

## National Education Policy 2020 and Mental Health

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### Abstract:

Mental health refers to the emotional, psychological and social well-being of an individual, and it is just as important as physical health. Mental health care and its management have become increasingly important in contemporary times. With the prevalence of mental health disorders on the rise, it is crucial that individuals receive adequate support and treatment to manage their mental health.

**Keyword:** National Education Policy, Mental health, Curriculum, Environment.

### Introduction

The National Education Policy 2020 of India recognizes the importance of mental health in the overall well-being and development of students and emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to education that includes attention to mental health. The policy states that mental health and emotional well-being are critical components of holistic development, and schools should ensure that they are integrated into the curriculum. *“The development of capacities that promote student wellness such as fitness, good health, psycho-social well-being and sound ethical grounding are also critical for high-quality learning”* (NEP-2020).

The policy emphasizes on *“basic training in health, including preventive health, mental health, good nutrition, personal and public hygiene, disaster response and first-aid will also be included in the curriculum, as well as scientific explanations of the detrimental and damaging effects of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs”* (NEP-2020); the need for early identification and intervention for mental health issues in students. It also stresses the importance of promoting positive mental health practices and creating a safe and supportive school environment that encourages students to seek help when needed.

The policy recommends that *“the nutrition and health (including mental health) of children will be addressed, through healthy meals and the introduction of well-trained social workers, counsellors, and community involvement into the schooling system”* (NEP-2020). Schools should provide access to mental health professionals, including counsellors and psychologists, and ensure that they are trained to provide effective support to students. Schools should also develop and implement mental health promotion programs, including awareness campaigns and mental health literacy programs for students, teachers, and parents.

The policy further emphasizes the need for collaboration between schools and other stakeholders, including parents, community organizations, and healthcare providers, to address mental health issues effectively. Some of the key provisions related to mental health in the NEP 2020 are:

- **Awareness and sensitization:** The policy emphasizes the need to create awareness about mental health among students, teachers, and parents. It also calls for sensitization programs to address stigma and discrimination associated with mental health. *“Critical*

life skills (including financial literacy, digital literacy, commercial skills, health care and awareness, child care and education, and family welfare”. (NEP-2020)

- **Counselling services:** The policy recommends the establishment of counselling services in all educational institutions to provide students with emotional support and guidance. *“In every education institution, there shall be counselling systems for handling stress and emotional adjustments” (NEP-2020)*
- **Mental health curriculum:** The policy advocates for the inclusion of mental health education in the school curriculum to promote mental health literacy among students. *“Health checkups and growth monitoring that are available in the Anganwadi system shall also be made available to Preparatory Class students of Anganwadi as well as of primary schools.” “All school children shall undergo regular health check-ups especially for 100% immunization in schools and health cards will be issued to monitor the same”.* (NEP-2020)
- **Support for special needs students:** The policy recognizes the specific mental health needs of children with special needs and calls for the provision of appropriate support and accommodations.
- **Capacity building:** The policy emphasizes the need for capacity building of teachers and other educational personnel to address mental health issues in students. *“Basic training in health, including preventive health, mental health, good nutrition, personal and public hygiene, disaster response and first-aid will also be included in the curriculum, as well as scientific explanations of the detrimental and damaging effects of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs”*(NEP-2020)

Overall, the National Education Policy 2020 recognizes the critical importance of mental health in the education system and emphasizes the need for outlines a comprehensive approach to promoting positive mental health practices and addressing mental health needs and issues of all students.

### **Mental Health Care and Its Management**

Mental health care and its management in contemporary times have come a long way, but there is still a long way to go. One of the most significant advancements in mental health care has been the shift towards a more holistic approach to treatment. This approach recognizes that mental health disorders are complex and multifaceted, and that treatment should take into account not only the symptoms of the disorder but also the individual's social, cultural, and environmental context.

In the past, mental health issues were often stigmatized and misunderstood, and people with mental health issues were often ostracized and left to suffer alone. However, in recent times, there has been a significant shift in attitudes towards mental health, and people are now more aware of the importance of seeking help for mental health issues.

In terms of management, there has been a shift towards a recovery-oriented approach, which focuses on empowering individuals to take an active role in their own mental health care and supporting them in achieving their goals and aspirations.

Another important development in mental health care is the increasing use of technology to provide access to mental health services. Teletherapy, for example, allows

individuals to access mental health care from the comfort of their own homes, making it more accessible and convenient for those who may have difficulty accessing traditional in-person services.

There has also been a growing emphasis on early intervention and prevention of mental health disorders. This includes efforts to reduce stigma and increase awareness about mental health, as well as the development of programs and interventions to support individuals at risk of developing mental health problems.

There are many different approaches to mental health care and management in contemporary times, and they include:

- **Medication:** Medication is often used to manage mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder. Medication can help to stabilize a person's mood and alleviate symptoms.
- **Therapy:** Therapy is another common approach to mental health care and management. Different types of therapy, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), talk therapy, and family therapy, can help individuals learn coping skills and manage their symptoms.
- **Lifestyle changes:** Lifestyle changes, such as exercise, meditation, and healthy eating, can also help to manage mental health conditions. These changes can help to reduce stress and improve overall well-being.
- **Support groups:** Support groups are another way to manage mental health conditions. These groups provide a safe and supportive environment where people can share their experiences and offer each other encouragement and support.
- **Digital mental health care:** With the advancement of technology, there has been an increase in digital mental health care, such as teletherapy and mental health apps. These resources can provide convenient and accessible care for those who may not have access to traditional in-person care.

Overall, the field of mental health care and its management continues to evolve and adapt to meet the changing needs of individuals and society as a whole. As our understanding of mental health disorders and their underlying causes continues to grow, we can expect to see further advancements in the diagnosis, treatment, and management of mental health issues in the future.

In conclusion, mental health care and its management in contemporary times have come a long way, but there is still much work to be done. It is essential to continue to raise awareness about the importance of mental health and to provide access to care for those who need it.

### **Need of a Curriculum and Interventions**

Developing self-awareness, mindfulness, critical thinking, and life skills to deal with stress is essential for the holistic development of children. A curriculum that focuses on these aspects can help children become mentally resilient, emotionally happy, and better equipped to deal with life's challenges.

There is a growing need for a curriculum that focuses on developing self-awareness, mindfulness, critical thinking, and life skills for children to deal with stress and build mental

resilience. Such a curriculum could have several benefits for children, including improved emotional regulation, reduced stress levels, increased focus, and better decision-making skills. Some reasons why such a curriculum is needed:

- **Promotes Mental Health:** Mental health is essential for overall well-being, and a curriculum that helps children develop self-awareness, mindfulness, and critical thinking can contribute to positive mental health outcomes. By teaching children how to deal with stress and regulate their emotions, they can become more resilient and less prone to mental health problems.
- **Enhances Academic Performance:** A curriculum that emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, and life skills can also have a positive impact on academic performance. Children who are taught how to think critically and apply life skills to their studies are better equipped to learn and retain information.
- **Prepares Children for Real-Life Challenges:** Life is full of challenges, and a curriculum that focuses on developing life skills can help children prepare for real-life situations. By teaching children how to manage their emotions, communicate effectively, and solve problems, they will be better equipped to handle the challenges they encounter throughout their lives.
- **Promotes Social and Emotional Learning:** Social and emotional learning is critical for the development of children. A curriculum that focuses on self-awareness, mindfulness, and critical thinking can help children develop empathy, social skills, and positive relationships with others. Some potential components that could be included in such a curriculum:
  - **Mindfulness practices:** Children can be taught mindfulness techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, and body scans, which can help them, develop greater self-awareness and emotional regulation.
  - **Critical thinking skills:** Children can be taught how to evaluate information, analyze situations, and make informed decisions, which can help them deal with stress and challenges more effectively.
  - **Life skills training:** Children can be taught skills such as problem-solving, communication, and time management, which can help them manage stress and build resilience.
  - **Emotional regulation:** Children can be taught how to identify and regulate their emotions, including techniques for managing anxiety, anger, and sadness.
  - **Physical activity:** Physical activity has been shown to have numerous benefits for mental health, including reducing stress levels and improving mood. A curriculum that includes regular physical activity can help children build resilience and develop healthy habits.

In conclusion, a curriculum that focuses on developing self-awareness, mindfulness, critical thinking, and life skills can help children develop the tools they need for promoting mental health, enhancing academic performance, preparedness for real-life challenges, promoting social and emotional learning, well-being and for overall holistic development to deal with stress and build mental resilience. Teaching these skills at a young age is essential to develop healthy habits that will serve them well throughout their lives.

## **Ayushman Bharat School Health and Wellness Programme**

Ayushman Bharat School Health and Wellness Programme is an initiative launched by the Government of India to address the health and wellness needs of school-going children. The program aims to detect and prevent health issues at an early stage and provide comprehensive healthcare services, including preventive, promotive, and curative aspects of healthcare, to children in government and government-aided schools. The program covers children from the age of 6 to 18 years.

Under this programme, various health and wellness services are provided to children, such as regular health screening, check-ups, eye and dental check-ups, deworming etc. The programme aim to promote healthy habits and lifestyle, health and nutrition education, and promotion of physical activities.

Mental health is an essential and integral component of the Ayushman Bharat School Health and Wellness Programme. The program recognizes the importance of mental health in overall wellbeing and has provisions for addressing mental health needs and issues of school-going children such as stress, anxiety, depression, and behavioural problems. The program includes activities that promote mental well-being, such as yoga and meditation, and provides support and counselling services to children who need it or for children who may be experiencing mental health problems.

The program also focuses on raising awareness about mental health and reducing the stigma associated with mental health. It aims to create a supportive environment for children with mental health problems and provides them with the necessary support and resources to manage their condition.

One of the key components of the Ayushman Bharat School Health and Wellness Programme is the promotion and development of self-awareness, mindfulness, critical thinking, and life skills among children.

These skills are crucial for developing mental resilience and emotional well-being to be emotionally happy, and can help children to deal with stress and real life challenges more effectively.

Self-awareness is an ability that helps children to understand and recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and behaviours. It enables them to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and work on improving themselves. It is a critical skill for developing emotional intelligence and empathy, and can help children build stronger relationships with others.

Mindfulness is a practice of being present and fully engaged in the current moment and focus on the task at hand, without judgment or distraction. It can help children to improve ability to stay calm and focused, even in challenging situations and increase their focus, reduce anxiety, and manage stress.

Critical thinking is the ability to analyse and evaluate information, and to make informed decisions based on evidence and logic. It is an essential skill for problem-solving and decision making, and can help children develop a growth mind-set and a sense of empowerment. It helps children become independent learners and problem solvers.

Life skills refer to a range of abilities that enable individuals to cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Life skills include communication, decision-making, problem-

solving, interpersonal skills, creativity, and emotional regulation. These skills help children navigate the complexities of life and build positive relationships with others. By developing these skills, children can become more confident and self-reliant, and better equipped to handle stress and adversity.

The Ayushman Bharat School Health and Wellness Programme aims to provide children with opportunities to develop these skills through various activities such as mindfulness case studies, group discussions, role-play, and other experiential learning activities. The program also provides training to teachers and peer educators to support children in their development.

The Ayushman Bharat School Health and Wellness Programme aim to provide comprehensive healthcare services to school-going children, including mental health support and services. It is an important essential initiative to promote the overall health and well-being of school-going children in India by focusing on the development of self-awareness, mindfulness, critical thinking, and life skills; the program help children to deal with stress, be mentally resilient by building the resilience, and be emotionally happy through emotional intelligence needed to lead happy and fulfilling lives.

### **Summary**

The National Education Policy 2020 aims to provide equitable and inclusive education to all learners in India. While the policy focuses on various aspects of education, it recognizes the importance of mental health and well-being of learners. In this regard, the policy emphasizes the need for integrating mental health education and services into the education system. It calls for the integration of mental health education into the school curriculum, which will help learners understand the importance of mental health, recognize the signs of mental health problems, and seek help when needed.

The management of mental health problems requires a multi-disciplinary approach that involves various stakeholders, including mental health professionals, educators, parents, and policymakers. In the education system, teachers and school staff can play a crucial role in identifying mental health problems early and referring learners to appropriate services.

In addition to integrating mental health education into the curriculum, the policy emphasizes the need for providing mental health services in schools. This includes providing counselling services to learners who may be experiencing mental health problems and creating a supportive and inclusive school environment that promotes the well-being of all learners.

The policy also recognizes the need for interventions that address the mental health needs of learners from marginalized and vulnerable communities. These learners may face additional challenges related to their mental health due to factors such as poverty, discrimination, and social exclusion. It is essential to provide them with targeted interventions that address their specific needs and promote their mental health and well-being.

In conclusion, the National Education Policy 2020 recognizes the importance of mental health education and services in schools. It emphasizes the need for integrating mental health education into the curriculum and providing mental health services in schools. By providing learners with the necessary support and care, we can promote their mental health and well-being and ensure that they have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

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