

Best Practice II

Title: Counselling Support

Goal: To empower students and staff to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. The benefits of counseling for college students include enhancement of their listening and social skills as well as empathy towards others.

Context: College students have to adapt to environments plagued by rapid change, ambiguity, uncertainty. They also have to cope with a myriad of personal and psychological problems that range from basic adjustment and developmental, academic and learning, and career concerns to clinical-level mental illness. Counseling concerns that are common in campuses include college life adjustment stress, anxiety, or depression relationship problems with roommates, friends, or family members difficulty with studying and concentrating drug or alcohol use eating problems/disorders largely due to self-esteem issue or peer pressure concerns about gender orientation and sex and many other issues that come from all directions in students' lives.

Within higher education, there exists general consensus that the role of personal and psychological counseling is to contribute to student development, adjustment, and learning

Practice: The Counselling Centre, Bharati College was set up in 2002. In fact, Bharati College was one of the pioneering colleges of Delhi University to have a Counselling Centre that was open on all working days. The Centre is supported by a team of teachers. It works with students and staff to provide free counselling, and to offer a containing and safe space in the service of all in College. Dr Rekha Sapra and Dr Sonali Jain have been associated with the Centre since its inception. In recent years, a number of students, some from violent and dysfunctional families, and others depressive, with a suicidal bent, have been coming to the Centre. Some had severe difficulties in interpersonal relationships, and felt comforted in a safe and containing space. Detailed records have been maintained for each case. The current Convenor is trained in psychodynamic psychotherapy, and has a certificate from Dr Sudhir Kakar, the eminent psychoanalyst and thinker. According to the norms of the discipline, counselling sessions are supervised by a professional analyst. Starting March 2017, all her sessions are under supervision. For each session, a process note, which comprises a verbatim account of the session, is made and kept as record for supervision.

For psychoanalytic counselling the Centre has been given an analytic couch by the College, so that counselling sessions are in the standard configuration. A couch is considered a must as a relaxed position is much better, for subconscious feelings and associations to surface.

Rules

The rules of the Centre are as follows:

- i) The Centre is available to all students, faculty and staff members of the College.
- ii) Sessions are of 45 minute duration, twice a week, by prior appointment.
- iii) Total confidentiality is assured.
- iv) All counselling is free.

During the Pandemic, a webinar series was organized by the counselling centre in association with the Department of Psychology. Psychologists, psychoanalysts, child psychologists and psychiatrists were invited to discuss various issues pertinent to maintain a positive outlook and mental wellbeing during these difficult times.

Evidence of Success: Empathy, trust and neutrality go a long way in containing emotional frailty. It must be mentioned that the Counselling centre has yielded results in enhancing the emotional health of quite a few over the years, thus enabling the individual to thrive in the college community. Over the years, it has succeeded in:

- 1) Providing a safe zone where the students can speak honestly
- 2) Offering students guidance and support through tough times
- 3) Helping them cope better with reality
- 4) Assisting them (and facilitating) positive behavior changes

Problem encountered and resources needed: Mental health is essential to a successful and fruitful college experience. Therefore, the College seeks financial and infrastructural help to expand the scope of the services of the Counselling Centre.

