family involvement. All of these studies have pointed to a need for more family participation in the mentoring process. All of these studies point to the possibility that a young person's past relationships may moderate the results and experiences they have with relationship-based therapies like mentoring. Even so, a lot of mentoring programs still just give attention to the relationship between the mentor and mentee.

Considering that the majority of research on positive youth development emphasizes the value of familial ties for young people. The partial knowledge of mentoring procedures and



results may result from an overemphasis on the mentoring relationship as the main mechanism of change. Certain scholars have discovered that the observed effect sizes could be influenced by the emphasis on the mentee's individual and dyad results. Therefore, in order to advise programs about potential strategies to improve meaningful outcomes for kids and enhance their effects, mentoring research that explores the larger context surrounding the mentor-mentee dyad is necessary. Furthermore, studies that take into account the

larger context of marginalized youths might aid mentors in practice by helping them better understand the unique needs and strengths of their mentees, enabling them to provide more effective mentoring.

Conclusions:

All things considered, this study proved how beneficial Mentor Families' program element can be for young people undergoing mentoring. Mentor Families can offer a safe haven where individuals can grow, learn, and feel supported and supervised, according to reports from mentors and mentees. The inclusion of the Mentor Family may also help youth have positive experiences even if they do not click with their specific mentor and/or the mentors are having trouble keeping their commitment, since most programs place a lot of emphasis on the one-on-one mentoring relationship. Although further quantitative testing is necessary to confirm these findings, this study suggests that mentor families could be a useful strategy for fostering relationships between mentors and mentees as well as for creating more chances for relationships and other favorable outcomes.

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Promoting Healthy Coping Mechanism

The modern generation is frantic, with hectic schedules accompanied by sleepless nights coupled with a sedentary lifestyle pushing them to extreme corners. This makes it impossible for them to concentrate on themselves in this technologically advanced world generating anxiety incomprehensibly. While late-night snacking and sleep disruptions have become common trends in the corporate sector, where MNC-managed technology reigns supreme. It has promulgated distress among young people, prompting them to seek coping techniques. While some people have found consolation in activities like self-enrichment, and fitness, a sizable section of the population continues to engage in risky behaviours that hurt both themselves and society as a whole.

Man has developed multifarious things with the assistance of nature, drugs are the worst of them. In hindsight, this era has preserved and promulgated many things that would be self-destructive, and drugs in all their forms are the ideal illustration of this. There is a worldwide consensus that drug consumption has surged globally, but experts opine that while drugs were formerly used for entertainment alone and then as a stress reliever, they are now heading straight towards doom in the twenty-first century by causing addiction to youth.

Incidentally, TN Governor RN Ravi has voiced his concerns about the sharp rise in drug use among students, particularly off-campus where it is causing excruciating pain. Narcotic substance consumption has been observed throughout the nation and the statistics support this statement. From Punjab in the west and Mizoram in the east to Tamil Nadu in the south the country's youth are staggered gently sailing towards their doom. Shifting the focus on the drug epidemic at India's academic institutions with major consequences ranging from drug users' critical conditions to social problems within the institutions. It has become a haven for various types of criminality, including sexually improper behaviour among young females. Sexual violence is frequently connected with alcohol and other drugs, which impair judgment and increase impulsivity and aggression, creating the ideal environment for sexual predators.

For a long time, the media has been inundated with reports of narcotics being used to promote sexual abuse on college campuses. Non-consensual use of alcohol and other narcotics is a regular phenomenon in which offenders add these chemicals to their victims' drinks so that they become intoxicated and therefore are incapable protest or recalling what occurred to them. It not only upsets the victims' bodies, but it also traumatizes their minds to the point that it interferes with their lives.

Furthermore, the illegal drug market has resulted in the formation of several criminal syndicates that deal with illegal narcotics and coerce students, particularly young girls from disadvantaged backgrounds, into selling them.

Because they believe it is a simple way to make quick cash, combined with their desire to be accepted into these groups, they end up in extremely dangerous human trafficking organizations.

Dealing with this multifaceted problem requires engaging a lot of parties in the effort, including police schools, and other community facilities. It is vital to enact severe legislation to destroy drug vulnerability and trafficking networks, as well as to establish awareness, counselling services, and educational programs to teach youngsters about the harm caused by substances and the potential consequences.

Primarily, the best ways to divert your attention from a depressing situation and focus all of your energies include sports, yoga, or even just going for a stroll or a bike ride. We may resist the allures of the contemporary world and come out on the other side as stronger, more self-aware people by using these constructive coping mechanisms, acting in the right manner.

Moreover, the ability to express oneself creatively is the final effective strategy to discuss. Man is a magnificent creation with a multitude of skills. He must express his ideas through writing, music, painting, or any other form of creativity, and he finds comfort in creating something tangible. Not only is the creative process a form of therapy, but it also fosters self-worth.

Besides, Rehabilitation centres are unquestionably important, but there is a negative perception of them in society, and those accepted to the institution are also despised since they are thought to be horrible people. As a result, awareness must be raised so that the facility can be useful. Numerous institutions in the United States (USA) have boosted both society and individual well-being. This

should also be extended to professions such as therapy and psychiatry.

Concludingly, it is strongly advised that people dealing with difficult feelings and experiences seek counselling or join support groups. They ensure that these environments promote open discussion, empathy, and help, allowing a person to effectively manage his challenges. Ultimately, families, schools, and communities must collaborate to implement suitable coping methods. Openness, self-care, and emotional intelligence are essential for personal safety and well-being, and they can assist people in dealing with difficulties.



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Youth, Addiction, and Crimes in India

Is there any relationship between youth and rising crime in India? Is there any correlation between drug and other substance addiction with crime or the propensity for crime? To precisely answer these questions, a sample of 65 under-trial inmates were randomly selected to study the reasons behind their incarceration in the year 2022. A prison from the western region was selected to understand the psycho-social needs of inmates in order to work towards the prevention of crime and the rehabilitation of inmates.



Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the inmates to learn the factors associated with their crimes. The results indicate that a significant number of youths (47 out of 65) associated with crime were in the age group of 19-35 years, confirming their vulnerability due to age, life situation, and addiction. The findings indicate that the youth were either in a state of intoxication or addicted to drugs and other substances at the time of committing the crimes. Their offenses ranged from petty acts of street fights to bike thefts to serious crimes such as rape, drug trafficking, and murder. Upon further exploration, these young men admitted that if they had not been drunk or on drugs, and had avoided going out that evening/night, the crimes could have been prevented. Some young men who committed crimes informed that it was an attempt to escape an attack by the victim who was in an intoxicated state. Some youths have also accepted that their addiction has led them to be recidivists, engaging in crime more frequently to ensure that they are able to buy their drugs. Such youth who started as customers eventually become drug peddlers until caught. Indeed, these case studies indicate that addiction and crime are highly correlated.

Subsequently, the study explored the reasons for their addiction. As the psycho-social intervention session progressed, the young men shared the challenges of their lives that led them to become addicted to alcohol, drugs, and other substances in search of pleasure or happiness in their struggling lives. Addiction knows no age or class barriers or limitations. Youth from affluent and marginalized families are part of it in varied ways but mostly found grappling with unresolved emotional and economic issues due to a lack of social intervention. It starts from escaping momentary emotional pain associated with family issues, lack of employment, disinterest in pursuing studies, heartbreak, lack of feelings of achievement in life, and joy in engaging with something worthwhile. Then, the thrill of euphoria begins by engaging with a variety of substances under peer influence, rather than pressure. Then, it slowly becomes a habit, leading to addiction and crime. An economic and psychological struggle, where state systems have played a limited role to date, presents both an opportunity and a gap that requires attention. A gap that can be filled by trained social workers and psychologists who can be part of social policy to aid in the holistic development of happy and peaceful societies.

What can aid youth in working towards reducing addiction? There are two dominant models of intervention to address addiction: medical intervention through de-addiction centres, and medical intervention along with therapist involvement is another model of operation, as psychologists view addiction associated with emotional issues along with other than bio-social and economic factors.

An individual can also work on their addiction through mindful practices, practices that seek engagement with one's breath by observation of it. The observation of inward and outward

breath, ranging from twenty minutes to an hour, can give greater insights into one's body and mind, thus aiding in resetting to one's natural self. Connecting to one's breath in conscious effort enables individuals to understand and align with the natural rhythm of the body, breath, and mind, including their thoughts and emotions. This practice is called Anapanasati and is immensely applied in modern Western psychology as a part of mindfulness practices.

Our work with the inmates focused on demonstrating and practicing

Anapanasati for naturally connecting one's breath with body and mind. The young inmates were encouraged to speak their minds and discuss their difficulties in counselling sessions held by the correctional social worker and psychologist. Further, the inmates were also guided to take up a range of therapeutic activities such as drawing, painting, writing, sketching, etc., to engage their body, emotions, and mind by creating an acceptable form of outlet, leading to pro-social behaviour. These efforts have been reported to be helpful for young inmates who were addicted. In one of the cases, the individual left his dependency on drugs by channelling himself into artwork. The other decided to abstain from drugs and also intended to seek proper treatment with the aid of his family members who were present at the time of his release on bail. The findings of the study can also be applied to youth who are struggling with addiction but have not yet turned to crime. This enables us to work towards youth well-being, which will eventually help prevent crime as well.

While the Constitution of India and the laws aim to promote the rights of the individual, well-being is a fundamental right of every citizen irrespective of whether they are an addict, victim, or offender. Now, it is natural to seek solutions to the prevailing problem among youth, such as what could be done to help the youth of this country avoid falling into addiction during their downtime.

Perhaps, there is a need for community-based counselling centres to guide young individuals in facing their life challenges. Maybe there is more that can be done through social policies that address emotional well-being, supported by trained social workers who can further refer them to clinical psychologists, de-addiction centres, and other therapies as and when the need arises. However, it is necessary to connect these community well-being centres with youth welfare organizations, employment centres, including community-based organizations, and hospitals.

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Shaping The Next Generation

“Too much of anything isn't good for anyone”, said a wise man and author named Ray Bradbury. We often associate addiction with bad habits or influences, when in reality, they could stem from both positives and negatives. It is an individual's lack of control on the frequency of a habit, and the extreme craving to perform a certain desired activity that puts them in the category of an addict. Addiction could vary from an extreme case like drug addiction or alcoholism to a simple scenario of addiction to a sport like football or cricket. With the lack of resources for the generations before us, addiction was almost an alien concept. Life was much simpler with less distractions and very limited hobbies to adopt. But the concept of addiction has gained massive importance in the current times with abundant resources, interests, and opportunities for individuals to not only explore areas of life but also express themselves with freedom and come out of their metaphorical shells. Addiction scares people around the addict because of the lack of awareness in the addict about their addiction. It is a trap which draws people into it without individuals being aware of their acute interest to do something very frequently. People lose consciousness of their activities in the road to ultimate satisfaction through certain acts they perform.

Rehabilitation mechanisms and institutions have been a major source of bringing people out of good and bad addictions and changing their lives for the better. In a country like ours, India, where conversations related to drugs, alcohol, sex, addiction, etc., are considered taboo, it has been a struggle for victims of addiction, until now, to come out of their closet and expose themselves to their loved ones and ask for help to overcome their problems. These mechanisms have gained

much-needed popularity in the last decade and have been used to not only treat human beings but also become a support system for them to rely on. It has influenced hundreds and thousands of helpless individuals and addiction victims to not fight their demons alone, and ask for help to find faster and more sustainable solutions to their issues. Rehabilitation for addicts varies from person to person. Rehab has a range of ways to help an individual. From physical, speech, and oral therapy to neuropsychology and cognitive ability rehabilitation. It does not use one draconian method to treat all individuals the same, but uses different mechanisms to suit people's unique problems and needs. Even though rehabilitation has gained popularity, it needs to be advertised more for people in rural areas and remote locations, as well as a few urban areas, to gain awareness, not only about rehabilitation, but also about treatment of their addictions or life problems.

The solutions to almost every life problem of a human being, can be traced back to their roots, their birthplace and the culture they have been surrounded by, their upbringing, and family conditions and environment. The habits of a human are shaped very early in their lives and they are often formed due to the aforementioned reasons. Children develop habits

at a very small age and they generally stick to those habits even after growing. The skills that an individual develops and hones over their life are a major criterion to decide how their present as well as future turns out to be. Being brought up in a positive family with an optimistic approach to situations does incredible things for the mindset of a person. Firstly, it keeps an individual happy at home where they spend the most time, thus keeping their mental health in check. It also plays a role in what kind of goals or aims the person sets for themselves, career wise and more importantly life wise. A human being with a crystal clear or even mildly clear idea of what to do in their life, and a plan on how to go through with that process, have a pretty high chance of being balanced in life and not getting addicted to materialistic or non-materialistic things. They tend to have a unique outlook on life and how to control it. It allows them to lead a fulfilling life while not taking away any freedom that they possess or satisfaction that they desire. Being grounded and sticking to our roots, by doing something as simple as having a conversation with our family or friends, is the easiest and most feasible solution to our problems, and being aware of this will allow us to exercise our demons by ourselves.



Addiction is not an easy game to play. It is one of the biggest challenges anyone can face. But like every challenge in life, individuals should not hide from it and should face it head on with a positive mindset and an approach to get out of it. Staying balanced is the key to a happy life. That, is what the youth should adopt as their mantra. (824)

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Addiction: A Socially Induced Affliction?

In our modern society where people follow the rhythm of their daily life, between all the hustle and bustle, there is a strong silence within individuals. Addiction is like a shadow lurking in the corner of our lives. People drink or smoke for a moment where they forget everything, youngsters scrolling their way through life, this is addiction. As a young kid, I never understood the concept of “addiction”. I used to wonder how can someone want one thing with such desperation that if they don't get it, they exhibit abnormal symptoms. What is addiction? Is it how I used to feel frustrated when in 10th standard my mom used to hide my phone because she thought I was getting addicted?

Addiction is an inability to stop doing or using something, especially something harmful. In most of the cases, addiction is usually paired with negative things like drugs, but it doesn't always have to be that. I see people around me presenting withdrawal symptoms if they go without smoking or kids addicted to social media who couldn't scroll for hours in a day. To these people, it's not just a day, it's 24 hours that becomes a huge task for them to overcome. As much as addiction is an individual problem, it is a societal issue as well. Your habits, your way of talking, is majorly affected by the surroundings or society you live in. Students in the 12th grade who swear they will never “touch a cigarette or even sip alcohol” most of the time turn out to be intoxicated and regularly smoking cigarettes. In these cases, it's not just the individual that you can blame, but also the environment. If you've grown up in a household where drinking or smoking was never an issue, it will never cause you any concern to try. This doesn't mean that people who don't grow up in such places are always concerned but, they are less likely to do it or would think twice before doing this.

A first-year law student when asked about his daily smoking habit claims, “life's not fun when you don't smoke, it's sad.” A person gets addicted to the sense of relaxation or peace they feel after smoking up. Even though there are a lot better and healthy ways to get relaxed, nothing is as fast as drugs, and that's why people turn to substance abuse. When people get into all this, they tend to find people who do this and thus a vicious cycle begins. Most people think of addiction as negative and they don't really consider how it started, addiction's earlier phases with the non-availability of proper intervention and social ostracization. So, people surround themselves with addicts and the chances of them being normal again are reduced.

When the topic of prevention comes up, the first thing is perspective. Today's generation have normalised words like anxiety, and depression a lot. If one cannot sleep, he'll believe he is depressed and that might result in actual depression. Just like that, in addiction, when a person starts believing that they can't go back to normal, it makes things worse. One person's perspective matters a lot in their journey to become addiction-free. When addicts are allowed to talk to people of their own kind, who are trying or have achieved the state of being free from addiction is one of the most helpful things. This practice can change their perspective and help them believe that they can overcome this issue.



Secondly, the stigma. An addict daily has to face a stigma around addiction that revolves around the antagonization of the addict instead of targeting the real causes of addiction and addiction itself. Society at large treats the addict as an “immoral person” or a “bane of society”, he might feel left out which further adds to the problem of addiction. Society puts all the blame on the person and thus at one point the person himself may realize that they do not feel like participating in events where they might have to

interact and thus starting a cycle of loneliness and depression leading to an increment in their substance abuse, it becomes a way to cope with their loneliness and wants for companionship, as earlier mentioned, substance abuse gives them a temporary calm and a feeling of “being at peace”. We had a senior who was addicted and social ostracization made it even harder. But, in the end what helped was proper care and treatment. In these circumstances, the way the person is being treated affects him a lot. A compassionate and understanding approach towards an addict would help him cope with his addiction.

One other way to combat addiction is with appropriate development of skills and achievement of goals, e.g., We engaged a batchmate to talk about his habits of using substances and he opened up to a fact that for the past month, him, personally as an addict had been working on several projects and legal cases under his internship and he hadn't had enough time to indulge in his habits, thus a proper goal and skill development greatly helps in dealing with addiction, when a person has something to work on that intrigues him and create a holistic learning process, it combats the problem of addiction as it takes away the excess time one has where he chooses substances over development, thus a proper goal helps a person in minimising the problems faced during a period of excessive addiction.

So, even though the temporary euphoric feeling you get after using drugs is incomparable, it has lasting consequences. While hospital treatment or medication play a crucial role but moral support and change in perspective are indispensable components of this journey. The support from your loved ones, guidance and strength drawn from a better outlook can be more helpful than any medication. By fostering healthy environment and community support we can hope to break the cycle of addiction and have an addiction free youth.

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¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/addiction>

² Department of Health and Social care, children whose parents smoke are 4 times as likely to take up smoking, 28/12/2021, [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/children-whose-parents-smoke-are-four-times-as-likely-to-take-up-smoking-themselves#:~:text=Analysis%20has%20also%20shown%20that,\(4.9%25%20versus%201.2%25\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/children-whose-parents-smoke-are-four-times-as-likely-to-take-up-smoking-themselves#:~:text=Analysis%20has%20also%20shown%20that,(4.9%25%20versus%201.2%25))

Peer Support in Overcoming Addictions (Story)

THE SILENT SKY

Where am I? a sudden question of curiosity crossed my mind.

I can see the playground of my university; the basketball court and I am here, sitting on the stairs as if I am cheering for someone.

Oh! There he is. What is he doing? Why is he playing basketball all by himself?

A cascade of questions once again flooded my mind.

Oh! I am here applauding and cheering for him.

Suddenly he started running towards me as if he was begging for help and sat beside me. His face mirrored that day's sky-pale and silent.

'What happened? Come on Sivan talk to me', there was no response.

I could see tears welling up in his eyes. I wanted to tell him that he is not alone but somehow, my lips refused to move. A sudden, tight embrace enveloped me, and that is when the alarm went off.

I was startled and was searching for Sivan beside me. Oh god! That was a dream.

Another day that I start off with Sivan lingering in my thoughts.

I glanced at my phone and saw the date, yes, it is the 13th of March. A rush of emotions, should I feel happy, sad, thankful, excited or worried? I had no answer, but I knew one thing; I was relieved.

With a sigh of relief, I got up from the bed. I must get ready. Tony and Manoj will be here by 9AM.

I got into the car, and I could see the same emotion of relief reflected in their eyes. As the car started to move, I became lost in my thoughts. That dream, that pale and silent face of Sivan haunted me. The car entered the building. I used to feel a pang of sadness whenever I saw the sign titled 'THE REHABILITATION CENTRE'. But today is different; today, I felt a sense of hope.

The entrance welcomes us to a hallway with a rusty green couch above which a board proclaimed, "The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any", by Alice Walker.

This quote always made me ponder and question many things; POWER is something people often use to assert their authority. But people, unfortunately, forget to wield that power over themselves, to control the very impulses that could lead to their downfall.

I remember the first time I was here. It was nothing like today. There was no relief; instead, grief and sorrow weighed heavily upon us. It happened in last June. Sivan is my best friend. Sivan, Tony, Manoj and I were inseparable at the university. Sivan used to be one of the brightest students and a dedicated basketball player. But during the third year, we noticed a change in him. He started hanging out with another group known for their drug use. We always warned

him to stay away from them, trusting that Sivan wouldn't do something so reckless. He adored his mother, and we believed that bond would keep him grounded. But then, one day Sivan was absent from our semester exam. He didn't answer our calls and were all worried about him. Desperate, we filed a police complaint. After a month, they found Sivan. We rushed to the station, but the sight was unbearable: Shivering hands, chapped lips, torn and untidy clothes, eyes red and filled with tears and anxiety. I couldn't believe my eyes. We took him to a hospital, where the doctor informed us about his severe addiction. But we refused to give up on him. We decided to support him through rehabilitation.

Sivan is at the rehabilitation centre. Sometimes that thought used to make me sad. But now, looking back, I realize that every struggle was worth it to have him back. Today, Sivan is coming home. We are eager to see him smile again. No matter what happens, we will always be there for him.

'Sivan will be here now' the warden informed us.

My heart raced with anticipation.

Suddenly, I heard footsteps echoing down the hallway. When I turned, I saw Sivan approaching. He looked nothing like the broken figure we saw at the police station. Instead, he wore a neat white shirt, his hair trimmed, and he appeared

healthy. But his eyes were still filled with tears. This time, I knew they were tears of joy. He hugged us all, and as we were leaving, he paused to look at the quote about power, sighing with a smile.

We got into the car, and as the sign of the building faded away, I glanced at Sivan, wondering what thoughts were in his mind. We drove in silence to our university and went straight to the playground. The four of us exchanged glances and then sprinted towards the basketball.

But I paused for a moment.

'What?', Sivan asked.

I looked into his eyes and told him 'Guys go, I will sit here on the stairs'.

He smiled, and they began to play. I sat there, watching and cheering for him with all my heart. Suddenly, Sivan ran towards me and sat beside me. And when I looked at him, unlike the dream I had this morning, I could tell him that I will always be there for him. Then a warm and genuine embrace enveloped me, and this time, it was real- a silent 'thank you' with no interruptions.

And as I looked up, the sky was silent, but it was a silence that spoke of calm after a storm- clear, serene, and filled with gratitude.



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Building Emotional Strength: Positive Coping Mechanisms for Mental Health

Introduction

Nail biting, laughing at unusual situations, or becoming angry at challenging moments are all strategies to cope with life's challenges. Whether one resorts to healthy or unhealthy strategies to face these challenges is known as a coping mechanism. These mechanisms help one tolerate, manage, and sometimes reduce stressors at a cognitive and behavioural level. Linger on this essay to find some effective positive coping mechanisms.

What are Coping Mechanisms?

Coping Mechanisms are our psychological strategies to deal with stress and adversity. Some coping mechanisms are beneficial and adaptive, while others can be harmful and maladaptive. Self-care, relaxation techniques, seeking support from other people, and facing direct challenges are all examples of healthy coping mechanisms. These mechanisms help an individual manage stress more effectively and maintain their emotional balance.

There are five coping styles -

a. Emotion-focused – This focuses on "reducing the emotions associated with a stressor while avoiding addressing the problem" (Van Den Brande et al., 2020). This coping mechanism can also be dangerous as it is affiliated with mental health problems through behavioural problems. (Yang, 2021).

b. Problem-focused - "This is the most effective way to tackle life's problems. But it's only effective if the individual has control over the outcome." (Zaman & Ali, 2019). For example, you watched YouTube videos to prepare for an exam and failed. You make a different study plan for the next exam using a different method, such as group study, etc.

c. Meaning-focused - This style is "associated with employing cognitive strategies to process and make sense of the meaning of a situation" (Algorani & Gupta, 2021). "This style is best used when the individual cannot control the situation." (Leipold et al., 2019). E.g. A person sprains his ankle before a marathon, he may reflect on the meaning of this misfortune and attribute the sprained ankle to god's will or karma.

d. Social Coping (Support seeking) - seeking emotional or instrumental support from the community to manage stress is known to be engaged in social coping. E.g. A person experiencing a break-up seeks the advice of a close one who had a similar situation for advice and compassion.

e. Avoidance-focused - An avoidance coping style can be described as avoiding the stressor by pursuing an alternate person or task (Meyerson et al., 2022). This style is also known as distraction-seeking. This strategy is related to an individual's negative functioning. For example, avoid the boss's office after making a mistake at work or find alternative ways to do so.

Common Addictions in Youth

In today's world, no. of things grab our attention daily, some good, some bad, some neutral, etc. Many of the things we encounter in today's world are addictive in nature. A person can develop an addiction towards anything which might be detrimental to them.

Common addictions found in youth are social media addiction, porn addiction, drug addiction, and various other reward-seeking behaviours which have trapped our youth. Sports betting and gambling can also be added to this never-ending list of addictions as fantasy sports are on the rise.



Advertisements are made to constantly target youth as they are more susceptible to being attracted to these behaviours.

One may smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol to cope with their stressor, all of which are found cool by today's generation, but these are nothing but examples of negative coping mechanisms. Below, we will discuss various positive coping mechanisms which might be effective in today's world.

Positive coping mechanism the need of the hour

Strategies like journaling, self-awareness, and meditation are all examples of positive coping mechanisms, i.e. Positive strategies used in response to stressors to help navigate a way out of an individual.

1. Journaling - Journaling can not only help one manage their emotions but can also help them get in touch with themselves better and can help develop a better awareness of self in an individual. Journaling is a type of adaptive coping mechanism as it empowers one to change a stressful situation or adjust their emotional response to a stressor.

2. Meditation - It is also an adaptive coping mechanism that has a very special reputation in our country. In India, meditation has been practised for centuries, and we all are aware of the benefits of deep breathing or meditation; a 10-minute meditation can keep many physical and mental health diseases at bay, making it a powerful and effective tool to have in your armoury.

3. Support Seeking - Humans are social animals by nature, making this a good coping mechanism; having a deep conversation with a close one can help one find solutions towards a specific problem or find another perspective to the same. Having a deep conversation can also reduce the burden on an individual, which may benefit them. This may also make an individual feel a sense of support, which can help boost one's self-esteem.

4. Exercise - Exercise can be a great coping mechanism if used correctly. Having trouble controlling your emotions, go and play your favourite sport, hit the gym, or go for a walk. All of these can work wonders in controlling one's emotions. But, of course, it has its negatives, too; too much exercise can cause both physical and mental burnout, and that's why it should be regulated properly.

5. Healthy lifestyle - It's common knowledge that a healthy lifestyle can maintain and regulate one's mood and help one stay more energy efficient and positive, which is required in this stressful life. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle can also boost one's self-esteem and confidence by giving them a feeling of control.

Conclusion

Creating appropriate coping strategies is crucial for stress management, emotional control, and upholding general well-being. You may develop the emotional fortitude and resilience necessary to successfully handle life's obstacles by implementing constructive techniques into your daily routine, such as journaling, meditation, reaching out to others for support, working out, and leading a healthy lifestyle.

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Peer Support in Overcoming Addictions

INTRODUCTION

In today's society, youth addiction is an urgent concern, casting a shadow over the well-being and prospects of countless young individuals who represent the future of our nation. Whether it's substance abuse or behavioral addictions, the toll on physical health, mental wellness, and social connections cannot be overstated. Yet, within this challenging landscape, there's a glimmer of hope – a united effort to empower our youth and carve out a future liberated from the grip of addiction.

From alcohol and tobacco to marijuana and prescription drugs, substance misuse among teens is all too common, often beginning as early as middle and high school. Influential factors such as genetics, mental health conditions, peer pressure, family dynamics, and societal norms can heighten a teenager's susceptibility to addiction. Conversely, strong family ties, parental oversight, academic achievements, and engagement in positive endeavors serve as protective shields, aiding young individuals in breaking free from addiction's grasp.

However, amidst these complexities, there's a pertinent societal factor at play – the desire among children and adolescents to fit in and be perceived as "cool." This drive to conform to peer expectations can inadvertently lead to experimentation with addictive substances or behaviors, as young people seek acceptance and validation within their social circles.

Understanding the Problem

Before discussing solutions, it's vital to understand the breadth of the problem. Youth addiction spans a range of behaviors, including substance abuse, gaming addiction, and dependency on social media. These addictive tendencies are influenced by a variety of factors such as social pressures, environmental stressors, and underlying mental health issues. Recognizing this complexity is crucial for developing effective strategies to intervene and prevent addiction among youngsters.

Education and Awareness

Education is a powerful tool in combatting youth addiction. By providing young individuals with information about the risks and consequences of addictive behaviors, we empower them to make informed choices and resist peer pressure. School programs, community workshops, rehabilitation programs and online resources are essential in raising awareness and promoting healthy lifestyles. Additionally, fostering open dialogue within families and communities helps break the stigma around addiction and encourages seeking support when necessary.

Early Intervention

Early intervention is critical in addressing addiction before it becomes entrenched and difficult to manage. Schools, healthcare providers, and mental health professionals play pivotal roles in this process by remaining vigilant in identifying signs of addiction and providing timely support to young individuals in need.

Counseling services, peer support groups, and rehabilitation programs offer valuable resources for young individuals struggling with addiction. These interventions not only provide immediate assistance but also help individuals confront underlying issues contributing to their addictive behaviors. Through counseling and therapy, young people can develop coping mechanisms to navigate life's challenges without resorting to substance abuse or other addictive behaviors.

Recognizing the signs of a potential problem early is essential. Changes in behavior, mood, relationships, and academic performance can all serve as indicators of underlying issues related to substance use. Seeking help from counselors, therapists, or support groups at the first signs of trouble can

prevent the escalation of the issue and facilitate timely intervention.

While substance use remains prevalent among youth, a comprehensive prevention approach targeting risk factors and building protective factors can help reduce rates of addiction. Early education programs in schools can equip young people with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about substance use. Additionally, family support plays a crucial role in providing a nurturing and stable environment that fosters resilience and healthy coping mechanisms in youth.

By combining early intervention with proactive prevention efforts, we can create a supportive ecosystem that empowers young individuals to lead healthy, fulfilling lives free from the grips of addiction.

Promoting Positive Alternatives

Prevention strategies focus on proactively reducing the likelihood of youth engaging in addictive behaviors before they develop. Promoting positive alternatives is a cornerstone of prevention efforts because it offers young people healthy and fulfilling alternatives to substance abuse

or other addictive activities.

Investing in recreational activities, sports programs, artistic pursuits, and community engagement provides young individuals with opportunities for constructive self-expression and social interaction. Engaging in these activities not only occupies their time productively but also fosters skills development, builds self-esteem, and encourages teamwork and collaboration.

By nurturing their passions and talents through these positive outlets, young people develop a sense of purpose and belonging. This sense of fulfillment acts as a protective buffer against the allure of addiction by addressing underlying needs for connection, achievement, and self-fulfillment. Moreover, involvement in these activities fosters a supportive social network, reducing feelings of isolation and peer pressure to engage in risky behaviors.

Overall, promoting positive alternatives empowers young people to channel their energy into activities that promote their well-being and personal growth, ultimately reducing their susceptibility to addiction and enhancing their resilience against its harmful effects.

Building Support Networks

Recovery from addiction is a journey that often requires ongoing support and encouragement. Establishing robust support networks, both offline and online, can make a world of difference for young individuals in recovery. Peer support groups, mentorship programs, and family therapy offer invaluable guidance and solidarity, fostering resilience and promoting long-term recovery outcomes.

Conclusion

Creating a future free from youth addiction requires a broad approach that deals with root causes, empowers individuals, and constructs supportive communities. We can create resilient, capable, and addiction-free youth by making investments in education, early intervention, positive alternatives, and support systems. It's critical to identify underlying dynamics and take steps to address them by creating environments that value uniqueness, encourage confidence in oneself, and provide supportive social outlets. Let's encourage this cause together and make sure that no youngster is ever denied the chance to prosper due to an addiction.

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Media Literacy and Its Role in Preventing Youth Addiction

The Reel vs The Real: Empowering India's Youth through Media Literacy

From the soaring silver screens of Mumbai to the smartphone clutched in a young person's hand in a rural town, Indian youth today are surrounded by powerful media narratives. The stories we watch, the music we stream, the social posts we share - they all shape our perceptions of the world around us, including views on hazardous behaviours like substance abuse.

While Indian cinema has long depicted alcohol and drug use, the explosion of streaming platforms, social media, and cheap mobile data has turbocharged youth exposure to such content like never before. The latest Bollywood blockbuster celebrating alcohol-fuelled college parties has been viewed millions of times. Gritty rap videos glorify the riches of the drug trade. Viral Instagram posts from celebrities and influencers make vaping, drinking, or cannabis use seem edgy and desirable.

This overwhelming cultural glamorization of substance abuse masks an ugly reality playing out across Indian homes and communities. About 1.08% of 10-75 year old Indians (approximately 1.18 crore people) are current users of sedatives (non-medical, non-prescription use). Addiction has devastating ripple effects - eroding family relationships, derailing promising academic and professional careers, and enabling a vicious intergenerational cycle of poverty, crime, and despair to take root.

Yet through the typical media lens, this tragic human toll is rarely reflected. Instead, pervasive narratives frequently normalize or even glorify drug and alcohol abuse as a fun, harmless rite of passage into adulthood. These insidious messages plant dangerous seeds in impressionable young minds at a pivotal developmental age. So how can we counteract this toxic undertow and empower India's youth?

The antidote is media literacy - the ability to critically analyse the messaging, motives, and techniques behind what we see, hear, and consume across all media sources. We must teach the next generation comprehensive skills to identify unfair stereotypes, emotionally manipulative advertising tactics, and hidden commercial agendas woven across movies, music, shows, video games, social media posts, and more.

Developing robust media literacy curricula in schools nationwide is vital, but education cannot stop at the classroom door. We need facilitators to spark open discussions in communities, homes, and youth clubs, examining media's influence with honesty. We need parents, teachers, counselors, and coaches - all trusted adult figures - to habitually engage young people in dialogue about responsibly assessing the deluge of media they face daily. And crucially, we need to amplify the unvarnished voices, stories, and art of those who have battled substance abuse disorders themselves.

There are indeed powerful examples of more responsible, reality-based storytelling emerging in Indian media. An increasing number of independent films, web series, musicians, and authors are depicting the harsh life realities of

addiction without glorification or judgment. These gripping, human-centric works provide an essential counterweight to more distorted societal narratives. They spark vital conversations and can be beacons of understanding for those struggling.

But fostering true media literacy is not about condescending lecturing or blind censorship. It's about building critical thinking skills that allow discerning media consumers to make informed choices for themselves about what they internalize. To look beyond the glossy facade and see substance abuse for what it truly is - a wrenching personal struggle, not an accessory or teenage phase.

For far too many generations, Indian youth have fallen into the traps laid by mixed media messaging downplaying addiction's dangers and lack of thorough education. But this vicious cycle can be broken through investment in cultivating media literacy nationwide at a young age. In our era of infinite content streams bombarding us from all directions, enhancing these crucial critical consumption skills is a proactive public health measure we cannot afford to ignore.

From the young student in a rural town raised amid Bollywood's dazzling fantasies, to the urban teen anxiously keeping up with social media's latest dizzying trends and



influencer idols - all of India's precious youth deserve empowerment through robust media literacy tools and training. They must be equipped with the discernment to shatter distorted perspectives and embrace reality through an unclouded lens. Only then can they confidently reject glamorized depictions of self-destruction and pursue their authentic dreams and fullest potential instead.

Media literacy is simply a fundamental life skill for our modern age and the key to preventing so much spiritual, physical, and societal harm from substance abuse. As we fight to steer the nation's rising generations away from addiction's riptides, this educational investment stands out as a uniquely powerful form of prevention, awareness, and personal empowerment. One proactive step today in cultivating critical thinking capacities can spark a generational transformation in shaping wiser, healthier attitudes and behaviours around substance use.

The path ahead is not an easy one. The endless churn of new content, new platforms and new media gurus ensures rising influence with each new technology. But India's young citizens deserve the chance to be free, skeptical, and informed consumers - not passive targets easily swayed by glitzy fictions designed to exploit them. When armed with truth and discernment from an early age, they can reject the hollow trappings of any behaviour or product, glamorized for commercial gain, and chase their authentic dreams instead.

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Breaking The Silence: Exploring How Socio-Economic Factors Exacerbate Addiction

Introduction

The inter-relationship between the onset of substance addiction and the deteriorating socio-economic conditions is the subject of much research. On the contrary, the popular outlook commands that addiction is a personal failing, a character flaw that leads to the destruction of families and the isolation of individuals. This outlook ignores one of the major puzzle pieces—the prevailing socio-economic conditions. This myopic approach guarantees the continuation of the addiction epidemic, as addressing mere manifestations will never achieve complete eradication. In this article, we shall elucidate the causes and the solutions to long-term addiction with a special emphasis on the role of socio-economic factors governing the premise.



The Disparity Trap

The connection between socioeconomic factors and addiction is undeniable and has also been propagated by various studies (refer Patrick, 2012 and Collins, 2016). Now let us delve into the crux of the matter to understand the critical interplay of the factors at play. The first factor that we shall discuss is economic hardship. It is easier to understand with the help of an illustration. Imagine you are financially unstable. Food and shelter are under constant threat. In these circumstances, substances provide a sense of escape from reality. A coping mechanism, if you will (albeit unhealthy). Another factor to be considered is the limitations of education. Lower education levels have been linked to an increase in substance abuse resulting in addiction. The same was discussed by Fothergill, 2008.

Furthermore, the lack of opportunities instills a sense of doom in the youth which translates to the need for a coping mechanism. The most readily available coping mechanisms (sadly) are drugs and other addictive substances. Some of the factors are environment-related. The mental model of a child growing up in a slum, amidst constant gang wars and violence will not be the same when compared to the mental model of a child in a high rise. These hostile environment conditions offer fewer avenues of positive outlet and confine the children from a young age into the shackles of addiction. Of course, this is not a rule, but this is the general trend that is seen.

Barriers to treatment

The sad reality of battling addiction lies in the fact that even

after being aware of their addiction, the people from these disadvantaged backgrounds are not able to afford the treatment or are simply unaware of the same. Here we shall discuss the barriers that may be prevalent. The first barrier that is prevalent and is visible is the lack of financial capacity to the extent of pursuing therapy and recovery which forces the people to choose between their daily needs and the option to go into recovery. The next barrier is the question of stigma. Stigma means a negative and unfair belief that a society or a group of people has about something. In our country, the problem

of second-hand stigma is a large hurdle. People do not want to battle their demons because they are afraid of the “what if” question. What if the society will shun me? We need to act on this as a society to delineate this sense. The fear of losing jobs, relationships often force people to stay in a cocoon about their hardships.

A Multi-Faceted Approach

Is there no sustainable solution to this pandemic? It might feel pessimistic but there are solutions which if implemented correctly will clearly change the course of the addiction exacerbated by socioeconomic conditions. We need to make the treatments affordable, accessible and reachable to the general masses of the nation. The addiction prevention programs should not be a chattel of the rich and the affluent. The obvious course for this is by direct government involvement or even public funded projects. Early identification and intervention will go miles in the direction of prevention. We need to equip schools and communities with tools to recognize potential problems and connect individuals with resources.

The stigma attached to the problem of addiction needs to go and the best way to do this is by awareness and education campaigns. We need to start conversations and celebrate the success stories.

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The Power Within: Media Literacy Empowering Youth Against Addiction

“Good habits formed at youth make all the difference.” - Aristotle

Understanding Media Literacy: An Introduction

We live in the age of digitalization where we are constantly and closely connected to different forms of media and social media, especially the youth. Youth are considered to be that part of the society that gets influenced easily with the surrounding environment. Over a decade, there has been a drastic increase in engagement of youth and children with media, specifically the digital media. It plays a significant role in shaping their behavior, perceptions and even their identity. Amidst such connection with media, youth can be misled and to prevent it media literacy stands as a powerful tool.

Media is not about just using but understanding it. Media literacy enables an individual to evaluate, decode and analyze the media content with understanding. It empowers individual to have control over what they want to see, read or hear.

Impact of Media on Youth -

The messages, information and any content that youth come across on media in any form plays a pivotal role in shaping their ideologies and even their personality. The impact of media on youth can be said to be two folded that is positive and negative impact. If used carefully, media is a powerful tool to educate and make youth well informed. But on contrary to this, some representations leave a negative impact on the mind and behavior of the individual. Some movies, television shows, and social media frequently depict substance use in a way that can be misleading.

Media Literacy: A tool for Empowerment

Media literacy acts as a powerful tool in raising awareness and influencing the behavior of the youth. Media literacy assists youth to identify the glamorization of substance use and

recognize the lack of realistic consequence often depicted in media.

For Instance - The Bollywood movie *Udta Punjab* represents the rampant drug abuse issue in State of Punjab through characters of doctor, rockstar, migrant worker and a police officer whose lives are intertwined amongst the backdrop of drug abuse. Media literacy allows the individual to analyze the themes and messages presented through the movie rather than just being influenced by it. Media literacy will help the youth in-



media literacy, strategies such as integrating media literacy in school curriculum, conducting interactive seminars and workshops, parental involvement, community campaigns and collaboration with influencers and content creators shall be promoted. By equipping young individuals with critical thinking skills and empowering them to navigate the media landscape responsibly, we can build a resilient generation capable of resisting the siren call of addiction.

- Identify difference between glamorization and realism as movie represented the health issues, stigmatization and legal consequences associated with drug abuse.
- Analyzing characters motivation and the consequences as viewers will be able to closely understand the factors that led to drug abuse. By examining the outcomes of these choices, youth can understand the devastating impact of substance abuse.
- Promoting Critical dialogues as parents and educators need to throw light and carry out dialogues regarding the theme and message the movie intended to convey so that youth are not misled.

Thus, media literacy is a powerful tool in educating the young mind about the realism and preventing them from being influenced by glamorized and normalized portrayal of substance consumption in Bollywood movies.

Strategies for Promoting Media Literacy To Prevent Substance Abuse

1. **Integrating Media Literacy in School Curriculum**
Education is a powerful tool that can do wonders and holds capability to shape lives of the individual. In order to promote media literacy, school curriculum shall be updated to include media literacy as it is a powerful tool in influencing the ideologies and even the personalities of children and youth.
2. **Conducting interactive seminars and workshops** – Interaction is the key to problem. Engaging youth in interactive seminars and workshops with individuals having experience of working with drug abuse victims and other experienced dignitaries can help them to understand the core and consequence of the problem of drug abuse.
3. **Parental Involvement** – Workshops shall be organized to make parents aware about significance of media literacy and how it influences their children. Parents should be made aware about the strategies to have open communication with their children about serious issue of drug abuse and make them aware about the realism of it rather than them learning it as glamorized and normalized activity.
4. **Community Campaigns** - Media shall be used to spread awareness regarding the unhealthy and glamorized consumption. Youth shall be allowed to engage and interact with the rehabilitee through media to make them aware about the real consequence of substance abuse.
5. **Collaboration with Influencers** - In the present digital world, influencers on social media are highly popular and youth are closely connected and influenced by them. Collaboration with such content creators and influencers who can promote media literacy and substance abuse prevention messages will play a pivotal role in having good influence over the youth as they have significant impact on youth perceptions.

Conclusion

Substance abuse amongst youth stands as a significant concern in our society. Young minds are influenced through peer pressure, glamorized representation in movies and shows, media portrayal, lack of knowledge to indulge in substance abuse. Thus, media literacy is a powerful tool that can contribute in preventing youth to get involved in substance abuse. Media literacy enables the individuals to critically analyze what they see, hear or read on media (newspaper, social media, television, radio, magazines etc.). In order to promote

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I Made It Through With My Crew

I was having the best time
Without realizing, I was hanging on a thin twine.

From life, I wanted to escape
In pills & bottles, I sought embrace.

Lost in a haze, fading away
Hoping for release, Longing for doomsday.

It felt like a cluster
Right behind me, I could sense a monster.

They saw me wheezing
Felt like I was freezing.

I was so desperate for a taste
I was always in a haste

They tried to help me heal
But every time I would do a cartwheel

They did not give up on me
They were adamant to set me free

Through trials dark, their voices soar
Guiding steps towards a brighter shore

Through tears & laughter, I found a release
Together we conquered, our burdens decreased

They must be so brave
Who have kept all my secrets safe

The shoulder on I can cry
I could fully rely

They know all the details
This bond never fails

With peers & friends, our strength unfurls
They are my precious pearls

In shadows deep, where addiction thrives
Their sight revives

I made it through
With my bestest crew.

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Beyond Substances: Navigating the Modern Landscape of Addiction

Unveiling the Modern Face of Addiction

In the bustling epoch of technology and urbanization, addiction has morphed into a multifaceted phenomenon that extends far beyond the traditional realms of substances like drugs and alcohol. When people imagine addiction, the everyday images of drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes pop up in their minds. But addiction is not just about substances, it wears innumerable habiliment. Some of which might startle anyone. Intriguingly, the first definition of addiction was given by “Alfred Lindsmeth” in 1938. This suggests that addiction has not been studied in its entirety. Although it was linked to substance use in the beginning, today it comprises many terms. Let us journey into the hidden corners of addiction, exploring the unseen forces reshaping our society. At the same time, we are going to look at the recuperation tactics employed by the people to fight back.

1) The Rise Of Digital Addiction: Navigating The Dystopian Realm

In this digital age, technology has seamlessly woven into the fabric of our lives, offering both convenience and chaos. The incessant ping of notifications and the allure of instant gratification have given rise to a new form of addiction—a dopamine-driven dystopia with no escape.

Society normalizes addiction, but the perception varies. Substance addiction faces stigma and damaging relationships. Yet, phone or internet addiction is often celebrated despite harming mental health, relationships, and productivity. Tech companies fuel this by keeping users hooked with algorithms, and paying attention to their product.

2) Addiction And The Environment: Unraveling The Surprising Connection

Beyond the confines of individual behavior, lies a surprising link between addiction and the environment. Nature provides a healing mechanism, unknown to mankind. Research reveals that urban areas with limited green spaces breed addictive behaviors. Thus, research suggests, that in substance addiction, being in touch with nature, and exploring the freshness of air, can increase the production of hormones in our body. For instance, endorphins, and dopamine manage our “happiness” level. It cannot be denied that nature offers a sanctuary - a refuge for recovery and renewal. This can be witnessed in the “Forest Bathing” technique, a Japanese practice of immersing oneself in nature. A final study conducted on the participants showed lower stress hormones and improved mental health.

3) The Influence of Genetics And The Environment

In the age-old debate of nature versus nurture, both genetics and environmental factors shape addictive behaviors. Family dynamics, peer influence, cultural norms, and media portrayal intertwine to sculpt individual predispositions toward addiction. Genetics influence a person's susceptibility to substance addiction. Conversely, external factors like family and peer pressure can directly contribute to addiction development.

a) Family and Home Life: Parents and supervision levels are crucial. Over or under supervision can lead to risky behaviors like substance abuse. Conflict-ridden households can drive individuals to seek solace in substances, often emulating normalized unhealthy habits within the family.

b) Peer Group:

The instance where peer group affects addiction can be seen in the symbolic interaction theory of sociology. An excellent example could be Howard Becker, “A Marijuana User.” Friends who have been using marijuana for a long time are usually the ones to force another to start it.

To maintain the desire to smoke marijuana, newcomers must inherit three key behaviors from their experienced peers as

explained below.

- I) They must learn to smoke marijuana properly, including deeply inhaling and holding the smoke before inhaling.
- II) They must interpret the effects they feel after smoking enough marijuana as “being stoned”, a designation as confirmed by friends.
- III) They must see the feelings as pleasurable with their friends reinforcing this perception through positive comments.

Becker's analysis tells us addicts do not feel their acts as worrisome.

c) Culture and Media

Cultural norms can influence problematic behaviors especially if widely accepted by the community. Celebrities using alcohol and cigarettes are considered “dope” and are emulated by the younger generation, unaware of its harmful effects.

4) Unconventional Therapy: Embracing Animals and Art

Traditional addiction treatments often focus on counseling and medication, but a growing movement towards unconventional therapies offers new avenues for healing. From animal-assisted therapy to the expressive power of art, these innovative approaches provide unique pathways to recovery. Animal-assisted therapy usually helps people with mental disorders like cerebral palsy. Studies have shown dogs can reduce pain and other related symptoms. As a result, many centers now offer these peculiar therapies

5) The Hidden Addictions In Our Food

Food addiction, a hidden epidemic, thrives beneath societal norms and celebrations. It sees no gender or race and can affect anyone. Processed foods can create “good feelings” perpetuating overeating and a never-ending cycle of dissatisfaction.

Unique to food addiction is its societal acceptance. We celebrate, find comfort, and cope with stress through food. Addressing this issue demands a holistic approach—one that recognizes food's cultural and emotional significance while promoting healthier choice

6) Redefining Recovery: Embracing Community and Creativity

In the traditional landscape of recovery, abstinence, and group support reign supreme. Yet, innovative approaches are emerging, redefining what it means to heal from addiction. One peculiar instance could be seen in “Creative recovery cafes”

Creative recovery centers, where individuals engage in music, dance, or other endeavors, to ease mental health recovery. There has been an escalating trend of such cafes in the UK. “Serenity Café” provided an exclusively non-scrutinized zone void of drinking. There is social interaction where addiction is not stigmatized. Furthermore, the government provides institutional support.

7) Conclusion: Navigating the New Landscape of Addiction

To concur, we need to evolve with society's changing needs of addiction and recovery. Recent research and studies demand unconventional solutions. Unlike harsher forms of recuperation, these solutions can help in a faster, compassionate, and healthier recuperation. Yet the key is a change in societal perception. We need to see, addiction not as a moral failing but as an interplay of complex factors. The deeper question should be how addiction should not sway our lives. Only then can we lead a blissful carefree life.

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अपनों का साथ

मैं एक कहानी लिख रहा हूँ।
उस कहानी में आज
एक हकीकत बयां कर रहा हूँ,
कौन हैं हम लोग
जो इस दुनिया की भीड़ में
कहीं खो से गए हैं।

आखिर किसकी तलाश है हमें?
क्यों एक ज़िंदा लाश बने
खुद के होकर रह गए हैं?
फिर क्या मज़ा ऐसी ज़िंदगी जीने में?

इस संसार में सब लोग
अपना घर छोड़कर
बाहरी लोगों से दोस्ती करते हैं।
अजनबियों को अपना दोस्त बनाते हैं।

पर मैं कहता हूँ क्यों?
अपनों से फासला कर रहे हो।
क्यों अपनों को खुद से दूर कर रहे हो?

अगर अपने माता-पिता को ही अपना दोस्त बना लो,
तो फिर देखना ये ज़िंदगी कितनी खूबसूरत लगने लगेगी।
आखिर ऐसा क्या है
जो प्यार, साथ, माहौल एक इंसान अपने घर के बाहर ढूँढता है?
वो उसे अपने घर में ही मिल सकता है पर
अपनों के सामने ही उन्हें अपना प्यार-अपनापन
दिखाने में शर्म आती है।

क्या याद है तुम्हें वो अपने बचपन की बातें?
खुशियों से भरी वो हर रातें।

छोटे से तुम,
माँ की गोद में थे तुम।
पिता की उँगलियों को पकड़कर चलना सीखा था तुमने।

जब गिरते थे तो सब संभाल लेते थे।
बाहों में भरके तुम्हें
ढेर सारा प्यार करते थे।
ज़िंदगी का हर पाठ
तुमने पापा से सीखा था।

यात्रा के चलते-चलते
ना जाने तुम कब बड़े हो गए।
हमें पता ही ना चला।
वो यादें आज भी जेहन में हैं,
बस वो वक्त चला गया है।

आज पीछे मुड़कर देखता हूँ
तो आँखें नम हो जाती हैं।
क्या बचपन की यादें
इतना रुलाती हैं
जब आपकी संतान
गलत राह पर चली जाती है?

घर की यादें भला कौन कैसे भुला सकता है?
माँ-बाप, भाई-बहन, इनके बिना घर कहाँ पूरा हो पाता है?

इस ज़िंदगी की दौड़ में, हमने काफी कुछ सीखा है।
हंसती-खेलती ज़िंदगी से हमें बहुत कुछ मिला।

एक खूबसूरत ज़िंदगी जीने के लिए,
हमारे जीवन में किसी का साथ और विश्वास होना बहुत ज़रूरी है
और ये साथ और विश्वास हमें सिर्फ अपनों से मिल सकता है और कहीं से नहीं।

इसलिए हर उस माता-पिता का कहना है
जिसने अपने एकलौते बेटे या बेटी को खोया है,
चाहे फिर वो नशे की लत हो
या फिर मोहब्बत हासिल न होने पर आत्म-हत्या।

की मत खोज दोस्त को कहीं और,
जब घर में सब कुछ है तेरा।
ज़रा दिल खोलकर तो बोल,
पिता से अच्छा और सच्चा कोई दोस्त नहीं होगा तेरा।

तेरी हर परेशानी में तेरे साथ होगा वो।
झूठे दिलासे नहीं देगा वो।
तेरे दर्द को समझेगा वो।
तुझे बुरी आदतों में नहीं पड़ने देगा वो।
हर वक्त सही सलाह देगा वो।

फिर क्यों परेशान होकर घूमता है तू
बाहर दोस्त बनाने को?

के एक ऐसा घर बना है
जिसमें खुशियों भरा आशियाना हो।
सब साथ होंगे, अपने-दुखों से न कोई नाता हो।
जोड़कर रखना है घर के हर एक सदस्य को एक साथ,
फिर चाहे कितनी मुश्किलें हों।

अपनों का ख्याल अपनों से बेहतर कोई नहीं रख सकता।
कोई बाहर वाला मोहब्बत करे, झूठी तो ज्यादा देर तक कर नहीं सकता।
क्योंकि जो अपने होते हैं वो सच होते हैं,
बाकी मोह-माया के जाल होते हैं।

के छोड़ सब दुनिया-दारी की बातें,
चल आ अपने घर चलते हैं।
कुछ नहीं रखा इन बाहरी रिश्तेदारी में,
सब खोखले रिश्ते हैं।

सच बस इतना है
जो अपने हैं
बस वही सच्चे हैं।
वरना आजकल के लोग
कहाँ इतने अच्छे हैं?

Sahil Asiwat

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Empowering Hearts, Recognizing Signs

In the halls of justice, where words hold sway,
A tale unfolds of youth's uncertain day.
Where dreams collide with shadows dark,
And innocence meets a world stark.

In the echoes of courtrooms, where truth is sought,
Lies a plea for the young, a lesson taught.
To empower their hearts, to recognize the signs,
Before fate casts its cruel designs.

In the scrolls of law, where justice is bound,
Lies the duty to listen to every sound.
For the cries of the youth, often silent, unseen,
Hold the secrets of what might have been.

With each legal angle, each statute's decree,
There's a call to protect, to set young hearts free.
To weave a tapestry of laws so strong,
That shields them from harm, where they belong.

For in the depths of their souls, lies a flicker of light,
Yearning to soar, to take flight.
But dangers lurk in the shadows, disguised,
Waiting to shatter their dreams, unrecognized.

So let us stand as guardians, in the court of life,
Guiding the young through turmoil and strife.
With laws as our compass, and empathy our guide,
Let's empower their spirits, let love abide.

For in empowering youth, we forge a brighter day,
Where warning signs are heeded, come what may.
And in the heart of justice, beats a rhythm pure,
Empowering youth, forevermore.

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Making Youth Addiction Free

ABSTRACT

This article examines strategies to combat youth addiction, a pressing societal concern. It explores the root causes of addiction, including social, psychological, and environmental factors. The article advocates for early intervention through education and community support. It emphasizes the role of parental guidance and peer support in prevention efforts. Additionally, it addresses the challenges posed by digital addiction and calls for media literacy education. The article concludes that a holistic approach, combining prevention, intervention, and support, is essential for making youth addiction-free.

Keywords: Addiction, combining prevention, environmental factors, support, youth.

Introduction

“Good habits formed at youth make all the difference.”
- Aristotle

Addiction in youth is a serious social problem that affects people on an individual, family, and community level. Addiction behaviours have a profound effect on young people's physical and emotional health, academic performance, and social connections. This is true whether the behaviour is substance abuse, gambling, or internet addiction. Comprehensive approaches are required to prevent addiction, intervene early, and offer support for recovery in order to handle this complex issue. Community involvement and engagement are keystones of strength and optimism in the ongoing fight against juvenile addiction. The intricacies of addiction among adolescents are becoming more and more apparent, and it is clear that community efforts as a whole are critical to building resilience, offering assistance, and bringing about change. In the larger conversation about eradicating teenage addiction, this essay explores the importance of community engagement as a subtheme. Communities are the cornerstones on which people construct their lives, influencing their identities, morals, and ways of acting. They also observe the terrible repercussions of addiction on young people and their families; thus, they are witnesses to the brutal reality of addiction. Given the interdependence of individuals within communities, it is critical to use the force of group action in order to address this urgent problem. Communities may foster positive youth development and provide resources and assistance to people struggling with addiction by taking the initiative to engage and involve themselves in the process. Involving the community, whether via grassroots projects, neighbourhood coalitions, or faith-based organisations, promotes a sense of solidarity and belonging that are critical components in the battle against addiction.

Upon realising the interdependence of individuals throughout communities, it is apparent that combating youth addiction necessitates a multidimensional strategy that leverages the combined efforts of community members. Active involvement, teamwork, and shared accountability are all elements of community engagement when it comes to tackling issues like addiction. Preventive measures are one



aspect of community involvement in the fight against adolescent addiction. Communities can lower the risk factors linked to addiction by fostering environments that support healthy habits and lifestyles. This could entail putting in place educational initiatives in schools, planning community gatherings with a substance misuse prevention theme, and pushing for laws that limit access to dangerous substances. In addition, community involvement is critical to early intervention since people in the community are frequently the first to identify addiction symptoms in young people and may offer vital support to those in need. Communities can avoid the escalation of addiction by empowering individuals to seek assistance and support early on and facilitating open communication channels and resource availability.

Moreover, community participation involves establishing recovery groups and support systems for those who are battling addiction. The sense of acceptance, understanding, and belonging that these networks provide is essential for maintaining rehabilitation efforts. Community-based treatment programmes, faith-based organisations, and peer support groups offer a vital support system for individuals attempting to overcome addiction.

Conclusion

In an effort to eradicate child addiction, community involvement and engagement become essential elements of a comprehensive strategy. In this piece, we have examined the role that communities play in helping young people fight addiction by building resilience, offering support, and promoting positive change. Through school-based prevention programs, community-wide initiatives, and advocacy for policies that promote health and well-being, communities can create supportive environments that empower youth to make informed choices and resist the pressures of addiction. Furthermore, by providing accessible and youth-friendly treatment services, including peer support groups and mentorship programs, communities can offer hope and healing to those struggling with addiction, guiding them on a path towards recovery and fulfilment.

As we conclude, it is evident that the journey towards making youth addiction-free is not one that can be undertaken in isolation. It requires the collective effort and commitment of communities working together towards a common goal. By fostering a culture of empathy, understanding, and support, we can build communities that prioritize the health and well-being of their youngest members, ensuring a brighter and addiction-free future for generations to come.

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Unplugging The Mind: Navigating Youth Mental Health In The Social Media Era

Social media has become an essential component of many young people's life in the current digital era. Numerous social media platforms, including Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat, provide limitless chances for amusement, connection, and self-expression. But underneath the surface of likes, shares, and follows, there's a complicated world that may have a big impact on young people's mental health. It's no secret that using social media may make anxiety and feelings of inadequacy worse. Young people may feel inferior to others when they scroll through well-chosen feeds that feature people who appear to have great lives. Comparison and self-doubt can become a never-ending loop as a result of the pressure to project a perfect picture online. There is a link between high social media use and higher rates of anxiety, despair, and low self-esteem in teenagers, according to studies.

The constant need for approval via likes and comments is one of the main causes of this phenomena. Many young people now view social media as a popularity contest, where one's value is determined by how well they are received online. Getting likes can give you an addicted dopamine rush, which can cause a compulsive demand for validation that can be detrimental to your mental health. Furthermore, social media platforms actively promote addictive behaviours rather than being passive observers of how juvenile mental health is shaped. Long-term user engagement is the goal of features like autoplay videos, alerts, and infinite scrolling. This never-ending assault of stimuli can cause sleep disorders, shorten attention spans, and increase feelings of exhaustion and overwhelm.

Another negative aspect of social media that can have disastrous effects on young people is cyberbullying. Some people feel more comfortable doing harmful acts that they may not otherwise do in person because of the anonymity provided by internet platforms. Due to social media's ongoing accessibility, victims of cyberbullying sometimes believe there is no way out, which breeds emotions of hopelessness and loneliness. What therefore can be done to lessen the detrimental effects of social media on the mental health of young people? Being aware is the first step. In order to make responsible decisions regarding their online behaviour, young people need to be equipped with knowledge about the possible risks associated with excessive use of social media. In addition to teachers and parents, mental health specialists are also vital sources of direction and assistance. It's critical to establish limits on social media use. The detrimental effects of excessive screen time on sleep and mental health might be lessened by promoting frequent screen breaks, particularly before bed. Establishing "digital detox" days or tech-free zones can also offer much-needed relief from the never-ending onslaught of online stimuli.

It's also critical to promote candid dialogue around mental health. It can help de-stigmatize mental illness and foster a supportive atmosphere for individuals who are struggling if young people are encouraged to communicate about their thoughts and experiences in both online and offline settings. Youth resilience and good mental health may be fostered in schools and communities via the use of tools and programmes. Additionally, it is the duty of social media companies to put user welfare ahead of engagement numbers. By putting in place tools like activity monitors, time limitations, and alerts regarding overuse, people may keep a better relationship with technology. Strong moderation guidelines and prompt action against dangerous content and cyberbullying are also necessary to create safer

online environments for youth.

In conclusion, social media clearly has a lot of advantages, but it also has serious drawbacks for young people's mental health. We can support young people in navigating the challenges of the digital era while preserving their mental health by increasing knowledge, establishing boundaries, encouraging open communication, and pushing for good change. It's time to disconnect from technology and take back authority over our online life.

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A Night in My Ashes



And this endlessly cold night had a beginning with no end.

This night I lied in my own ashes .
With scratches and violence ,
Along with echoes and silence.

Remembering , how I wrote all my misery in
that dusty leather bound diary ,
My mom gifted me ,
when I entered my teen ,
Maybe because she knew
there will be times ,
when I'll be stuck in between.

For times when I would not have the courage to put
myself out to the world ,
For times I would feel insecure about these scars ,
that are supposed to be loved.
For the times I would feel these gloomy eyes ,
would scare people around me.
For the times the only person who could heal my soul,
would be me.

And this night a moist palm touched my lashes and
I prayed that this would be the last time I lied in my ashes.

Parisha Singh

Student, Delhi Metropolitan Education

Making Youth Addiction Free

When looking at the current youth, it was observed in a survey conducted by the first-year students of St Xavier's College located in south Mumbai that as many as 75 percent of youth in India, covered under a multi-city survey, revealed that they consumed alcoholic drinks before turning 21, the legal age for drinking. According to the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) 2019, among adolescents and youthful grownups (aged 10–24 years), alcohol-attributable burden is second highest among all threat factors contributing to disability-adjusted life years in this age group (GBD 2019 Risk Factors Collaborators).

The current youth is involved in both substance abuse and addiction. The difference between substance abuse and addiction is veritably slight. Substance abuse means using an illegal substance or misusing a legal substance. Addiction begins as abuse, or using a substance like marijuana or cocaine. Therefore substance abuse is one of the causes of addiction but not a necessary one.

Eg- People can get addicted to all sorts of substances. When we think of addiction, we generally think of alcohol or street drugs. But people become addicted to prescription medicines, cigarettes, and even sniffing glue.

Therefore addiction could be physical as in a person's body becoming dependent on a particular substance or it could be psychological as in when people addicted feel overcome by the desire to have a drug. Youth in the current scenario is prone to either or both of these addictions. Some of the signs observed in them are changes in mood, weight loss or gain, depression, or eating disorders.

The causes of drug addiction could be due to various factors like- using drugs or alcohol to help forget problems or to relax, spending a lot of time figuring out how to get drugs, stealing or selling belongings to be able to afford drugs, tried and failed to stop taking drugs or drinking, feel shaky or sick when trying to stop, need to take more of the substance to get the same effect.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) successfully launched the National Campaign "Addiction Free Amrit Kaal" on 31st May 2023 at NCPCR on World Tobacco Day. The campaign is aimed at promoting a healthier and addiction-free India and strives to address the pressing issue of tobacco and drug addiction amongst children in the country.

Solutions to Drug addiction among youth-

1- Peer support in overcoming addictions-

Peer support is pivotal in addiction recovery, as it involves individuals who have successfully conquered addiction offering guidance and companionship to those currently in recovery. This backing not only boosts engagement with treatment but also provides practical advice, fosters a sense of community, promotes collective responsibility, confronts denial, and fosters a supportive cycle. To become a peer supporter, individuals must have completed rehab, maintained sobriety for at least a year, and shown control over their addiction. If you're struggling with addiction, consider reaching out to medical professionals or substance abuse organizations for assistance, which may include peer support.

Peer support plays a significant part in reducing drug use. By

connecting with someone who understands your journey as a recovering addict, you gain valuable support and guidance. Peer supporters are dedicated to preventing relapse and alleviating negative emotions like isolation and anxiety, which can trigger drug use.

Having peer support reduces the likelihood of drug use and relapse post-addiction treatment. Recovery from addiction is a gradual process where relapses are common, and having peers to support you aids in maintaining sobriety and achieving your recovery goals.

Peers offering support may also serve as instructors, aiding you in setting and accomplishing goals outside of rehab. They can help you navigate meetings and learn effective coping strategies.

Engaging in peer support during recovery provides an opportunity to forge new friendships with individuals who have experienced analogous experiences. Since addiction can strain relationships, forming new connections in recovery proves invaluable and may even improve other relationships in your life.

Peer support fosters accountability for your sobriety by encouraging regular attendance at meetings and fostering relationships with fellow recovering addicts. It also celebrates milestones in your recovery journey and helps you stay focused on your goals.

2- Cultivating Life Skills and Goal Setting-

Cultivating life skills goals while avoiding drug addiction entails several crucial steps. First, individuals must cultivate self-awareness, understanding their strengths, weaknesses, triggers, and motivations while recognizing the importance of sobriety. Next, goal setting is essential, focusing on achievable personal, professional, and health-related objectives. Effective time management is crucial, prioritizing tasks and incorporating supportive activities into a daily routine. Problem-solving skills are honed to address challenges, and effective coping strategies are developed to manage stress and cravings. Improving communication skills facilitates expressing needs and building a supportive network. Adopting healthy habits promotes physical and mental well-being, including exercise, nutrition, and stress reduction techniques. Pursuing education and vocational training aligns with personal interests and career aspirations, while responsible financial management involves budgeting and seeking assistance if needed. By actively engaging in these strategies, individuals prioritize personal growth and development, successfully avoiding drug addiction.

Thus with drug addiction proliferating among the youth as in 2018, roughly 2.2 million youth ages 12 to 17 reported using illicit drugs, and 2.2 million used alcohol in the past month, with approximately half of those youth reporting binge drinking, apt solutions must be opted in the form of early intervention and prevention programs, family therapy and support groups, community engagement and involvement, holistic approaches to treatment, accessible rehabilitation centers, addressing socioeconomic factors in addiction.

Eshanya Mishra

¹ Tracy, K. and Wallace, S. (2016) 'Benefits of peer support groups in the treatment of addiction', Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation, Volume 7, pp. 143–154. doi:10.2147/sar.s81535

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Workshops & Events by Meraki

International Day of Happiness

Meraki: The Society for Mental Health organized an Interactive, activity-oriented session on the account of International Day of Happiness on 05th March 2024, which falls on 20th March every year for all teaching and non-teaching member of Delhi Metropolitan Education, Noida.

The theme for the International Day of Happiness 2024 is 'Happier Together'. We took this opportunity to celebrate this day with our DME family and endeavour to promote happiness in our own lives and communities. The resource persons for the session were Dr Ragini Singh, Counselling Psychotherapist, and Ms. Gulina Singh, Counselling Psychologist. The coordinators for the workshop were Ms. Shanu Jain, Faculty Convener of Meraki, and the student volunteers.



The event started with an ice-breaking session with everyone dancing on the beats of the song 'If You're Happy and You Know It'. The session was filled with activities and interactions like a video that showed how laughter is contagious and all the people sitting in one place spread happiness even through just laughing by themselves, some inspiring anecdotes, reliving the happy moments in our lives where some staff members shared their sad and happy moments and how in times of their sadness, they found small joys leading to ultimate happiness and 'let it go'.

The event concluded with all smiles and spreading the joy of life, by spreading - Happiness.

Session on Mental Well-Being during Summer Internship

Meraki at DME conducted a workshop as a part of the Summer Internship Programme organized by Outreach Cell, DME for class XI & XII students of various schools from June 3 - June 4, 2024.

The session aimed at sensitizing the students about mental health, managing stress and anxiety, and promoting open conversations that can reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking behaviour.

The resource persons for the workshop were Ms. Gulina Singh, Counselling Psychologist, DME, and Ms. Shanu Jain, Faculty Convener, Meraki. 60 students from various schools in Delhi-NCR enthusiastically attended the sessions in two batches of 30 each and participated in various activities.



The sessions began with a rapport-building activity, i.e. "I Am Poem", wherein students were asked to write and recite a poem about themselves. Further, Ms Gulina discussed various mental health issues faced by youth and the ways to cope with them with the help of short motivational videos. A fun-filled Sing and Dance Along activity was conducted which students enjoyed thoroughly.

After the lunch break, a Pictionary Game encompassing mental health-related terms and activities was conducted in teams. Students participated wholeheartedly and even shared their personal experiences. It was enthralling to listen to their mature thoughts, sensitivity toward mental health, and active participation throughout the session. It concluded with another fun-filled activity. "Let It Go" followed by group photos.

Workshop on Emotional Well-Being for School Teachers

The Outreach Cell and Meraki: Society for Mental Health at DME conducted a workshop as a part of the Personality Development Programme at St. Teresa School, Indirapuram & East Point School, Vasundhara for their teaching staff on June 26 & July 11, 2024.

The session aimed at promoting awareness about mental health, emotional management, holistic well-being, managing stress and anxiety, and promoting open conversations that can reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking behaviour.

The resource persons for the workshop were Ms. Gulina



Singh, Counselling Psychologist, DME, and Ms. Shanu Jain, Faculty Convener, Meraki.

The teachers attended the sessions enthusiastically and participated in various activities. The sessions were fulfilled with activities and interactions began with a rapport-building activity, i.e. "I Am Poem", wherein teachers were asked to write and recite a poem about themselves. They also shared their personal and professional experiences where they faced emotional challenges and how they managed them.

Further, Ms Gulina did a questionnaire-based exercise on emotion management which involved self-assessment of their body, mind, emotions, and spirit followed by a discussion on ways to strengthen physical and mental well-being. Some short motivational videos were showcased followed by animated discussion. A fun-filled Sing and Dance Along activity was conducted which the participants enjoyed thoroughly.

Another self-assessment activity regarding life aspirations through jumbled words was conducted along with an activity called "Tree of Feelings" where participants were allowed to introspect and draw out their strengths and areas which they need to work on.

The workshop concluded with another fun-filled activity "Let It Go" followed by feedback sharing. Overall, it was an enriching experience focusing on emotional management and creating a nurturing environment where educators can thrive emotionally, leading to better learning outcomes and overall well-being.

Orientation cum Workshop of Batch 2024 [1st Year Students] on the theme - Transition from School to College (Developing Positive Coping Mechanism)

The purpose of the workshop is to help students mentally and emotionally prepare for the transition from school to college. Being emotionally prepared for college life is a key contributor to success and happiness. In the workshop, various topics were covered about some ways and techniques that will ease the transition and help set you up for success in college and beyond. Students shared their experiences and also were able to relate to each other's experiences from school life. This interaction builds a connection among students. After interacting about the school life which was indeed a beautiful phase of everyone's life. Now we moved into the next phase of life i.e., college life. The sessions took place across all the three schools by Ms. Gulina Singh (Counselling Psychologist).



Orientation Schedule of Batch 2024 - Management, Law & Media School

Date & Day	Batch
09th July 2024 (Monday)	Law 1st Year – Batch 1
16th July 2024 (Monday)	BBA 1st Year – Batch 1
22nd July 2024 (Monday)	BBA 1st Year – Batch 2 BA(JMC) 1st Year – Batch 1
24th July 2024 (Wednesday)	Law 1st Year – Batch 2
30th July 2024 (Tuesday)	BBA 1st Year – Batch 3
1st August 2024 (Thursday)	Law 1st Year – Batch 3
12th August 2024 (Monday)	BBA 1st Year – Batch 4 BA(JMC) 1st Year – Batch 2



Mentoring of the Mentors Interactive Sessions

The Mentoring Cell and Meraki: Society for Mental Health collaborated on the mentoring sessions for the mentors, which were designed with the aim of addressing the concerns of the mentors, who are dealing with students on a daily basis with resource persons Dr Ragini Singh (psychotherapist) and Ms. Gulina Singh (counselling psychologist). The sessions took place starting from 11th July 2024 till 16th August 2024 every Thursdays across all the three schools.

The objectives of the sessions were to cater to the concerns that mentors had with their mentees during the prior session, prepare a plan for the coming academic sessions, and provide mentors with techniques and suggestions to manage and effectively conduct mentoring sessions with their mentees.

The mentors were encouraged to share any problems or worries from their prior sessions with their mentees. They

shared various concerns regarding behavioural and emotional management issues among their mentors. Mentors additionally touched on a few mentee cases that, despite their best efforts, proved quite challenging for them to manage.

After the open discussion and interaction with the mentors, brainstorming was conducted. During this session, various ways, strategies, and approaches were shared regarding how to address the problems and challenges that the mentees have created and preserve their own well-being. These include setting certain rules for the class, planning an engaging class, modifying class conduct patterns, altering the norms of behaviour in the classroom, and giving some time to indulge in interactive sessions with mentees, etc.

The sessions were concluded on a positive note, with open channels for approaching mental health cell for any future concerns and referrals of the mentees.





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Meet The Team

2024-2025

MERAKI: SOCIETY FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Be Kind to Your Mind



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STUDENT CONVENER



ANANYA SHARMA
STUDENT CONVENER



KARTIKA NAIR
STUDENT CO-CONVENER



LAXMI MISHRA
STUDENT SECRETARY



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ESTHER INDIRA SOARES
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