

**Course Name: Adolescent Health and Well-being: A Holistic Approach**

**Professor Name: Dr. Parmeshwar Satpathy**

**Department Name: Community Medicine, Dr. B. C. Roy Multi-Speciality Medical Research Centre**

**Institute Name: IIT Kharagpur**

**Week: 01**

**Lecture: 05**

Lecture 05 - Basics of Adolescent Mental Health

Hello everyone. This is Dr. Parmeshwar Satpathy, Assistant Professor in the Department of Community Medicine at Dr. B. C. Roy Multispeciality Medical Research Centre, IIT Kharagpur.

As we move towards the end of week 1 of this course, I will be taking you through the basics of Adolescent mental health. Now, we will be covering a few concepts in this lecture.

Importance of mental health in Adolescents, mental health issues of adolescents, now what are the reasons for conflicts in adolescents, the factors affecting psychological health of Indian adolescents, what are the various warning signs as far as mental health is concerned among the adolescents, what is the role of parents as far as mental health in the adolescents is concerned, and what are various promotion and prevention methods used for mental health issues among the adolescents. Now, these are various keywords that I have used for this lecture; adolescent, mental health, suicide, depression, warning signs, substance abuse, and life skills.

Now, what is health per se? According to WHO, health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Now, mental I have highlighted over here. So, basically health is not complete without the mention of term mental health. So, mental health is an essential and integral component of health as such. Now, this mental health is not merely an absence of mental disorders or disabilities.

Then, what basically is mental health? Now, according to WHO, mental health is a state of well-being that involves being able to recognize own abilities as per the capability of the individual, coping with the normal stressors. Now, these stressors can be the pressure of exams, the pressure of relationships, it can be separation anxiety and so on. Now, it is also state of well-being that involves working productively for a cause and contributing to society. Now, why mental health in adolescents is important? Now, we have already seen the burden of mental health in adolescents in the previous lectures.

Now, India is home to the largest adolescent population in the world. India accounts for nearly one-fifth of the world's adolescent population. Now, this Adolescence period, this is a very unique, formative, and challenging phase for the adolescents. Now, in this second decade of life, where the adolescents, they are neither too young to be treated as kids, nor they are too old to be considered as adults. Now, the previous literature suggests that nearly 50% of the mental health issues in the adulthood, they start by the age of 14 years. Now, this mental health problems, they account for nearly 45% of the burden and dysfunctionalities in the adolescent population.

A sound mental health helps adolescents develop resilience to face future challenges in their lives. These adolescents, they have the creativity and potential to bring about changes. Now, these changes can be at the individual level, at the level of communities and at the level of rest of the world as such. Now, there is a plethora of changes in the Adolescents that is concerned. Now, these changes can be physical, they can be sexual changes, cognitive, social and emotional changes.

Now, what happens is these changes, they bring about anxiety not only in the adolescents but also seeing these changes, they could bring about anxiety in the parents alike. And amongst others, depression, suicide, substance abuse, these are of a great deal of significance as far as mental health in the adolescents is concerned. Now, adolescents with mental disorders, they are considered as a separate entity. This basically mental health is a stigma as such and the condition has not improved as such and hence these people, they are very reluctant to come out in open to seek help for these changes that they observe. Now, when we are talking about mental health issues, so what are the various mental health issues that the adolescents face? Now, these can be depressive disorders, these can be anxiety disorders, could be conduct disorders, Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and eating disorders.

Now, let us have a look at them one by one. Now, what basically are depressive disorders? Now, basically depressive disorders, these are a group of conditions, they involve the body, mood and thoughts. They interfere with the normal functioning of daily life. So, various symptoms of depressive disorders could be the individual is staying alone, they have basically lost interest in anything that they were enjoying previously. These could be any sports, any major hobbies, going out to movies, and so on.

Their basically sleep rhythm is disturbed and they have lost interest in anything and everything. So, these are few of the symptoms of depressive disorders. Few major examples of depressive disorders are major depressive disorders, that is major depression, dysthymia, premenstrual dysphoric disorders, psychotic depression and seasonal affective disorder. Moving on to anxiety disorders, now again these are a group of mental illnesses where these individuals, they have a constant and overwhelming anxiety and fear and this

anxiety makes them avoid social situations. These situations could be a family gathering, these situations could be going out for a movie, going out in various social gatherings.

Various examples of anxiety disorders are generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, special phobias such as agoraphobia where people are reluctant to go out to places where escape from which is difficult. Moving to conduct disorders, now these disorders, the individuals show a pattern of aggression towards others and this aggression can be at home, this can be seen in schools and with the peers as well, and in this disorder, there is serious violation of rules and social norms. Coming to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, again this is an ongoing pattern of inattention seen among the adolescents. Now, what this basically means is these adolescents basically have lot of difficulty staying on a particular task, they also have a lot of difficulty in sustaining focus in any task that is given to them. These individuals basically are hyperactive that is they show continuous movement mostly which is without any reason.

They are extremely agile, extremely restless and they are very fidgety. They are also very impulsive, they may act mostly without thinking or having difficulty with self-control. Coming to eating disorders, these have basically come out as a reason of the adolescents mainly trying to follow their stars, that is their actors, actresses and trying to go after that zero figure. So, this is basically a result of that and this leads to a lot of health problems in the future for these adolescents.

Coming to anorexia nervosa which is one of the eating disorders. Now, in this eating disorder, the individuals generally have an abnormally low body weight. These individuals have an intense fear of gaining weight. They severely restrict the amount of food that they eat and there is a distorted perception of weight just from seeing the zero figure of the actors, actresses, and trying to emulate them. So, that was anorexia nervosa.

Coming to another spectrum of eating disorder which is bulimia nervosa. Now, under this disorder, the individuals generally secretly binge eat and to get rid of those excess calories and to prevent weight gain they resort to various measures. These measures can be self-induced vomiting, these can be the use of laxatives, diuretics, and other weight loss supplements. So, that was bulimia nervosa and this was eating disorders in a nutshell. Basically, we would be discussing these disorders in the upcoming lectures in detail.

Now, coming to the estimates of number of mental disorders globally for girls and boys aged 10 to 14 and 15 to 19 according to UNICEF analysis based on the global burden of disease data. Now, what we can see in the age group of 10 to 14 nearly 80 million of the adolescents suffer from mental disorders with boys forming the major chunk of nearly 44 million and girls forming 34 million of the group. Now, in the age group of 15 to 19 we can see nearly 86 million of the adolescents suffering from any sort of mental disorders with boys again forming the major chunk of nearly 44 million and girls forming 41 million of the group. Next, moving on again to UNICEF analysis basically showing the prevalence of anxiety, depression and other mental disorders among adolescent boys and girls aged 10 to 19.

What we can observe is anxiety and depressive disorders form the major chunk of the prevalence that is more than 40% of the mental disorders followed by conduct disorders nearly 20% and attention deficit hyperactive disorder nearly 19.5%.

Moving on to the top 10 causes of death for adolescent boys and girls aged 15 to 19 as per the latest WHO estimates, what we can see is suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among boys aged 15 to 19 after road injury interpersonal violence and tuberculosis whereas in girls aged 15 to 19 suicide is the third leading cause of death after tuberculosis and maternal conditions. So, suicide is among the topmost causes of death as far as mental disorders is concerned. Now, coming to an important concept of why basically conflicts arise among adolescents. Now this basically being a formative phase where these adolescents are trying to find their individuality, their own identity and in doing so, they encounter few concepts such as freedom and responsibility. Now, basically the freedom being the individuals, the adolescents, they want that they are being given all sort of freedom for any sort of activity that they do, that they are in charge of anything and everything that they do.

But as far as responsibility is concerned, they are cognitively not that developed and which is why the parents also feel that they are not responsible enough to do the task given to them. So, basically this leads to a rise in conflict among the adolescents with their parents. Coming next to individuality and independence. Again, these individuals, they have this concept of individuality that they can do everything without need of anybody, any of their mentors and again this leads to a conflict of interest as far as the adolescents and their parents are concerned.

Next, coming to cooperation. So, basically what the adolescents do is they cooperate with their peers when they are going out for a movie, it can be going out for a gathering and in this cooperation, what comes out is the feeling of self-importance and this leads to conflicts. Next is authority. Now, what happens is these adolescents, they may exude authority over their fellow colleagues, over their peers, but when it comes to family members, it becomes a little difficult. So, hence the conflicts could arise over here.

Next is competition. Now, today in this fast-paced world, the competition with colleagues, with peers, it could be regarding examinations and this could be regarding any relationships and such other issues as well leading to conflict among adolescents with their peers, with their colleagues. So, that was the reason for the arise of conflicts among the adolescents. Now, what are the various factors affecting psychological health of Indian adolescents? Now, what we have seen in the previous one or two decades that largely there has been a mushrooming of nuclear families in India. With both the parents working, it becomes difficult for the parents to live with their previous generations leading to a rise in the nuclear families and what this does is, previously the social support that the adolescents would get from the joint families is missing. So, this leads to a poor social support.

Next, a major factor that is affecting psychological health of Indian adolescents is the use of

smart phone and social media. Now, you can see any adolescents that you come across, they are glued to their smart phones and they are glued to the social media. The feeling of getting approved from your fellow, from your colleagues, from your friends, from your seniors, juniors on social media, getting the likes, comments and all, this has become a huge mental health issue as far as adolescents are concerned.

Next, coming to increasing gap between aspirations and possible achievements. Now, this can be at the part of adolescents themselves. This can be from the pressure that the parents and the teachers have given to the adolescents and this is especially true as far as the 10th and 12th board exams are concerned where the students are burdened with an extremely huge syllabus and they have very little time and the aspirations of parents is always very high as far as Indian adolescents are concerned. Next, coming to substance abuse. Now, this is a very cool thing among the adolescents, seeing substance abuse. Now, I can remember a very close incident because this happened in one of the families of our urban health training centers. Now, what basically had happened was the family had come to us with problem of their child, basically who was a good student in class 10th, who was doing quite well and after passing class 10th had gone to his junior college.

So, what the parents reported was the student initially went quite well to the college, was very regular. What happened after 2 to 3 months of going to the junior college was the child had basically stopped going to the college, had stopped interacting and his sleep rhythm was also disturbed. So, basically they brought the child to us. We tried to counsel the boy, we tried to find out the reason why the kid was behaving in this manner. So, after 2 or 3 sessions with him, basically we came across that the child was basically approached by a few fellow colleagues, few friends of his to start cigarette smoking, which he had blatantly refused and on doing so, the friends of his basically tried to avoid him, tried to bully him and basically this happened even out of campus, in the campus.

So, all this had a deleterious effect on his health leading to the symptoms that we have seen. So, what substance abuse looked cool, this was a mental health burden for this kid. So, definitely this is a major psychological health burden as far as Indian adolescents are concerned. Now, it is important to know what are the various warning signs as far as adolescents are concerned. These adolescents may show excessive sleep that previously they were having a normal sleep rhythm and now they are having an excessive sleep.

They are having lack of interest, they are spending time alone, lack of interest in the activities that they were very readily doing earlier. These could be various hobbies, playing certain sports, going out to movies and other things. There could be decline in academic performance, like I had just given the example before, like the individual doing very well in the class tenth and then suddenly goes to a junior college and under the influence of peers, under the influence of certain relationships, the academic performance might go down. When there is an unexplained weight loss, again that is the thing that should be pondered and it should be thoroughly discussed with the parents and if at all the solution is not got, a proper professional help must be sought. Another warning signs could be the child getting

irritable easily, could get angry and other behaviour problems might surface.

There could be mood changes, worries and fears among the adolescents, could be the surfacing of suicidal ideation or self-harm and there could be unexplained physical symptoms like backache, stomach ache and other things. So, these were few warning signs as far as adolescent health is concerned. Now, what parents should do when they come across any of the mental health issues in the adolescents? Now, this formative phase in adolescents, they have to be handled very delicately. It is important that the parents respect the opinion of the adolescents. It is important to respect their need for privacy, their need for their own identity.

It is important to have a good healthy communication with the adolescents. It is rightly said that the healthy family and social times must be encouraged. Now, what we have seen with the advent of the western culture into the Indian society, what we used to see earlier was an Indian family used to sit down at the dinner table and they used to talk about what happened in the whole day. But nowadays what you see is the parents glued to their smartphones, the kids glued to their gaming zones or their other gaming apps in the smartphone. So, this hampers the happy social times with the family.

So, it is important to have a healthy family, a good communication. Showing interest, love, affection and care. Though the adolescents are willing here to get their own identity, they also need love and affection. So, this has to be kept in mind by the parents. The parents need to praise the achievements of their kids when warranted and they should be encouraged to talk about feelings and emotions because parents are the first mentors.

So, when there is an issue, the children should feel free to talk about their feelings and emotions and if the issue is not resolved from the parents, from the teachers, definitely professional help must be sought. Now, coming to various promotion and prevention of mental health issues as far as adolescents are concerned. The first and foremost being the children, the adolescents must have healthy sleep patterns. Now, again as far as the western culture has set in, the Indian societies mostly they go to bed very late and they have late dinners owing to the surfacing of OTT platforms, owing to the use of smartphones at night and such other things. So, important to have 8 hours of daily sleep for the adolescents.

It is important to have a regular exercise, minimum 5 days a week for the adolescents to have a sound mental health. Now, it is important that the parents do not solve the problems for the adolescents. It is important that the adolescents learn themselves from coping and solving the problems themselves. It is important that the adolescents learn good interpersonal skills. It is important that they learn to manage emotions and this they learn mostly from their parents.

So, it is important that the parents show restraint. It is important that the parents manage their own emotions in front of their adolescents. So, that is what the adolescents will

emulate. It is important to have a supportive family which supports the adolescents in their thick and thin and if there is an issue, they sort it out themselves. They talk among with the adolescent and the issue if it is not solved with the parents and definitely professional health must be sought.

Next, coming to life skills education. Now, life skills education, imparting them is an important thing here because it is very formative years of life where such life skills given to them, it holds them in good state as far as their work, family life balance and other relationships are concerned. So, coming to the take home message from this presentation. So, basically adolescence, this is a very delicate phase, a unique, formative, and challenging phase. The anxiety and depression disorders are more prevalent among the adolescents with suicide forming a major chunk as far as death among the adolescents is concerned. It is important to identify various warning signs as far as mental health is concerned among the adolescents.

The various measures for promoting and preventing mental health issues like having a proper sleep, regular exercise, having a good family time, these all must be given due consideration and seeking professional help, breaking all the taboos and barriers and consulting the right professionals for any mental health issues that is the need of the hour. So, these are few of my references. Thank you so much.