

EDITORIAL

SCHOOL COUNSELLING: DIRE NEED FOR IT

Schools should not resemble assembly-line industries churning out students with high capacity of rote -memory and an equally high capacity to spew out the learnt data verbatim in examinations! It's a downfall and degradation of the word 'education'. No wonder then, Einstein stated sarcastically that **'A student is not a container you have to fill but a torch you have to light up!'** He also said **'The only thing that interferes with my learning is my education'**! We all agree that academic reforms are pending for decades, right from the concept of an individual, curriculum content and teaching pedagogy. But this is not about educational reforms. **This is about the emotional development and holistic wellbeing of the child.**



As a psychologist we have seen **many children become 'victims at school'** due to the rigid and close-minded systems. I can mention that children with learning disabilities, ADHD, autism, language deficits, borderline intelligence, gifted children with high intelligence, creative and imaginative children, independent thinking children and all those children who do not fall within the curve of 'normalcy', can become 'victims at school'. Besides these children, we have many who have physical health problems, asthma, allergies, physical handicaps, weaknesses etc. There would be some children from troubled homes, dysfunctional families, broken families, families with mental illness, drug addiction, alcoholism, abuse and violence, and the lot.

The concept of the 'happy normal child' may be a myth. All these children as well as the 'normal children' need special care and attention at some point in school, and need to be helped by mental health experts and not by the teaching staff. **Emotional development and emotional care is a core aspect of holistic development and growth.**

When such **children are not understood, neglected, misunderstood and mistreated in school** by the teacher, the principal and the classmates, we have a good case for the development of mental health disorders. This underscores the necessity for counselling services within the school campus. School counseling are vital services for any school and cover a wide range of services. **Besides counselors** for emotional problems, we need **special educators for remedial education** for children with learning disorders, **psychologists for psycho-diagnostics**, and **behavioral trainers for building coping strategies**, teaching social-emotional learning, resilience and other life skills.

The Government of India through the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) issued a government resolution (GR) more than two decades ago, mandating schools to appoint a full- time psychologist/ counsellor. The majority did not bother about it, dismissing it for reasons known to them. The New Education Policy (NEP) has many wonderful initiatives for mental health care in schools but its implementation will take a long time. Yet, it gives us hope that schools will wake up to the rude reality of rising teenage deaths by suicide and the growing incidence of anxiety and depression among students. **Mental health has already been a silent pandemic for more than a decade.** I do not understand the ostrich-like attitude of most schools, 'my students do not have mental health problems'. It's always the neighbor's son who is sick.

Besides the burden of studies, children carry many unknown hidden emotional burdens leading to despair. School counselling is not a fad or a luxury but a necessity, a vital service for all children. They deserve it, they need it desperately.

Rita

-Rita Aggarwal
Editor

TANAAV: EXIT NOW

DAGMHI-3030 in association with ROTARY CLUB OF AMRAVATI and VIDYA BHARTI COLLEGE OF PHARMACY organised a seminar on Stress management on 13th September, 2025 at Vidya Bharti College of Pharmacy, Amravati. Dr. Kushal Zanwar was the speaker. Other dignitaries present were PP Rtn. Dr. Smita Hantodkar, President- DAGMHI-3030, Rtn. Gunjan Karan Hantodkar, Hon. Secretary- DAGMHI-3030, Rtn. Sugandha Deshmukh, President - RC Amravati, Rtn. Manish Sanjay Chhangani, Vice President- RC Amravati, Rtn. Lovina Lokendra Jain, Hon. Secretary- RC Amravati and Dr.S.D.Pande, Principal, Vidya Bharti college of pharmacy.



SESSIONS ON WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY

On account of World Suicide Prevention Day on the 10th of September, Chaitanya Counselling Centre, a project by The Rotary Club of Nagpur, organised two sessions on the same- one at the Interact Orientation for school children and the other at KDK College of Engineering. The sessions were conducted by Rtr Devika Gokhale, who is a counselling psychologist.

The sessions were interactive and received great feedback from the students. The session at the Interact Orientation ended with a collective pledge by the students and the dignitaries present- a pledge on never giving up and to seek professional help when needed!



EARLY INTERVENTION AS A TRELLIS OF GROWTH

Little Madhusudhan, 4 years of age, does not converse with anyone in class, neither with the teacher nor with his fellow students. He watches with curiosity and chuckles over the plays and activities, but connecting with them was not possible for him. I could point out the subtle signs of fearfulness in speech, weak eye contact, and fear of being singled out. Intervention at this early stage helped the adults detect his learning difficulties with ease, and with their encouragement and support, he overcame his inhibition.

The first time detection and intervention in school have been the unobvious support columns of each child's successful emotional life. As a counsellor myself, I have had frequent interactions with school and college students, and I have learned that the least significant signs, if observed at an early stage, can significantly alter a young person's life. The fertile window period is first five years, when developmental milestones, speech, and playing behaviour disclose a child's rhythm.

Signs and Symptoms for Early Detection

•**Developmental Delays:** Delayed speech (failing to speak 2-word communication by 2 years of age), clumsiness for motor coordination, slow training for toilets, and minimal social playing.

•**Learning Disabilities:** Inability to recognise letters/numbers, letter reversals after age 7, slow speed of processing, difficulty dealing with sequencing tasks.

•**Borderline IQ/Slow Learners:** Inability to match peers with effort, requires instructions repeatedly, and has minimal conceptual understanding.

•**ADHD Signs:** Short attention span, impulsiveness, excess hyperactivity, inability to sit quietly in group activity, and distractibility.

•**Emotional and Behavioural Issues:** Severe withdrawal, being overly preoccupied with being rebuked, over-perfectionism, irritability, belligerence, or abrupt discouragement from previously favourite activities.

Children rarely verbalise their distress. Emotional distress, upsets, bullying, or family stress normally whirl into behavioural details—reclusive behaviours towards group work, restlessness, or uninterest in favorite courses. Detections early on also rest on the vigilant eyes and warm hearts of support staff, teachers, and sometimes even peers.

When school networks incorporate training for early mental health signs, teachers are first-line observers and counselors act as guides and fixers. Research has also demonstrated that early school-based intervention can reduce pain, increase openness, and support long-term health.

I often recall Meera, a diligent girl whose perfectionism belied an inner struggle with fear of failure and anxiety. She had spotless notebooks and good marks but sleepless nights with fear of failure. A non-threatening space with her school counsellor gave her the courage to speak up and with parental support, she learned to balance herself and got strong enough to support others.

The power of early intervention is that tiny cracks do not become fractures. Research corroborates what lived experiences remember—early intervention strengthens academics, social bonding, and emotional safety. But stigma and ignorance persist as problems. Counselling is considered remedial by many, but it is really preventive and supportive, giving children a language for feelings and the courage to express them.

As mental health catches equal pace with physical health, there will be no choice but to take up screening, teacher training, and parental enlightenment programs at school. Early intervention is no luxury, but a necessity. Beyond each child's smile or silence there is a tale hiding and crying out for a hearing. Let us hear early, intervene early, and have faith in the quiet strength of early treatment.

-Dr Sripirya Shaji

Counselling Psychologist & Nutritionist

Srisha Counselling, Kozhikode.

THE UNSEEN CURRICULUM: EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT THROUGH SCHOOL COUNSELLING

“My best friend stopped talking to me. I don't feel like myself anymore.”

“Ma'am, my parents keep comparing me with others. I don't know how to make them proud.” “I get nervous before every test. Sometimes I feel like running away.”

While working with school students, counsellors often get to hear such confessions. While for others these may seem insignificant, but for the child, it may be a heavy weight to carry. In today's world, many students unfortunately trust strangers they meet online and prefer opening up to them, more than their family and friends. The others prefer brushing off their feelings in denial, because it is supposedly 'cool' to show that they're not affected by difficult situations. And the rest- they choose to suffer in silence.

Sadly in most Indian households, children are always taught that emotions like 'anger' and 'fear' are not good, when in reality it is very human to have these emotions! **However, when we are assured that all our feelings are valid, that our struggles are not insignificant to be acknowledged and that it's okay to not be okay, that is where emotional and psychological support begins.** And this support, when extended to children during their developmental years, helps beautifully in so many ways- it gives them ways to understand and accept their emotions better, regulate them and then express them in healthy ways. When we talk of holistic development of children, **empathetic and non-judgmental listening paired with building resilience using coping skills forms the foundation of mental well-being.**

In schools, counsellors often try to build this foundation by offering support in students' everyday life. The counselling room becomes the 'safe space' for children to talk, cry and vent about things that are bothering them. Through conversations, art, play and other reflective methods, counselling gives them the reassurance that they can be their authentic selves, learn more about who they feel and learn to deal with it better.

Along with these, counselling also helps in other areas of life. Children recognise that **seeking help is not a weakness** but a strength. Emotionally and psychologically supported children tend to have better problem-solving and decision-making skills and are more empathetic.

School counselling is not just about 'fixing' or 'solving' problems. It's also about navigating through the unseen fears, doubts and insecurities a child may have while growing up, by either being their confidante or being the bridge between the child and the parents/ teachers. The counsellor also helps parents and teachers become aware of mental health problems, so that the school environment becomes more conducive and supportive towards mental health problems thereby breaking the stigma and creating an impact.

-Devika Gokhale

Counselling Psychologist, Nagpur

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SCHOOL COUNSELLING: NURTURING ACADEMIC SUCCESS, CAREER CLARITY AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

As students progress along their learning journey, they are increasingly faced with challenges that broaden beyond texts and examinations. School counselling has evolved into a critical support system, one that supports students through and beyond the period of education-related stress. It directs them towards planning their careers while also attending to their mental health. Coming at a time when October 10 is observed as World Mental Health Day, its relevance stands all the greater.

Academic and Career Counselling for Development

Guidance in academics teaches students essential skills such as time management, discipline, and systematic study habits, enabling them to handle stress and build confidence. It also supports individuals who may struggle in certain subjects, ensuring they do not feel inferior but are instead guided toward learning methods that suit them best.

As students progress beyond middle school, career advising also becomes important. Around age 13, aptitude and personality tests are typically administered and are valuable. Aptitude tests evaluate reasoning, numerical, and problem-solving skills, while personality tests examine interests, values, and work habits. When combined with academic performance and personal ambitions, these assessments offer students a clear understanding of their strengths. Guidance counsellors then help connect these insights to subject choices and future careers, ensuring decisions are independent rather than driven by pressure or obligation. Academic and career counselling together form a comprehensive approach—supporting current studies and future opportunities while also protecting students' mental well-being.

The Role Played by Schools in Counselling Support

Schools can help greatly to create space for accessible, non-stigmatising counselling. By having counsellors trained at the university level, there is immediate access to support for the student when needed. Schools that make counselling mainstream through policy not only embolden seeking help among students but also bring about emotional fortification to the institution itself.

Busting Your Parent and Social Stereotypes

One of the greatest difficulties learners are likely to experience is needing to study a "prestigious" field like science and engineering. This usually discourages other talents and interests and hence renders it extremely stressful. Counselling educates students and parents regarding the truth that all fields of professionalism are honourable and deserving. Debunking myths and enhancing open communication, parents are permitted by counsellors to advocate for the child's well-being and are not bound by peer pressure.

A Student-Driven Mental Health Approach

The ultimate goal of school counselling is to position itself at the cutting-edge of academic and occupational decision-making, meeting the needs of the students. By offering a safe and non-judgmental space, counsellors assist students to become strong, make constructive decisions, and meet challenges with confidence. Parents and schools are equally helpful by continuing open communication and empathy, so that students feel encouraged to speak out regardless of what is best for their interests, and interests related to their aptitudes and passions.

Ahead of Us: An Appeal

School counselling is not just about exams or careers; it is about enhancing overall well-being. Counselling is an ongoing process, not limited to specific seasons. Parents should see mental health support as essential, and students must feel comfortable seeking help without stigma. By combining academic, career, and emotional guidance, schools can empower children with resilience, informed choices, and equal opportunities. Early assistance promotes not only strong classroom performance but also emotional and social well-being that can last a lifetime.

-Akansha Hirraani

**Founder & Head Psychologist,
CALMFIT COUNSELLING**

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WHEN A SAFE SPACE BECOMES A LIFELINE: THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR IN TIMES OF EMOTIONAL CRISIS

A school is often described as a second home for children, and rightly so. Out of twenty-four hours in a day, nearly eight are spent in classrooms, corridors, and playgrounds. That is almost one-third of their lives shaped within the walls of a school. Yet, learning here is not limited to academics. This is also the place where children experience friendships, heartbreaks, comparisons, pressures, and sometimes, pain they do not know how to put into words.

This is where the school counselor quietly steps in and notices something deeper - the heart, the mind, the invisible struggles. Because if a child is not emotionally healthy, it spills into every other corner of life.

The truth is, children today carry more than just heavy schoolbags. There is pressure to top exams, clear entrances, be smart enough, beautiful enough, popular enough. They juggle parental expectations, friendships, and a "perfect" social media image, trying to do it all without breaking. From career worries to friendship fears, each child is silently battling storms adults may not see.

And then, sometimes, these storms turn into a crisis. **Crisis is not always a disaster**- it can be a panic attack in class or maybe during a test, a fight that feels like the end of the world, a child caught cheating, or a student breaking down after family conflict. It could be bullying, grief, or the loneliness of feeling invisible. **What seems small to adults can feel overwhelming and real to a child.**

At that exact moment, the counselor becomes calm in their chaos. The one who sits beside them, listens without judgment, and helps them breathe again. Sometimes it is grounding a student during anxiety, sometimes mediating conflict, sometimes simply reminding a lost child they are not alone.

What makes the counselor's role powerful is not just the guidance they give, **but the safe space they create - where children can drop their masks and share what weighs on them, be it exam pressure, family tension, or hidden fears.** The way a counselor holds that trust during a crisis often stays with a child for years. Crises in schools will always come, but with someone empathetic and prepared, children learn it is okay to stumble, that support is always near, and that no matter how heavy life feels, they can always find their way back. Because sometimes, what saves a child is not a solution to their problem, but simply a safe person saying: ***I am here. You don't have to go through this alone.***

-Aditi Sethi

**Counselling Psychologist | School
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HEALTHY HABITS, HEALTHY MINDS: GUIDING SCHOOL STUDENTS TOWARDS POSITIVE FOOD RELATIONSHIPS

"I was so hungry in class, I couldn't even hear what the teacher was saying," admitted Aarav, a Class 9 student. He had skipped breakfast to finish homework, and by mid-morning, his mind felt as empty as his stomach.

This is a story many school students know well. Rushed mornings, tiffin boxes swapped for canteen snacks, endless love for chips and cold drinks, food often becomes a second thought. But here's the truth: **the way you eat doesn't just affect your body. It shapes your brain, your mood, and even your marks.**

Food and Mood in the Classroom: Your brain is like the topper of your body, it does a lot of work but demands the most attention. Though it's only about 2% of your body weight, it uses nearly 20% of your daily energy. That means what you eat for breakfast, lunch, and snacks directly fuels your focus, memory, and emotions. Skipping meals or relying only on instant noodles and samosas can leave you tired, cranky, and unable to concentrate in class. Studies worldwide (and in India too) show that children and teens who eat more fruits, vegetables, and balanced meals perform better in academics and feel calmer, while junk-heavy diets are linked to anxiety, low mood, and poor grades.

More Than Nutrition: A Healthy Relationship With Food: It's not just *what* you eat — it's also *how you think about food*. Many school students feel pressure from social media or peers about how they look. This can create guilt about eating a burger or skipping meals to "stay fit." But here's the reality: **food is not your enemy. Food is fuel for your brain, energy for your sports, and even joy when you share it with friends.**

Healthy Habits for School Success:

- 1.Never Skip Breakfast-** Think of breakfast as switching on your brain's Wi-Fi. A bowl of poha, upma, or even paratha with curd gives steady energy for morning classes.
- 2.Pack a Power Tiffin-** Add one fruit (banana, apple, or guava), one protein (boiled egg, paneer cubes, or roasted chana), and your regular roti-sabzi or rice-dal. That's a topper's lunchbox!
- 3.Snack Smart-** Instead of fried chips, try fruit chaat, sprout salad, or peanuts. They keep your energy up without a crash.
- 4.Drink Water, Not Just Cola-** Even slight dehydration makes it harder to focus. Carry a bottle and refill it.
- 5.Mindful Munching-** No gobbling food while scrolling Instagram. Chewing slowly helps digestion and stops overeating.

The Role of Schools and Parents: Schools can make a big difference by offering healthier canteen choices : fruit bowls, idlis, or roasted snacks instead of only fried options. Parents can encourage balance at home: a laddoo is fine, chips occasionally are okay, but everyday meals should be colorful and wholesome. Most importantly, we must remind students that **food is not about punishment or reward, it's about nourishment.** Sharing a tiffin with friends should feel like joy, not guilt.

Final Thought: For school students, food choices today are shaping not just your growing body but also your learning brain. When you eat with balance and kindness not fear or guilt you build both health and confidence. Remember this simple mantra: **Healthy habits build healthy minds. And a healthy mind helps you dream, learn, and shine.** So the next time you open your lunchbox, know that every bite is feeding your future.

-Malvika Fulwani
Dietician, Nagpur

LIFE SKILLS: THE MISSING PIECE IN SCHOOL EDUCATION?

For years, education has been viewed as the foundation of a successful life, at least in India. Good grades and academic achievements dominate the school years. But they alone do not prepare a child for the real challenges of life. There is another dimension that is equally essential: **life skills - a vital bridge between knowledge and wisdom, between learning and living** – these are the everyday abilities that help the child handle challenges, build healthy relationships, and grow into balanced human beings.

Life skills encompass essential abilities like emotional regulation, effective communication, empathy, decision-making, stress management, and many more. **These are not just 'soft skills'; these are 'core skills' for healthy mental development and positive social interaction.**

When I talk to the younger generation, I realise that they value life skills as much as traditional education. They recognize that 'grades' alone cannot guarantee success or happiness. They see life skills as tools that prepare them not just for careers, but also for life's unpredictability.

Too often, students struggle silently with peer pressure, fear of failure, and identity issues, even if they perform well academically. Life skills empower them to face these challenges with confidence and clarity.

This is where school counselors play a crucial role. They can teach life skills education through workshops and classroom discussions and help students develop healthier perspectives and improved emotional intelligence. Thus, they can bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world readiness.

Additionally, extracurricular activities - from art and sports to music and debates - **offer experiential learning that reinforces these skills.** These activities provide students with opportunities to express themselves, manage emotions, work in teams, and discover their strengths beyond academics.

Life skills training and development of good habits at an early age from school level leads to character building and a good personality, which will last them a lifetime and make them resilient to face challenges. Life skills training is a continuous process from the foundational stage of standard two to high school, as the child begins to understand the complexities of life, as they grow up.

Life skills, therefore, are not 'extras', but essentials for nurturing character for life! As we raise awareness about mental health, it is essential that schools prioritize these skills - not as an optional subject; but as an integral part of the curriculum.

Dr. Aabha Pimprikar,
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P.C.: Gemini



CBSE's NEW COUNSELLING AND WELLNESS INITIATIVES (2025-26)

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has launched a fresh set of counselling and wellness initiatives for the academic session 2025–26. These efforts are a meaningful step toward supporting not only the academic journey of students but also their emotional well-being, social skills, and future aspirations. In line with the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, CBSE's focus is on holistic development—helping children grow as confident learners and resilient individuals.

Career Guidance Dashboard – A Digital Companion

One of the highlights this year is the Career Guidance Dashboard, a user-friendly online platform designed to assist students in exploring career opportunities and higher education pathways. At a time when young learners often feel confused by too many choices, this dashboard provides reliable information in a structured manner. It enables students to make informed decisions and offers them clarity during one of the most crucial stages of their lives.

Counselling Hub & Spoke Model – Schools Supporting Schools

Another promising step is the Counselling Hub & Spoke Model, which creates a collaborative network among schools. Selected Hub Schools will act as guiding centers for Spoke Schools, helping them build stronger counselling and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs. This model ensures that even smaller schools with limited resources can access quality support systems. It promotes peer mentoring, shared responsibility, and a collective culture where counselling becomes an integral part of school life.

Project MATE – Building Wellness Through Education

In partnership with AIIMS Delhi, CBSE has introduced Project MATE (Mind Activation Through Education), a pilot program launched in August 2025. Nearly 50 counsellors and wellness teachers from Delhi-NCR received intensive training based on the MATE-5 framework.

This program focuses on strengthening areas such as resilience, stress management, family relationships, digital well-being, and communication skills. Experts from psychiatry, psychology, and counselling guided the sessions, equipping participants with practical strategies to support adolescents more effectively. If successful, CBSE plans to expand Project MATE across the country—an initiative that could truly transform the school counselling landscape.

Building a Culture of Care

These initiatives are part of CBSE's larger commitment to embed SEL into everyday school practices, normalize help-seeking behavior, and encourage empathy. Parents and teachers are also being included through training programs, as CBSE believes that the well-being of students is a shared responsibility.

The board continues to offer free tele-counselling services (Monday to Saturday) and operates a **24/7 IVRS helpline (1800-11-8004)**. In addition, bilingual podcasts and online resources make support more accessible to students and families across diverse backgrounds.

Looking Ahead

With its mix of digital innovation, professional training, and wellness collaborations, CBSE is showing a renewed commitment to student well-being. These initiatives are not just about preparing students for examinations—they are about preparing them for life. By addressing emotional health, resilience, and social skills, CBSE is laying the foundation for stronger, healthier, and more confident generations.

As educators and counsellors, we can look forward to an academic session where guidance is not limited to academics but extends to shaping hearts and minds. This could truly mark a turning point in how Indian schools nurture the leaders of tomorrow.

**-Aradhana Gambhir CBSE Tele-Helpline Counselor
M.A. Psychology, B.Ed., P.G. Diploma in Guidance
and Counseling**

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Tick mark on True/False in the underlying statements based on depression:

- Genetics can be a possible cause of depression among students. (T/F)
- Depression doesn't really affect a person's day to day functioning. (T/F)
- Everyone experiences depression in the same way. (T/F)
- Depression can be mostly found among teenagers. (T/F)
- Headaches, numbness and difficulty in breathing are some of the symptoms of depression. (T/F)
- Depression is the same as long term stress. (T/F)
- Depression in a classroom can look like persistent boredom, extreme sensitivity and difficulty in following rules. (T/F)
- One can snap out of depression by just thinking positively. (T/F)
- Depression occurs only when something bad happens to you. (T/F)
- It is possible to manage cases of severe depression at school level with the help of counsellors/psychologists. (T/F)
- People need to look sad in order to be diagnosed with depression. (T/F)
- Talking about suicide/death, sudden personality changes and excessive feelings of guilt can be seen as warning signs of suicide among students. (T/F)
- Working on the family environment of the student can be a solution in managing depression. (T/F)
- Depression is just a phase, it passes. (T/F)
- Other medical illnesses can be a possible cause of depression. (T/F)
- The rate of deaths by suicide among teens is one of the highest in India. (T/F)
- Poor diet and nutritional deficiencies can lead to depression. (T/F)
- Online addiction can be a leading cause of anxiety and depression. (T/F)
- Teaching healthy coping skills to children in school can help prevent depression. (T/F)
- Once someone has been cured for depression, they can never experience a relapse. (T/F)

Score grades:

- 1-6: Low knowledge around depression
- 7-15: Moderate knowledge around depression
- 16-20: High knowledge around depression



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