

## **GEETANJALI COUNSELLING HELPLINE REPORT (2018-19)**

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE: Dr Nitasha Khehra (Convener), Dr Bhavna Sood, Dr Bindu Dogra, Dr Shefali Dhiman, Dr Vandita Kapoor, Dr Anubhuti Sharma and Dr Shaifila**

**AIMS, OBJECTIVES & PROCEDURE:** Geetanjali Counselling Helpline Committee at MCM DAV College for Women, Chandigarh emphasizes mental health awareness, identification of problems crucial for psychological diagnosis and early treatment, short term counselling and psychotherapeutic intervention by a trained Clinical Psychologist (PGIMER, Chandigarh) Dr Nitasha Khehra (Convener) and other members of the committee. We encourage students from diverse academic (UG and PG students including hostellers/ day scholars/ex-students who wish to seek consultation) to share their psychological problems and have catharsis of their concerns for early intervention. We encourage interaction with parents and teachers for students' concerns. The teaching and non teaching staff can also approach the team for personal counseling. In case of high severity of their symptoms which warrants the need for medication, the students are referred to a reputed Psychiatrist at a well known Medical Institute/Hospital within the Tricity. The duration of each counselling session is flexible extended upto 1 to 1.5 hours with regular follow up sessions (weekly/monthly basis) as required and the record regarding the detailed case history of each student (self referred or third party referral) is maintained. The process is kept confidential except in a condition where disclosure is necessary to protect the student or another person or abide by the Institute Policy.

**INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING:** A total of 45 students in the mentioned academic session who approached or were referred to the committee were provided with individual counseling sessions and follow up sessions by the members of the committee. The most commonly reported problems reported by students are Depression, Suicidal Ideation, Academic pressures (Test anxiety), Anxiety Disorders (including Social Anxiety & Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), Panic Attack, Fear of Public Speaking, Lack of confidence, Substance Abuse, Peer Pressure, Relationship difficulties with parents and friends, Loneliness, Adjustment difficulties for hostellers, etc. Evidence based effective psychotherapy such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Behaviour Therapy, Relaxation Techniques with Guided Imagery, etc was provided depending on higher severity of psychiatric illness by the clinical psychologist (Dr Nitasha Khehra) on the team.

**GROUP COUNSELLING SESSIONS ON “MANAGEMENT OF EXAMINATION ANXIETY”:** A crucial group activity was organized on the significant theme of “Management of Examination Anxiety” was conducted by three committee members (Dr Nitasha Khehra, Dr Bhavna Sood & Dr Vandita Kapoor) for 100 students of MA Psychology, MA Sociology, BA III Psychology and MCom students in the month of April, 2019 before the commencement of PU Semester Examinations. Qualitative analysis done during the group counseling sessions about frequently experienced symptoms and causes of examination anxiety was noted down. Test anxiety included symptoms of nervousness, stress and worried thoughts that interfere with test performance and study regime

throughout the semester. All these symptoms work together to create a vicious cycle of disappointing test performance, higher stress, depression, lower confidence, and more anxiety. In addition to mounting pressure by parents to perform exceptionally well in academics, the other sources of test anxiety experienced are unfamiliarity with study material, lack of preparation, general lifestyle, psychosocial environmental stressors, conditioned anxiety, lack of confidence, irrational thinking, etc. Numerous coping strategies for managing examination anxiety were recommended to the students including learning test-taking strategies, examining priorities and effective time management, using active study techniques, overcoming procrastination, setting realistic goals, reducing use of technology, practicing relaxation techniques, etc. The group counseling sessions were highly successful with positive feedback by students to handle their examination anxiety with constructive suggestions which can be used practically.

