



MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS IN ADOLESCENTS

Dr. Mallikarjun H. Krishnakar

UGC, Dr. S. Radhakrishna Post doctoral Fellow, Dept. of Psychology, Gulbarga University, Kalaburagi, Karnataka.

INTRODUCTION:

Mental health is a term used to describe how well the individual is adjusted to the demands and opportunities of life. People differ in their adjustment to the problems of life, some people are able to adjust well and derive more satisfaction in socially approved manner. They are 'normal' or mentally healthy people. On the other hand, some people cannot cope up with the demands of life and remain dissatisfied and mal-adjusted. They are abnormal or mentally unhealthy people. Mental health means the full and harmonious functioning of the whole personality. A mentally healthy person enjoys the harmony of the



internal with the external. It is the balance between the needs and environmental factors. So he can lead a fuller, happier, harmonious and effective life.

DEFINITIONS:

Mental health is the capacity of an individual to form harmonious adjustments to one's social and physical environments. Menninger (1945) defined mental health as the adjustment of human beings to the world and to each other with a maximum of effectiveness and happiness. It is the

ability to maintain an even temper, an alert intelligence, socially considerate behavior and a happy disposition. Mental health can be described as absence of symptoms of maladjustment, be they mild or severe. Mentally healthy person is free from all types of maladjustment (Klein, 1956). Jahoda and Marie (1958) has said that aspects of attitudes toward self, growth and development, self-actualization, integration of personality and mastery of the environment must be considered in judging whether a person is

mentally healthy or not.

Bhatia (1982) considers mental health as the ability to balance feelings, desires, ambitions and ideals in one's daily living. As part of one's overall health, mental and emotional health is a necessary condition to enable one to manage one's life successfully. Mental health is the emotional and spiritual resilience that allows one to enjoy life and to survive pain, suffering and disappointment.

A mentally healthy person possesses the following characteristics.

- Practical and realistic attitude towards one self.
- Psychologically secure
- Realistic perception of the environment and people.
- Flexibility
- Self realization

and productivity.

- Greater emotional control

So a mentally healthy personality is functioning effectively and free from emotional disturbances. He enjoys life and faces all difficulties of life with great courage. He is self-confident, self-respecting, and hopeful and has sound social relationships.

WHO IS AN ADOLESCENT?

Adolescence is the most important impressionable period in the life of an individual. It is the period of day dreams, of adventures of intense affections and striving of the heart. Adolescence is critical in attitudes, characteristics and behaviors established during this time, relate to those in the years ahead. Adolescence is a period of consolidating coping styles or characteristic ways of solving problems. During adolescence young people make the decisions that set patterns for the years that follow in work, loving relationships, friendship experiences, religious involvement and academic orientation. The real problems of the adolescents lie in the area of social, emotional, moral and economic maturity. So adolescence is a transitional period, dreaded period of unrealism, search for identity, period of intense emotionality and confused roles name adolescence a period of 'storm and stress'

College students from the cream of student population. Studies have shown that about 50% students suffer from health problems 15% of the students suffer from mental disorders, many more students may have emotional problems related to their family and college life and get reflected in their behaviors in the form of

- Poor memory
- Decline in academic performance
- Lack of confidence, inferiority feelings lack of initiative
- Absenteeism
- Being dull and withdrawn
- Poor attention/ concentration
- Subjective sadness, feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness
- Frequent complaints of ill health resulting in frequent medical consultations.
- Being argumentative/ truant / antisocial
- Aggressive and violent
- Not being punctual / inability to abide by rules.
- Drug and alcohol abuse.
- Deliberate self harm (suicidal attempts)
- Poor impulse control
- Strange and disorganized behaviors
- Dramatic and attention seeking behaviors.

TYPES OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS:

1. Depression

-
2. Anxiety
 3. Adjustment reaction
 4. Hysteria
 5. Somatisation (medically unexplained body pain)
 6. Drug and alcohol abuse
 7. Psychosomatic disorder
 8. Psychotic disorders
(Disorders 1-7 are more common than psychotic disorders)

1. DEPRESSION

Depression is a condition characterized by

- Sad mood and crying spells
- Lack of interest/ energy/ motivation
- Decreased attention/ concentration/motivation
- Lack of pleasure/inability to enjoy
- Disturbed sleep /appetite/ bowels/sexual functioning
- Thoughts of ending one's self or one's life.
- Vague bodily symptoms like pain , weakness, fatigue.

These condition can be transient or persistent depression in an individual ranges from mild to severe degree, sometimes the intensity can be less than mild degree. Such a condition is quite common in day today life of every one of us. This usually follows, life events like death: separation, financial loss, failure of love affairs etc. suicidal thought or ideas are common in depression and needs immediate attention. Depression is one of the important or concentration problems, alcohol and other substance abuse and suicide.

2. Anxiety;

It is condition characterized by:

- Subjective feeling of appreciation, discomfort and fear
- Restlessness
- Feeling of impending danger
- Palpitation
- Tremulousness
- Sweating & dryness of mouth
- Frequent need to pass urine
- Body pains like, headache, fatigue, weakness.

Anxiety is very common in young adolescents. It may be transient / concentration, discomfort in social situations and a general feeling of restlessness. Anxiety is normal reaction in a threatening situation, but persistence of such a state without any understandable threatening situation is abnormal i.e. unknown fear

3. Adjustment reaction:

Adjustment reaction is a state of subjective distress and emotional disturbances usually interfering with social functioning and performance and arising in the period of adaptation to a significant life change or to the consequences of a stressful life event like failure in examination, loss of a close friend or family member

Symptoms are:

- Depressed mood
- Anxiety
- Worrying
- Feeling of inability to cope/helplessness
- Dramatic and attention seeking behavior
- Outbursts of anger and violence, suicidal attempts
- Antisocial behavior

The onset is usually within one month of the occurrence of the stressful event or life change. It lasts for a short period of time only.

4. Hysteria:

Condition of psychogenic origin often temporarily related to traumatic events, insoluble and intolerable problems or disturbed relationships. This is characterized by sudden onset of bizarre movements of limbs, unresponsiveness, or attacks of possession. Such problems start and terminate dramatically.

5. Somatization (Medically unexplained body pain)

Characterized by persistent and distressing complaints of increased fatigue and exhaustion after minimal physical or mental effort. This is associated with muscular pains, headaches. Sleep disturbance, irritability and disturbed sleep are mild symptoms of anxiety or depression. Such phenomenon is seen in males who unnecessarily worry about masturbation or seminal loss. In females such symptoms occur on the background of white discharge per vaginum. Somatization is also a way of communicating one's distresses and draw the attention of others to get help.

6. Psychosomatic Disorder:

Long lasting emotional distress may lead to certain physical illnesses in vulnerable individuals. These are known as psychosomatic disorders, for example.

- Hyperacidity and peptic ulcers.
- Diarrheas and dysenteries (Colitis, irritable bowel syndrome)
- Asthma
- Arthritis (joint pains)

7. Drugs and Alcohol Abuse:

Drug abuse has far reached consequence on the quality of life of the present and also the future .it is no more an individual problem but has assumed the proportion of a major social and public health problem

In a recent study in Karnataka the statistics shows that 41.2% students are alcohol users compare to 33.7% only from general population 11.9% students are drug users only 7.5% from general population

Substance users have lower self esteem , self confident , self satisfaction ,self confidence ,assertiveness personal control and self efficacy then non user . Substance user are mor4e anxious, impulsive rebellious, impatient to acquire adult status and in need of more social approval than non user.

- Obesity
- Migraine Headache
- Menstrual Irregularities

8. Psychotic Disorder :

Characterised by onset of strange behavior like

- Suspicious
- Withdraw/withdrawal syndromes
- Increasing social isolation
- Hearing voice when there are none
- Feeling prosecuted
- Sudden excitement, over acting wandering aimlessly ,unprovoked
- Aggression
- Excessively cheerful and boastful
- Associated disturbance in sleep ,appetite and bowel- bladder functioning
- Sometime psychotic behavior can manifest as progressive academic decline and change in personality

Psychotic disorders may also occur due to alcohol ,ganja and other drug abuse .these may appear with following head injury . Brain fever and fits

Treatment for mental disorders:

1. Drugs: Antidepressant, anxiolytics and antipsychotic drugs are prescribed in selected moderate to severe cases. The drug has to be taken regularly under medical supervision. The duration of drug treatment is individually determined by the doctor.
2. Electro convulsive therapy is given in a few selected cases of severe depression and psychosis.
3. Individual and family counseling and guidance.
4. Healthy recreation and relaxation activities like, Yoga, Meditation, Sports, Music, fine arts and other creative activities.

Students who have these problems have to be identified and helped. Because of a low availability of mental health services in the country and also of stigma attached to psychiatric consultations, these students do not seek help and suffer in silence.

CONCLUSION:

Earlier the treatment, better is the outcome, one should not hesitate to consult the psychiatrist and take the help of counseling services to overcome the problem. The old beliefs that mental disorders are due to evil spirits, black magic, past bad deeds should not be entertained, with appropriate treatment, help, support and encouragement, youngsters with mental disorders do recover. They can continue their education. They can lead a normal and useful life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bhatia, B. D., 1982, Mental health in education. Advanced educational psychology, *sterling publishers pvt. Ltd.*
- Jahoda and Marie (1958). Current Concepts of Positive Mental Health. New York, Basic Books. pp. 45-49. Journal 8, 285-309.
- Klein, D. B. (1956). Mental Hygiene. Henry Holtand Co., New York.
- Menninger, K.A. (1945). Human mind. New York