

Prav - The Mental Health Awareness Week

Prav - The mental health awareness week, organised by the cluster of Psychology, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), School of Business Studies and Social Sciences, Bannerghatta Road Campus aims to destigmatize the concept of mental health among college students and provide them a platform to discuss and improve their wellbeing. This week includes various activities, workshops and a panel discussion to provide students first-hand experience in taking a step to improve their mental health. The Psychology cluster aims to fit in activities and workshops in the students' free time, to both improve their psychological wellbeing, while making sure that their academic wellbeing remains unaffected. Following are the workshops that are planned for Prav 2020:

- Mental Health Advocacy
 - The activity was conducted with the aim to understand the current status of mental health awareness, different mediums that are currently being used to promote mental health awareness and introduce the participants to the initial steps and various plans that must be adopted to become a mental health advocate. The session, since it is a focus group discussion, had intentions of opening various horizons of discussions in order to understand as well as improve the above-mentioned aims within the participants. Additionally, the activity intended to introduce and discuss variously connected topics- Mental Health Bill, Mental Health Literacy and Problem Solving Strategies within the mental health sector; especially in the aspects of destigmatization and improvements.

- Creative Movement Therapy
 - The workshop was intended for the participants to have a therapeutic experience through different movements and reflecting upon the movements. It was intended to be a safe space and a non-judgemental environment so that people can be more free with their movements and thoughts. Few breaks were given to introspect about the movements. The workshop was enjoyed by the participants.
- Gender and Mental Health
 - The Gender and Mental Health workshop, by Dr. Meghna Mudaliar from the English cluster, focused, firstly, on various concepts within the field of gender and sexuality, and then on how individuals on these margins are often more prone to mental illness than cisgender or heterosexual individuals. The workshop was quite interactive and featured a number of advertisements that are being put out into mainstream media to include marginalised communities of all types, and reduce the crippling stigma faced by them.
- Reiki Healing Session
 - This workshop was meant to give an introduction to the science and philosophy behind the alternative healing technique of Reiki. The resourceperson spoke to the participants about chakras in our body, made them participate in a few breathing exercises and made students demonstrate reiki on themselves.
- Emotional Intelligence Workshop
 - The workshop provided a brand new way of looking at emotions through a biological yet Jungian perspective, where archetypical meanings of emotions can

be studied through neuroscience and neuroimaging. It caused the audience to ponder over their understanding of emotions and ask interesting questions regarding the relationship between emotions, the self and the external environment.

- Challenges faced by Youth - Mental Health and Wellbeing (Panel Discussion)
 - The panel discussion included a panelist each from the areas that the needs assessment conducted before Prav revealed a need for. Ms. Joanna Jowett from Muktha Foundation dealt with dating violence, Ms. Nitya from Heart It Out spoke about wellbeing and coping mechanisms, Ms. Annet Shaju spoke about academic and personal stress, Ms. Aarthi C Rajaratnam spoke about emotional regulation, and Ms. Shweta Sunil provided a student perspective. It was moderated by Ms. Pushpanjali. The panel discussion was very informative and provided useful insights regarding many issues related to mental health, especially dating violence, how to prioritise, maintaining work life balance, hustle culture etc. All of the panelists were very fluent in their speech and were able to express and articulate their opinions without much effort.

These workshops, along with several others, were meant to give a layperson a better idea about mental health and its all-pervasive reach in our lives, and aim to provide methods to improve wellbeing which can be incorporated into everyday life. The following activities are meant to further these aims and also incorporate elements of relaxation into the learning that students take away from them.

- Blindfolded Conversations

The participants provided their choice out of two kinds of blindfolded conversations that were conducted. The conversation preferences were either one-on-one conversations or group discussions. Ideated below are descriptions for each.

A. Blindfolded One-on-one Conversations (2 days, 40 participants per day)

Participants were paired up and seated across each other blindfolded. They were provided with leading questions in order to help steer their conversations which will last for a total of half an hour.

B. Blindfolded Group Conversation (2 days, 20 participants)

Participants were blindfolded and seated in a circle with a moderator. They took turns to talk about a few topics that have been decided upon. This way, the participants got various perspectives on the topic. Volunteers were on standby to assist, in case the conversations became uncomfortable or overbearing for any of the participants.

- UnMasked
 - Unmasked is a self-exploratory activity which allows people to identify their positive and inner qualities. This activity includes introspection into their life and thereby helps them to understand their positive and unique qualities. The aim is to deliver the idea that outer appearance is not all there is to a person; the inner qualities are what really build a person. In this activity each person was given a cut out mask from chart paper and they decorated it using art supplies. The outside depicted any negative experience they've faced with regard to their external appearance by using any colours or patterns of their wish after which they wrote about the same on the mask. Similarly, on the back side they depicted at

least one positive quality in them using any colours they find appropriate and then they wrote about it. After they completed this, everyone sat in a circle and shared one negative experience and their positive qualities.

- Theatre of Therapy

- Drama therapy is the intentional use of drama and/or theatre processes to achieve therapeutic goals. Drama therapy is an embodied practice that is active and experiential. This approach can provide the context for participants to tell their stories, set goals and solve problems, express feelings, or achieve catharsis. Through drama, the depth and breadth of inner experience can be actively explored and interpersonal relationship skills can be enhanced. There were 5 total activities, which consisted of 2 main activities. These focused on introducing participants to the concept of theatre therapy and sensitising them towards the same. Also, it acted as a medium for the participants to express and try to solve their personal problems through theatrical activities.

- CathARTsis

- CathARTsis allowed participants to openly express their emotions and go through catharsis, using art as a medium. Participants were not restricted to a single medium, but were instead allowed to draw, paint, sketch, dance, speak, sing, write, create origami, or even just share songs. The activity did not pressurize the participants to come up with original work, and just emphasized on catharsis through creation and performance.

- Snooze

- The activity intended to provide a platform for participants to relax and focus inwards through mindfulness meditation. The process of meditation and relaxation would serve as a break from the stress of daily life. Snooze was a necessary activity as it provided a break from the stress of everyday life and academic, social and internal pressures. It allowed the participants to relax and temporarily dissociate with their thoughts, so they could exist in the very moment. It also encouraged the participants to nap and catch up on some much-needed sleep.
- Corner of Comfort
 - The activity enabled the students to create a playlist that makes them feel at peace. While listening to their own created playlist, they engaged in art and express their emotions through it and connect with one's own present emotions and thoughts.

Several other activities that align with the aims of Prav have also been included, such as the promotional activities that were initially introduced through the Prav Carnival. Prav Carnival is intended to promote the mental health awareness week and aims to encourage students to take part in the events lined up for them. It aims to let students be aware of their mental health and wellness and suggests ways to take care of it. The Prav Carnival started off with full vigour on the third of February, and was held in the walkway of the campus, from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM. Multiple ideas intended to have a positive psychological impact on people were conceptualised into activities and put up on the walkway for the students of the campus to partake in. The theme of the carnival was overcoming problems using positive, creative yet mundane ways. Upbeat

music was played in accompaniment to elevate the mood of the people in the area. Students from the multiple disciplines spread across the campus came to interact with the activities. ***Silly Self Care*** utilised light-hearted stress-relieving activities using clay, paints, etc. to generally uplift the moods of the people by letting them take a break. Students could partake in painting Mandalas, which are ancient Hindu and Buddhist Tantric symbols associated with meditation. ***Stor(y)ed Voices*** was an activity in which people could choose and listen to stories regarding positivity, overcoming challenges, or accepting oneself and others. These true tales were narrated by the protagonists of the stories or by volunteers in their stead. The activity also had a jar filled with positive quotes written on small notes which people could take to uplift their moods. ***Wall of Semicolons*** was a large whiteboard where anybody could stick post-it notes, writing about something about facing and overcoming problems. Others could pick-up any notes which they believe positively impacted them and keep them with themselves. It was an anonymous method of being there for someone else, and some spoke about how they wished they could know who wrote the notes that impacted them. ***Wheel of Feelings*** was a huge wheel with different, categorised emotions. People were encouraged to mark whichever emotion they most resonated with at the moment. It allowed people to acknowledge their current affective state, and participants reported it heightening positive emotions. ***Time Capsule*** involved penning a letter that would be delivered to the writer themselves a year later. It allowed people to write down about their current situation so they could remember how they were a year ago. ***Postcards*** involved writing anonymous letters to others, which would be delivered the same day by volunteers. It encouraged the expression of hidden thoughts and feelings, and allowed people to spread positivity to the people around them. ***Tally Talks*** was an activity conducted by MACS,

where people could put tallies on a chart against problems they resonated with. They could also write down their personal experiences on notes and deposit them in a box, allowing them to realise their difficulties in the real world and share them anonymously. Contact numbers of MACS members were given against each issue, in case anybody needed someone who was willing to listen. People were also asked to write methods they have used to tackle these problems on an “Empower Yourself” board. The CAW wing of CAPS had set up a Psychometric Centre, where people could complete questionnaires regarding different aspects, such as emotional intelligence, stress, overall well-being, and level of aspiration. It was a way for people to understand themselves better, as the results would be emailed to the participants. Care was taken to conduct the tests properly, and the consent of the participants was taken before the administration of the test. Music being played in the background allowed people to enjoy the carnival with a jolly mood, and people kept breaking into dances to their favourite tunes. The carnival was attended by students of all disciplines, exemplifying the multidisciplinary nature of the campus while also showing the relevance of psychology in every single person’s life.