

**SUBJECT: REPORT ON COUNSELLING FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR  
July 2019 - July 2020.**

**ORIENTATION ON COUNSELLING:**

This Orientation Program is conducted at the start of the academic year for the first year students of all the different streams.

**The PURPOSE :**

1. The purpose of personally meeting and interacting with first year students is to form a connect with them.
2. To make them aware of the necessity of seeking the right kind of help when caught in a problem or a stressful situation.
3. To describe what a counselling session is all about.
4. To acquaint students with all the necessary information on Counselling, it's meaning and purpose.
5. To address their fears.
6. To clarify their doubts.
7. Most importantly for the students to get acquainted with their counsellor.

**INTERACTIVE SESSION**

This is an interactive session with a lot of discussion and feedback from the students on how they view counselling.

Problems Encountered and dealt with:

At this session, the major stressors in the life of students are addressed .

The problems that most students their age go through and which are effectively dealt with in counselling are shared.

A) Issues with parents:

- a) Communication problems.
- b) Separation and divorce of parents.
- c) Sibling rivalry.
- d) Verbal and physical abuse in the family.
- e) Death of a parent.
- f) Economic hardships.

B) Relationship Issues with the opposite sex:

1. Insensitive break ups.
2. Cheating and lying partners.
3. Controlling partners.
4. Physically and verbally abusive partners.
5. Pressure for physical intimacy.
6. Blackmail.

C) Problems with friends:

- a) Break of trust .
- b) Backbiting.
- c) Peer Pressure.



D) Other issues:

- a) Anxiety.
- b) Depression.
- C) Exam Stress.
- d) Blackmail.
- e) Lack of motivation and concentration.
- f) Lack of self confidence and low self esteem.
- g) Time Management.
- h) Anger Management.
- I) Stress Management.
- J) Career Counselling.
- k) Panic Attacks.
- l) Sex and Sexuality.
- m) Substance Abuse .
- n) Mental Health Issues.
- o) Suicide.
- p) Stigma associated with visiting a counsellor.

Sharing the above problems with students , helps them to identify with the same. It is tremendously reassuring for the students that these are the kind of issues that the counsellor is constantly dealing with and through these sessions the counsellor highlights the importance of getting help in addressing the same through counselling.

Emphasis is laid on the importance of

- a) The Confidentiality factor in counselling.
- b) Non Judgmental attitude of the counsellor.
- c) Unconditional Positive Regard for the client.
- d) Creating an atmosphere of ease, so that the client feels comfortable to talk about his/ her problems.
- e) Allowing the client to speak in the language of his/ her choice.
- f) Respecting the choices the client makes.
- g) The absence of force or compulsion in visiting a counsellor.

DIFFERENCE between the role of a Counsellor and Psychiatrist is clearly explained, as students are often confused between the two professions.

Role of Mentors in the academic progress of the student is highlighted.

#### **RULES ON CAMPUS:**

Students are advised and cautioned to

- 1) Follow and respect the rules of the College.
  - 2) Take them seriously.
  - 3) Breaking the rules can lead to disciplinary action against the student concerned.
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- 1) 75 % attendance is a must.
  - 2) Coming late to class
  - 3) Physical fights on Campus.
  - 4) Use of alcohol and drugs on campus.
  - 5) Using bad language.
  - 6) Ragging.
  - 7) Using language with sexual overtones.
  - 8) Disrespect towards teachers and staff of the college.

All the above will not be tolerated.

It is brought to their notice about the various committees formed especially to address their problems.



- 1) Anti - Ragging Committee.
- 2) Grievance Committee.
- 3) Women's Cell.
- 4) Internal Complaints Committee.

Students are encouraged to approach these committees whenever they have a problem and they can be assured that they will get the desired help.

An appeal is made to students

1. To be sensitive to others.
2. To respect the cultural differences especially of foreign students studying on our campus.

The importance of rules made by the college and their significance in the safety of the students is highlighted.

These rules help to shape an individuals behaviour and instill discipline in students.

The importance of a safe learning environment is that it focuses on academic achievements within a comfortable space, with the aim of fostering positive relationships between staff and students, and encouraging parental and community involvement.

We do our best to create a happy, safe and comfortable environment for the students, where they could explore , learn and grow, so that they can become more productive and contribute their best to the learning experience.

#### **WORKSHOPS ATTENDED:**

I attended a one day state level seminar on "Mental health of College and University students , present scenario and the way forward" organised by the Directorate of Higher Education, Government of Goa in association with COOJ Mental Health Foundation on 4th October 2019.

Programs related to Counselling:

Orientation on Counselling for the first year students of all the streams.

A team from Sangath conducted a week long screening programme in February for our students for mental health and alcohol addiction. I worked closely with them sharing information and counselling students.

A team from COOJ Mental Health Foundation visited the campus to conduct a workshop on Suicide Prevention.

Due to the lockdown imposed in the country on account of the Pandemic, college had to close early this year on 23rd March 2020.

**No of Clients:** 97 Clients.

**Type of Clientele:** Students, parents, teaching and non teaching staff of the college.

#### **PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND DEALT WITH.**

80% of problems were related to relationship issues with the opposite sex.

Painful and insensitive breakups.

Infidelity.

Physical abuse.

Blackmail.

Lack of closure .

All these were factors that affected students deeply.



Other issues were related to relationship between parents and children:

Emotional scars from childhood abuse.  
Parental strife.  
Sibling rivalry.  
Death of a parent.  
Separation and divorce were dealt with.

Lack of Communication between most parents and their children continues to be a cause for concern.

Parents having a major say in the choice of academic streams as well as career choices of their children is disturbing. The big positive was that cases of this kind were fewer in number this year .

Parental opposition with regard to their children being in relationships have created a divide between them. There have been cases of parents threatening suicide if their child continued to be in a relationship that they disapproved of.  
Sometimes in a flip situation it was children who threatened parents of the same if restrained from meeting their boyfriend.

#### **Other issues addressed:**

Threats by students of uploading pictures and messages on social networking sites, that was derogatory to the character of the victim was dealt with.

Issues pertaining to sex and sexual behaviour leading to feelings of shame and guilt as well as feelings of hatred directed at one's self were addressed .

Lack of self confidence, low self esteem, inability to strike conversation with others, lack of motivation and difficulty in concentration especially during exams were issues that were addressed.

Cases relating to Anger Management were also dealt with. Cases of students getting physical with each other in fights and using inappropriate language, were brought to my attention by concerned teachers, and firmly dealt with by us.

I helped students with planning a study time table for the exams. Many of them were anxious and stressed about clearing papers of the previous years. Some of them wanted advice regarding supporting themselves financially so as not to be a burden on their parents.

This year as well, there were a couple of cases of students who were unhappy with their stream and wanted to change to another stream.

All the above issues encompassed a wide range of emotions like pain, hurt, isolation, anger hatred, shame, guilt, repression, anxiety, fear, low self confidence, and low self esteem. Feelings of alienation, loneliness anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts were dealt with.

#### **NEW ISSUES/PROBLEMS.**

Cases of body shaming that left students feeling depressed and low in self confidence and self esteem were reported.

Cases of anxiety and depression leading to suicide attempts were on the rise this year.

There were cases of panic attacks as well.

Insensitivity of students towards class mates and eve teasing were also on the rise .

Sensitizing students towards respecting cultural differences among foreign students needs to be brought to their attention.



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

I recommend a talk for parents on “bridging the generation gap”, with stress on communication between parents and children to encourage a healthy interaction, and mutual respect that would lead to a more fulfilling relationship with closer bonds being established between parents and children, in an atmosphere conducive to the same. Attention needs to be drawn to the fact that children can fall prey to wrong and destructive influences when alienated and isolated by the family.

I strongly recommend students be given a talk by a doctor on sex education as I find that some of them have the wrong notions about sex and its related issues and most are embarrassed to ask questions on the same. A lot of students are sexually active and sexually promiscuous at a young age and need to be informed about the consequences. Emphasis should be laid on sexually transmitted diseases, teen pregnancies and the importance of practicing safe sex.

Students need to be motivated to attend classes and teachers need to go the extra mile to make the classroom and lectures receptive and interesting for students, keeping in mind their lack of interest and laidback attitude towards education.

Students should time & again be warned about the consequences of ragging and should be made aware of the existence of the “Anti Ragging Committee” to whom they could address their grievances.

I strongly recommend that a talk by an expert in the field of cyber crime be given, to educate students on the importance of being aware of the pros and cons of social networking sites . The consequences of internet dating, the dangers involved in chatting with strangers on the net as well as of uploading pictures and personal information which can be viewed by strangers , should be brought to their attention.

Students also need to be made aware that they can get help if they are victims of such situations and that these crimes are punishable by law .The importance of having a support group of family, friends, teachers and the counsellor should also be highlighted.

Teachers should be sensitive to the feelings of students. They need to weigh their words when speaking to a student as it is rude and improper to label students. When dealing with a problem, it would be fair if teachers spoke to the student in private. Students should be allowed to present their viewpoint and be given a fair hearing before conclusions are drawn.

Teachers need to be consistent in their behaviour and interaction with students. Teaching faculty should be warned that any information shared in the classroom which is beyond the syllabus, should not have a trace of personal or sexual overtones.

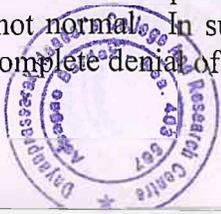
Teachers should maintain professional boundaries when it involves interacting with students. Meeting students outside the college campus even for academic reasons should be strictly avoided . There should be zero tolerance in cases of sexual abuse with faculty involved.

There have been a couple of cases of ‘panic attacks’ by students during presentations. I have counselled these students and together with the concerned teacher, we have worked to finding ways to bring down stress and create a conducive atmosphere for the presentations.

It is very important that teachers/mentors identify students showing signs of depression, encourage them to go for counselling, update the counsellor on the progress of the student and importantly, in the new academic year, alert the teacher of the next class the student is being promoted to, about the behaviour of the student so that close attention can be paid to the student and timely help can be given if required.

Follow ups between teachers / mentors and the counsellor on the progress of the student should be seriously adhered to.

Follow ups between teachers / mentors and parents are very important especially in cases of depression and behaviour that is not normal. In such extreme cases a psychiatrist intervention is sought. Most often parents are in complete denial of the fact that their child needs professional help.



Though the student has shown signs of behaviour that is not normal in the class and on campus, yet parents when questioned feign ignorance and deny the same. In such cases along with the concerned teacher, we had to inquire from close friends and classmates about the behaviour of the particular student.

Such feedback and information is important especially with regard to awakening parents to the reality and seriousness of the situation, as well as the fact that their child needs professional help.

The stigma attached to mental health issues is what causes parents to be in denial and shirk help.

I am grateful to some teachers / mentors for taking a keen interest in the well being of the students especially those students who were faring badly in studies or showing signs of emotional disturbance and depression. These students were encouraged to seek counselling.

Most often, teachers/ mentors try to counsel students, with good intentions no doubt, and when things don't work out, they are sent to me for counselling. It would be in the best interests of all concerned if teachers abide by what they do best, and left the counselling to me.

Audio Visual films on issues based on the need of the hour is an effective and interesting way of exposing and educating students to the issues that need our attention and should be encouraged.

A visit by a career counsellor is a necessity.

A talk on cyber crime by an expert in the field is essential.

These recommendations are made every year, based on the issues that are brought to my notice and are effectively addressed.

#### **OUTCOME:**

Parents have been more understanding and accommodating with regard to the choice of streams chosen by their children even if it went against their own choice.

I need to mention though, that much to my relief, there was a significant decline in cases of the above.

I conducted a workshop for students on anxiety, depression and suicide prevention.

It is heartening to see a rise in the number of faculty members availing counselling services this year.

Two mentors from the teaching faculty have been appointed for every class. They work in close proximity with the students helping them out with academic related problems. They are the first to notice if a student is not her/ his usual self or is going through stress related issues and encourage the students to seek help through counselling.

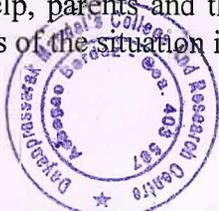
There is substantial rise in the number of students sent to me for counselling by teachers/ mentors.

Teachers /mentors are more alert now than ever to behavioural changes in their students.

There is a prompt feedback between the teachers/ mentors and the counsellor regarding behaviour changes in the student who is being counselled. This feedback is very important to the counsellor as it helps to track the progress of the student especially in the classroom.

Teachers/mentors have also been very helpful in going the extra mile to obtain background information on students with mental health issues through classmates and friends especially when the parents are ignorant or in complete denial of it.

Regarding cases of severe depression, prolonged anxiety or signs of schizophrenia that are brought to my attention and need medical help, parents and the concerned students are counselled on the issues that they face. The seriousness of the situation is explained to them. The importance of



getting professional help is made clear and they are advised to see a psychiatrist or a mental health professional.

The well being of the student is a group effort which links the parents, teachers and the counsellor. Progress takes place when all three work together with the student keeping his/ her well being in mind and under the reassurance of complete confidentiality.

I conducted a workshop with students on being alert to mental health issues among their classmates and sensitising them about the same. They were encouraged to look for signs which tell them that all is not well with their classmate and how they can help them get help in time .

I also touched upon the stigma associated with mental health and the difference between emotional well-being and mental health . How both are inter related and important for our well being.

Today, we have visiting faculty who address students on various issues, based on the need of the hour.

- a) A Medical Health Professional.
- b) A Cyber Crime Expert.
- c) Career Counsellor.

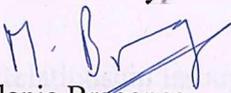
A team from the COOJ Mental Health Foundation conducted a workshop on Suicide Prevention for our students .

In college we have constituted various committees to address the issues of our students for their safety and well-being.

- a) A Disciplinary Committee.
- b) An Anti Ragging Committee.
- c) Women's Cell.
- d) Internal Complaints Committee.
- e) Grievance Cell.

There has been a notable change in the outlook and mindset of students towards counselling. They seem to be very comfortable with the concept of counselling and more open and receptive towards it. The fear of being seen in the counselling room is a thing of the past. My faith in the effectiveness of counselling is confirmed by the positive attitude of students towards it and by the growing numbers who seek it as a means to work through their stress, anxiety and emotional turmoil.

Yours Sincerely,

  
Melanie Braganca.  
College Counsellor.

