



CULTURE OF OPENNESS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Keeping up with last year, this year too we took to celebrating the important day with the youth. Interacting with the youth is always fun and an eye-opening experience as they bring their unique set of ideas and thoughts. It gives an insight into a different world which is fast changing due to AI and other technological innovations.



This year's theme given by the World Health Organization is 'work-place mental health'. We wanted to know first hand what the young minds had to say on the panel discussion. **Surprisingly, one of the major discriminations on the job/workplace which most of them highlighted was 'their young inexperienced age'.** On the new job, most of them stated that "they were not taken seriously and their competencies were doubted" because of their age! That was a shocker for them for the young today have an attitude of 'confidence and know it all'. **A taste of the real world is always a mixed bundle of sweet-bitter experiences bringing in doses of stress!** The young women on the panel felt **'subtle hints of gender discrimination'**. They have to work harder and push their way through. All this in spite of the proclaimed progress!

On the positive side, most of them wanted an open culture for mental health problems in the workplace. They stated that all types of workplaces, whether schools, NGO's or industries should have clearly stated policies and programs put in place for wellbeing and happiness. There should be services of a counsellor for mental health issues besides having doctors for physical health. There should not be a stigma for stress and anxiety and depression. Much needs to be done on the workplace front, we all agree. The current scene is dismal.

I am happy to note that **the younger generation is definitely more open and modern in their attitude and mindset for mental health.** They are the ones that suffer the most and hence they understand and are sensitive to it. This ushers in **HOPE for the future that the mental health pandemic will be addressed in the right manner** and people will get the relief they need to mitigate their suffering.

A workplace that talks about mental health is workplace that cares.

**-Rita Aggarwal,
Editor**

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INCLUSIVE MENTAL HEALTH POLICIES: A WORKPLACE IMPERATIVE



Workplace health is not a stand alone issue but is deeply connected to family health and other influences affecting an individual. Building a vertical structure to address workplace health in isolation often leads to oversight of these interconnections, causing greater problems. **A comprehensive approach that integrates all aspects of an individual's life is essential.**

Organizations must prioritize the implementation of inclusive mental health policies. These policies should enable employees to share their mental distress freely and foster a culture of openness and support. It is crucial to address questions such as whether an employee experiencing distress is treated with compassion, provided adequate leave, and reintegrated with understanding upon return. Without these measures, inclusion remains superficial.

Examples reveal gaps in workplace inclusion. A woman with schizophrenia was initially employed successfully but was asked to leave when she stopped her medication. Similarly, a male employee with panic attacks faced judgment instead of solutions to address his challenges. These incidents highlight the need for structured protocols for employees with mental health conditions, including periodic evaluations and consistent support.

Studies on workplace stress identify key causes such as work overload, ambiguous roles, unsupportive coworkers, and toxic environments. Elderly employees often cope better, potentially due to passive approaches, while younger employees express their concerns more openly. Clear, empathetic communication using feeling phrases—whether expressing joy, sadness, or constructive criticism—can significantly reduce stress and foster healthier relationships at work.

Frequent mental health checkups, while ensuring confidentiality, are vital for early identification of issues. **Breaking the stigma associated with mental health starts at the top; when leaders openly address their mental health, it encourages employees to seek help without fear.** Organizations must not only follow global best practices but also adapt them to India's unique mental health challenges, where one in seven individuals faces mental illness.

A telling example is of a senior executive who, after recovering from depression, became a mental health ambassador in his organization. Such initiatives highlight the importance of creating systems where employees are supported and valued. Inclusive mental health policies have proven to enhance productivity, strengthen employee bonds, and promote overall well-being.

In conclusion, workplaces must integrate mental health into their core philosophy. **A shift from reactive to proactive measures, such as comprehensive policies, mental health checkups, and empathetic communication, can transform workplace culture.** These efforts will not only support individual well-being but also ensure the long-term success of organizations.

-Article drafted from Dr Harish Shetty's session

CREATIVE STRUGGLES: AGEISM, GENDER BIAS AND STRESS IN ART EDUCATION

My work revolves around designing learning experiences that integrate various art forms into conventional education. Through my work in an organization based in Bangalore, India, I have been involved in helping schools embrace art as an essential part of their curriculum. This holistic approach aims to engage students in a way that fosters creativity, critical thinking, and emotional expression. However, **as much as this mission is fulfilling, there are significant stressors that come with working in a field that is often undervalued and misunderstood.**



One of the most prominent challenges I face is **ageism**. As a young professional, I often encounter situations where my ideas are dismissed or my credibility questioned simply because of my age. This, **paired with gender discrimination**, creates an environment where my voice is sometimes overlooked, and my contributions undervalued. **These forms of discrimination are deeply ingrained in the professional landscape.**

Moreover, **the very nature of my work—interacting with children—brings about a unique set of emotional challenges. I find myself constantly worrying about the well-being and future of the children I work with.** This emotional burden often becomes a source of stress, as I question whether I am truly making a difference in their lives. Coupled with **long working hours and back-to-back classes**, the pressure can become overwhelming. There's little time for reflection or self-care, and this constant rush sometimes takes a toll on my mental and physical health.

Another significant stressor is **'paving my own path' in a field where art is often seen as a secondary, non-essential subject.** Despite the growing body of research on the positive impacts of art education, there remains a persistent resistance from those who view art as a mere extracurricular

activity rather than an integral part of a child's development. **This constant pushback is disheartening and frustrating, especially when trying to advocate for the importance of the arts in education.**

The cumulative impact of these stressors on mental health is substantial. **The constant battle against self-doubt and low self-esteem is perhaps one of the most pervasive effects.** I often find myself suppressing my ideas and opinions for fear of not being taken seriously. This, in turn, stifles my creativity and growth as both an artist and an educator. **The lack of time for self-reflection also prevents me from developing a deeper understanding of my own practice and professional journey.** Moreover, without the space for introspection and personal care, physical health deteriorates, leading to burnout.

To manage these stressors, I've had to establish clear boundaries in my professional life. **Drawing firm lines** around working hours and ensuring I don't overextend myself has been essential. **Taking regular pauses** to reflect on the work I do—questioning its necessity and role in the broader educational landscape—has helped me regain a sense of purpose and clarity. **It's also crucial to advocate for a reasonable workload and a space where open dialogue about stress and mental health is encouraged.** Lastly, **maintaining a comfortable physical environment at work** - ensuring that spaces are conducive to relaxation and collaboration—has been key to sustaining both my mental and physical health.

In the end, navigating these challenges requires constant balance, perseverance, and a commitment. **While the path isn't always easy, the work remains meaningful, and the impact of art continues to be worth the effort**

-Saachi Pimprakar
Artist, Educator, and Designer

NAVIGATING STRESS, SUCCESS AND SELF-CARE

I am an entrepreneur and a writer. I have written a book, a self-help journal. I have suffered from depression. With counselling, I moved past that phase and later I worked on a journal which is now being implemented in schools across the country. I run my own company which is focusing on coaching and entrepreneurship where I visit schools and facilitate classes for life skills and journaling.

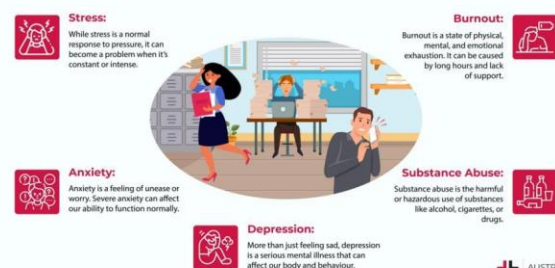


According to me the major stressor of an entrepreneur is that you are always on the go. I am constantly on my phone answering the mails to find new work opportunities i.e. new schools that I can. Also, networking is an essential part of my day. I miss following my self-care regime (yoga, meditation, walk) at times. This is another stressor for me. Continuous work with no or little rest adds to my stress level. I often tell myself I have to find a way to calm down and take a step back but then I have to grow my business and I have hired myself for that and I won't get paid if I don't work. Being a teacher is a tough task and I don't take care of myself; then I am super stressed, I am angry at people and I get impatient.

To cope up, I walk four to five times a week. I try to do yoga and meditation every morning. Occasionally, I leave my phone behind, so that people know that I am not available 24x7 for work. I try to slow down, spend time with family and my friends. I'm a big advocate of journaling. So I release my mind onto the paper, and then I feel emptier and happier in my mind.

-Gregor Baum
District Rotaract Representative D7720,
North Carolina
Youth Representative RAGMHI
(Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives)

TOP 5 MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES WITHIN THE WORKPLACE



UNPACKING WORKPLACE STRESS: THE HIDDEN TOLL ON MENTAL HEALTH



Being in the field of mental health, a lot of people tend to think that psychologists and counsellors might not be having any significant stressors at their workplace. However, **every job comes with its own set of stressors, even if it is a job you love.** I'm a psychologist and school counsellor, the nature of my work is such that it requires me to counsel students, teachers and parents; along with which I also teach life skills to students from II to V standard.

Mental health has always been a stigmatised topic, which is my first stressor at the workplace- lack of awareness and acceptance around the subject. And when there is no awareness or acceptance, your colleagues do not take your subject seriously either. At times, I'm expected to give my classes to other subject teachers for them to complete their syllabus, since "life skills" is supposedly not that important a subject as compared to Science and Maths. This also brings me to my next stressor, which is **discrimination based on age and experience-** working in a school where your colleagues have been there since 10-12 years, freshers often have to hear statements like, "You look too young to be a teacher" or "You'll need time to settle since you don't have much experience", instead of supporting them while they learn to make a mark for themselves. Also, **when you're the youngest at your**

workplace, you're expected to do a lot of other administrative tasks, which are not included in your job profile.

These stressors definitely affect your well being, instilling a sense of self doubt to begin with. You start doubting whether you're doing the right thing, because of which there is a lack of motivation too. Another impact this has is, **overworking to prove yourself,** since there is nobody to show faith in you or your ideas.

As a part of coping, I feel it is effective to focus on things which are under your control and work on them, instead of focusing on things which are not. Talking to your family, or a friend whom you trust, also helps in processing negative emotions. And developing a hobby certainly is a cherry on the cake since it helps in fostering self love and managing stress.

To sum it up, I feel every workplace should come up with ideas which will take care of their employees' mental health, since **a healthy mind ensures better productivity and improved interpersonal relationships in the long run!**

-Devika Gokhale

**Psychologist and School Counsellor,
Nagpur, India**

WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH - A REPORT

Workplace wellbeing has gained significant importance in recent years as organizations recognize its direct impact on employee productivity, satisfaction, and mental health. This report analyzes responses from a survey of 29 participants, focusing on workplace stress, wellbeing measures, and suggested improvements.

The key findings are **nearly half of the participants (48.3%) experience moderate stress**, 31% experience mild stress and 20.7% are undergoing severe stress. **44.8% of respondents stated that their organization does not offer any wellbeing measures or are unaware of the available programs, indicating a significant gap in awareness or provision..**

However, 24.1% have counselling services and the same percent have holidays. Around 13.8% have recreation rooms.

About **44.8% experience physical signs of stress quite often**, while only 10.3% reported never. Around **41.4% experience mental signs of stress often** and same experience sometimes.

Regarding supportive Workplace Culture for Mental Health **only 10.3% of respondents feel their workplace has a fully supportive culture.** However, 34.5% are unsure, and 24.1% believe their workplace is not supportive.

The popular stress management strategies among employees include:

- Taking breaks
- Talking to friends or family
- Exercising or engaging in recreational activities
- Participating in yoga or meditation sessions

Participants suggest the following as preferred mental health policies and programs:

- Counselling services
- Relaxation techniques such as yoga and meditation classes
- Balanced workloads and reduced work hours
- Improved communication between employees and management
- De-stress programs, mental health leaves, and get-togethers

The desired workplace changes by the participants are

- Emphasis on mental and physical well-being
- Reduction in working hours and improved leave policies
- Unbiased appraisals and transparent communication

- Stress-free working environments and better staffing patterns
- Institutional crèches to support working mothers

In addition, **respondents highlighted the importance of a calm workplace, better work-life balance, and active mental health support.** Many emphasized that changes at a governmental level, such as filling staff vacancies, could significantly improve workplace conditions.

In response to changes that may bring in a better work place they recommended the following

1.Enhance Wellbeing Measures

- Increase access to counselling services.
- Introduce flexible working hours and mental health leaves.
- Organize frequent recreational activities such as yoga sessions, team outings, and mindfulness workshops.

2.Promote a Supportive Culture

- Implement open-door policies to encourage clear communication.
- Train managers to be empathetic and understanding of employee challenges.
- Embed mental health programs into organizational goals.

3. Monitor and Address Stress Symptoms

- Regularly assess physical and mental stress symptoms through surveys or check-ins.
- Provide stress management resources tailored to individual needs

4. Encourage Work-Life Balance

- Revise work hour policies to avoid burnout.
- Introduce "no-meeting days" and scheduled breaks to reduce pressure.

This survey underscores the pressing need for organizations to prioritize workplace wellbeing. A proactive approach, focusing on supportive mental health policies, regular recreational activities, and improved work-life balance, can foster a healthier, more productive work environment. **Addressing these issues will not only benefit employees but also enhance organizational performance and morale.**

-Editorial Team, Mind Matters

WORKPLACE STRESS OF A PSYCHIATRIST



I have completed 12 years of practice in the mental health profession and have had the opportunity to work in various pockets of the country, including corporate sectors and academic institutions. I incorporate counselling and psychotherapy measures in addition to medications in my routine clinical practice.

Job stressors:

As a psychiatrist, the most common stressors in my work are either attributed to the nature of my work, or the culture of the workplace organisation or team, and to the general life stresses associated with choosing this field of work. **Being on the listening end of copious conversations involving negative life experiences exposes me to a huge degree of negative emotions** which need to be acknowledged, understood, processed, and released, before leaving work. It is far more effortful and difficult than one could imagine and often leaves me feeling mentally exhausted. In such a scenario, receiving ample support from colleagues, supervisors and the management teams of my organisation serves a vital role in maintaining my emotional wellbeing and performance at work. **Additionally, choosing to practice psychiatry brings with it a relatively small financial remuneration especially in Indian settings.**

How do they impact me:

The most significant impact of these difficulties is **manifested in my physical energy level and mental stamina.** Long working hours often leave me feeling depleted and leave **little time for myself**, which allows me less space to rejuvenate. I miss spending time with my toddler son, and on some days even house chores! Unable to strike a good balance between life and work, I **sometimes miss out on hours of fitness regime, family gatherings and even webinars for self-development.**

How do I handle them:

I have recently changed my workplace and that has been a significant turning point in my perceived wellness at work. I am happy to be working in a team of efficient, dedicated, sincere and courteous students and faculty members who value my services and have provided me a very warm welcome into the family-like dynamic space. I have now learnt to draw healthy boundaries, to say no to some things politely, and to **make time for pursuit of my recreational interests** like singing and content writing. I have also started promoting myself on various media platforms, which has **increased my communication with peers and community members, further adding to my work motivation.** I have also **minimised my working hours and invested in personal wellbeing.** Taking care of your own mental health and prioritising self-care over selfless service will help us sustain for a longer time.

Suggestions to support well-being measures on job:

I feel that **clear communication, mutual trust, and wholehearted sincere appreciation of each other are pillars of a good workplace environment.** I also recommend timely recreational and wellbeing enhancing joint activities with team members, sometimes even out of work timings to foster a meaningful bond over time.

-Dr Bhakti Sisodia,
Associate Professor in Psychiatry,
Geetanjali Medical College and Hospital,
Udaipur

<https://youtu.be/OmUHpBSGIyg?si=lyAjbvHZZx3T480>

Click the link to watch
 'Celebrating Mental Health 2.0'

BALANCING SALES, STAFF AND STRESS



I own and manage a clothing store in Nagpur, India. We have been here since 1961 and I'm the third-generation entrepreneur who has been managing this business.

They say it's the third generation who makes it or breaks the business. So, my biggest stressor is to prove myself as a successful businessman. Managing sales is my second biggest stressor. I need to reach a particular

sales figure at the end of the month. Otherwise, I cannot manage the fixed expenses. Also, I need some profits if I have to sustain and grow. Having a well behaved and well-trained staff and retaining that staff is another stressor. Satisfaction of the customer so s/he keeps on visiting our shop and buying from us also adds to my stress. Long working hours (that are never fixed) take a toll on our mental and physical health.

These stressors have affected my food intake and my physical health. I cannot spend quality time with my family. I often tell myself that I am a human being. I cannot reach everywhere and there are some things that are beyond my control.

I try to detach myself from the work for some time and take a break, hang out with my friends. I play professional Cricket, which helps me to completely take my mind off of my work.

-Karan Jaswani
Third Generation Business Entrepreneur,
Nagpur India

How to talk about your MENTAL HEALTH at work

@BELIEVEPHQ

- When talking to someone make sure you feel trusted, comfortable and are in a safe environment
- Reveal as much as you're comfortable with
- Remember you are not alone. 1 in 4 people experience a mental health problem
- Plan a private meeting with your boss or manager to express how you feel
- If you are worried to talk to your boss or manager, ask a supportive colleague to help you
- Try speaking to HR and seeing what support they can offer
- If you are struggling, ask for a note from your doctor to help explain your situation
- You do not need to go into too much detail about your personal life
- Ask for professional help. Your employer should have confidential services and support in place for you
- Understand and learn about your legal rights that protect your mental health at work

TCS CARES: COMPREHENSIVE WELLBEING & MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT PROGRAM

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), India's largest IT company and the world's third-largest, serves industries worldwide with a vast range of services.

TCS employs 6.5 lakh individuals across 46 countries. The workforce is highly diverse, with 38% women and 70% of employees below the age of 30, with many being Gen Z. TCS promotes inclusivity, encompassing a wide range of cultures, languages, and backgrounds. TCS places a strong emphasis on the **holistic wellbeing** of its employees and considers not only their physical health but also emotional, social, financial, and spiritual wellbeing.

TCS Cares: A Mental Health Program aims to create a supportive environment, ensuring a balanced and healthier workforce. It's a multi-faceted approach designed to help employees thrive, both at work and in their personal lives. TCS Cares is built around **five pillars: Awareness, Understanding, Acceptance, Support, and Community**. The program's overarching goal is to encourage employees to seek help when needed. TCS offers **professional counselling services** and other resources (both online and in-person).

TCS encourages a community-driven approach to mental health by training employees to become **peer guides** or **emotional health first aiders**, who offer initial support and identifying colleagues who might need more professional help.

TCS offers **Emotional Well-being Leave** for mental health reasons. If the leave exceeds **three days**, the employees are required to provide a certificate from a counsellor. This ensures that the employees receive the necessary professional support.

The company has designed specific programs for managers and senior leaders to promote empathy and resilience. Programs such as **"Care for Leaders"** focus on developing qualities like **authenticity, resilience, empathy**, and being **centred**. These programs consist of workshops, yoga sessions, self-assessments, and regular **care nudges** (small reminders sent to leaders to help them stay focused on their mental health learnings and continue practicing the skills they've developed). TCS has a localised approach and offers the resources as well as support in local languages.

In addition to this, TCS has the **"Notes of Care"** initiative - sending weekly email reminders to employees), to motivate and instill positivity. This initiative has proven to be highly successful, with a **55% open rate** on emails, reflecting the high engagement among employees.

TCS has a structured approach to managing **high-risk mental health cases**. When an employee is flagged as being at high risk, a collaborative response is initiated, involving the **EAP (Employee Assistance Program) team, HR, the employee's manager**, and sometimes their **family**.

TCS's mental health programs have had a **life-saving impact**, with the company reporting that on average, **one life is saved every 1.62 days** due to the early interventions provided through the program.

TCS Cares represents the company's **commitment to the mental health and overall wellbeing** of its employees. With a comprehensive, multi-layered approach to mental health support, TCS ensures that its employees are not only cared for but also empowered to take charge of their wellbeing.

**-Article drafted from
Sangita Chandran's session**



STRESSES OF A YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR

I have been leading my own coaching institute for the past eight years. At 27, my professional journey has been both rewarding and challenging, especially due to the high expectations that many students and parents bring to the table. Often, **parents look for rapid academic turnarounds for students starting from a low baseline, which can be difficult to achieve**. Balancing these expectations with the **administrative responsibilities** of running a business, such as fee collection, frequently leaves me navigating between my roles as a teacher, counsellor, and manager.



Adding to this complexity, **my relatively young age sometimes raises doubts among parents who associate expertise with years of experience**. This occasionally leads to feelings of self-doubt, as I strive to assure them that my guidance is sound and effective. **Coupled with the need to constantly adapt to evolving teaching methods and curricula, these pressures can sometimes lead to burnout**, impacting my focus and well-being.

To manage these challenges, I've implemented several strategies aimed at creating a more sustainable balance. First, I place a strong emphasis on **clear communication and setting realistic expectations**. By establishing transparent academic goals based on each student's progress, I can reduce the pressure of meeting unrealistic targets.

Operationally, I've also introduced **delegation into my workflow by hiring administrative support** for fee collection and other non-teaching tasks. This allows me to focus more on what I truly enjoy—teaching and counselling students. To build credibility with parents, I share success stories and data-driven results that showcase the impact of my work. **Holding regular updates and parent-teacher meetings has also been beneficial for fostering trust**.

Continuous professional development is crucial for me to stay current. I frequently participate in workshops and earn certifications in both teaching and counselling, which strengthens my confidence and credibility in the eyes of parents. Additionally, I prioritize **self-care and time management**, making sure to carve out time for relaxation, hobbies, and exercise to keep myself mentally and physically energized.

Lastly, I've found immense value in **peer support and networking**. Connecting with other educators and learning from mentors provides me with fresh perspectives and strategies for handling challenges. **This network of support not only helps me better navigate my stressors but also deepens my commitment to my work**.

Through these strategies, I'm able to handle the pressures of my profession more effectively, ensuring that I can continue to provide quality guidance to my students while safeguarding my own well-being. **For me, this journey is about resilience, growth, and the deep satisfaction that comes from making a positive impact in education**.

**-Agastya Munim
Educator, Career counsellor,
Director of DAGMHI 3030 India**



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