
MENTAL HEALTH: A MAJOR PREDICTOR OF ADJUSTMENT AMONGST ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

Mental health is a dynamic functioning of the whole organism. It brings a harmony of movement in the organism to achieve an end in completeness and fulfillment. Adjustment may be defined as the process by means of which the individual attempts to maintain physiological and psychological equilibrium. The individual must adjust to his physical and social environment in order to live happily and meaningfully which is possible only if an individual is mentally healthy. For safeguarding the mental health one has to remain alert from the very childhood, because the habits formed during this period, vitally affect the future life. In this context great responsibility lies on the elders of the family and the teachers. Psychologists have laid down certain programs which are to be arranged and organized in the schools, so that proper mental health of the adolescents may be developed.

Parents at home, and teachers in school, should arrange such activities which give children, the opportunities to express their feeling and emotions. For protecting mental health and adjustment, it is necessary to make a scientific study of all the problems of an adolescent. Nowadays apart from these traditional methods and approaches, new technologies are also been used quite frequently. Adolescence is the most crucial period of life so every care should be taken to keep it healthy and happy not only physically but most important mentally too. As it is rightly quoted by Noam Shpancer, "Mental health...is not a destination, but a process. It's about how you drive, not where you're going."

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Introduction

The main aim of an individual is to establish adjustment with the changes that take place in his environment. He can achieve his goal only when he possesses an integrated and balanced personality. Each individual solves his problems according to his own ways. It does not matter how resourceful he is in solving his own problems, the circumstances of life inevitably involve stress. Our motives of our

life are not always easily satisfied, obstacles must be overcome. He will maintain his adjustment if he has sound mind and sound philosophy of life. There is a branch of science known as mental hygiene which deals with mental health of the individuals. Prof. W. Dill is considered as the father of mental hygiene. A person, who suffers with some adjustment problems and is unable to cope with them, develops some ailments. These are caused due to failure of their solutions and he fails to adjust himself with the situation and the requirement of the environment. Therefore the modern psychologists have made good deal of attempts in this direction. There are some characteristics of maintaining good mental health. The persons having good mental health is indicated with having qualities like happiness, health (physical, mental and spiritual) and optimistic.

Meaning of Mental Health

‘Mental health is a state of well-being in which the person realizes his or her abilities, can work efficiently and can compete with normal stresses in the life.’ (WHO). Hadfield considers that, “In general, we may say that mental health is the full harmonious functioning of the whole personality.” In us there are various urges, impulses, drives, interests, attitudes, etc, some of which are in born while some are acquired. When these urges are allowed to function harmoniously in coordination with each other and getting full expression, we have a personality which we call as wholesome and which is essential for healthy mental life. However, the co-ordination of these potentialities is possible only when they are directed towards a common goal. Hadfield has suggested three requirements for mental health viz; i) full expression, ii) harmonization, and iii) common goal. On the basis of this we can say that, an individual whose all potentialities whether innate or acquired are fully developed and harmonized with one another by being directed towards a common end, aim or purpose is said to be a mentally healthy person. Mental health is thus a dynamic functioning of the whole organism.

It brings a harmony of movement in the organism to achieve an end in completeness and fulfillment. There are many notions regarding the concept of mentally healthy person. By mentally healthy person, people usually mean a person who has biological efficiency or is able to carry on nicely in society or is of good morale. There are persons who are efficient and in every sense may appear successful person in life yet these persons may not always be mentally healthy in the sense that they may be unhappy, worried and troubled often it has been seen that such people develop neurosis. On the other hand there are some people who work, utilizing all their energies and power in pursuit of some goals and ends, their will power is strong and they pursue their goal with confidence. Such persons are mentally healthy and since their will is strong, they are efficient in their work. English and English defined, “Mental Health is a

relatively enduring state where in the person who is well adjusted, has a zest for living, and attaining self-realization. It is a positive state and not mere absence of mental disorder.”

Adjustment of the Adolescents

Adjustment in psychology like adaptation in Biology, refers to an individual's relationship with the environment – the way he attempts to maintain harmony between his own drives, desires and the demands or restraints of his environment. It may be defined as the process by means of which the individual attempts to maintain physiological and psychological equilibrium; more, adjustment refers to behavior directed towards tension reduction. Implied in this definition is, a state of harmonious relationship existing between the individual and his environment so that adjustment is a matter of the interaction between the capacities of the individual and the demands of his environment. The individual must adjust to his physical and social environment in order to live happily and meaningfully.

Characteristics of mentally Healthy Individual

- A mentally healthy individual has an effective adjustment with the environment, an insight and understanding of psychological needs. He is capable to evaluate his own behavior, limitations and shortcomings.
- He has a sense of personal worth and self-esteem.
- He not only cares of his own needs, but has an understanding of others needs and problems.
- He is capable of facing his challenges in life rationally and objectively.
- He is capable to tolerate frustration, stress and anxiety in his life.
- He has social and emotional maturity in his behavior.
- He is very clear in his thinking and constructive in solving his daily problems and making his own decisions.
- He has his own philosophy of life which guides him in setting goals and finding purpose of his life.

Apart from the above, Hurlock has also stated the following characteristics of a well-adjusted mentally healthy person:

- Realistic goals
- Acceptance and responsibility
- Expression of appropriate emotions
- Ability to relate to others.

Adjustments and mal- adjustments

An individual's activity in a life situation never involves a single mode of operation unaccompanied by or uninfluenced by any other type of mental operation. The individual functions as a unit – thinking, feeling, striving, simultaneously making use of and being influenced by a varieties of abilities and characteristics both physical and mental, both learned and unlearned, which constitute his total personality. An individual has many desires. Some of them are in harmony with reality. Some are incapable of being attained. Here the individual is faced with the harmonization of them with reality. Here, if he is able to do so, he gets well-adjusted to the life situations. If he fails to do so, mental conflict develops. All of us have several desires, which are in conflict with each other, either because the desired goals are themselves in contradictory or because all cannot be desired at the same time. A child may be hungry at meal time, yet may wish to continue to play out-door. A student may desire to see a movies but at the same time and has to study for the examination. The majority of individuals acquire more or less effective technique for dealing with more conflict situations, but there are small proportion of individuals who adopt as their characteristic mode of response ineffective or definitely undesirable behavior. Those who fail to resolve the conflicts adequately are mal-adjusted individuals.

Factors having adverse effect on Mental Health

It has been proved that personality of the child develops according to the environment which he gets in his school, at home and in the society in which he lives. If the environment is good, the mental health of the child would also be good, but if the environment is poor, it will ruin the mental health of the children.

Following are the factors that have an adverse effect on the mental health of the children:

- **Poverty**

Poverty of the family influences the mental health of the child in adverse manner. This may result in negative personality depicting aggressive behavior, developing a feeling of inferiority complex, feeling of insecurity and so on.

- **Parental hatred**

If the parents don't treat their children affectionately and express indifferent behavior, they feel rejected which has a negative effect on their personality. They become revengeful and start revolting against their parents and teachers. They give up all hopes of doing something good and become delinquent.

- Over protection

Too much of love and care from the parents, adversely affects the child's personality. Such an attitude of the parents leads the child towards:

- Poor development of self-confidence
- Unable to face challenges of life
- Unable to take initiatives
- Low achievement and motivation
- Feeling of insecurity
- Pessimistic thinking.

- Parents Partiality

This may result into negative feelings like- Jealousy, Rivalry, Hatred, Biasedness, Poor sibling relationship, Quarrelsome and Very high Morals.

- Ideals of the Parents

Ideals are ideals which do not match with the reality. This creates mental conflict which ruins their mental health. They are not able to solve various problems of their life.

- Competition in the School

Examination system leads to too much of competition in the schools which adversely affects the mental health of the children. Students with poor performance get discouraged and develop inferiority complex. Successful students on the other hand develop a feeling of superiority. This competitive spirit develops self-centered attitude among children which is harmful for the society as well.

- Unsatisfactory Curriculum

It has been observed that curriculum in the school does not fulfill the interests, desires and needs of the students which results in negative effect on their mental health.

- Strict discipline in school and at Home

Strict disciplinarian teachers and parents may spoil the mental health of the children giving rise to negative feelings like frustration, tension, and anxiety. Teachers and parents are the role models for them; they should act in the manner, which they expect from them.

Role of Parents in Mental Health and adjustment of Adolescents

For safeguarding the mental health one has to remain alert from the very childhood, because the habits formed during this period, vitally affect the future life. In this context great responsibility lies on the elders of the family. The adjustment of the adolescent during his childhood depends upon the relations with his parents because he comes in their contact for almost all his needs. Therefore the mental health and adjustment of an adolescent depends on parent's capacity to understand his problems. The most important need of an adolescent is affection from his parents and others. He wants everyone to love him. If his desires remain unfulfilled, a conflict may arise in him, making him depressed and mal-adjusted. It is difficult to lay down code of conduct for adolescents. It is difficult to say when they should be loved and when punished. One may admit that sometimes punishment is necessary in building the adolescent's character. Excess of everything is bad.

The affection of the parents is very important in the development of the adolescent's personality, but if the parents cross the limit in this respect and dance to every tune of the child, it may result in ill mental health of the child and his emotional development will slow down. In this way by paying proper attention to the adolescent's emotional development, we may help him in getting a healthy mental growth and he will not face difficulty in making adjustments in his future life.

For the proper development of an adolescent's mental health it is necessary that he enjoys the freedom of placing his problems and difficulties before his parents. Having this freedom, the adolescent will be able to overcome his difficulties resulting in a better adjustment in real life situations. The parents should bear in mind that the child is not a super human being. He has limited abilities and powers. He may commit mistakes like other human beings. So the parents should not get disturbed or annoyed by their child's ordinary mistakes and give serious sermons to them without realizing that the child is unable to understand moral principles at this age. In such a situation, there are chances of the child, going astray. He may face many difficulties in his adjustment. For proper adjustment in the environment, an adolescent should always be kept busy in some good work. It is very necessary for him to take part in some social activities from time to time to satisfy his un-satiated desires automatically. An adolescent who always contemplates over his own feelings, comes nearer to realities by participating in social activities and gradually becomes well-adjusted.

Strategies for development of positive Mental Health and Adjustment

Psychologists have laid down certain programs which are to be arranged and organized in the schools, so that proper mental health of the adolescents may be developed. Parents at home, and teachers in school, should arrange such activities which give children, the opportunities to express their feeling and emotions.

The following activities can be arranged:

- **Play, games, and recreation:**
Game, play and recreation brings about proper development of the personality and attitude of team work in the adolescents. Ample opportunities of games and recreation should be provided keeping in mind their stage of development. Playing has a cathartic value, i.e, the adolescents get an opportunity to express their emotions and keep themselves free from physical and mental deformities.
- **Loving atmosphere in the school and home:**
Parents and teachers should provide a loving and congenial atmosphere both in school and at home. It should also be kept in mind that, too much love and too much strictness is harmful for the child's personality.
- **Freedom and Responsibility:**
The adolescents should be given full freedom to take part in games, social functions, and co-curricular activities, so that they may learn to realize their utility as well as importance of responsibility.
- **Self-confidence and self-control:**
The adolescents should be made to learn the ideals which may teach them not to lose their balance when faced with life's challenges which may bring about excitement. Too much expression of emotional excitement is the symbol of poor mental health.
- **Psychiatric guidance:**
It is necessary to have an availability of psychiatric centers to cure and remove the complexes, mental conflicts, anxieties and tensions of the adolescent students which may develop various mental ailments.
- **Education and Intelligence:**
Education in the school should be given according to intelligence of the children. Individual differences should be considered.
- **Proper care of Physical Health:**

Every student should be properly cared for his physical health. The teacher and parents should give ample opportunities for physical exercise and games.

- **Formation of Good Habits:**

Parents and teachers should strive hard in formation of good habits like co-operation with others, respect to elders, punctuality etc.

In a Nutshell..

“Mental health...is not a destination, but a process. It’s about how you drive, not where you’re going.” – **Noam Shpancer**. Throughout his life the individual has to adjust to the demands of his external environment as well as to those of his physiological and psychological make-up. Every experience that the adolescent undergoes affects his adjustment in one way or the other.

The adequacy of adjustment which the adolescent makes depends on considerable measure upon the severity of the adjustment problems with which he is faced. Many a significant change have taken place in the school during the last decades, but probably none is of greater significance than the increased concern over the personal and social adjustment of the child. The primary responsibility of the child’s adjustment lies with his parents who set the basic pattern of adjustment through the security they provide him, particularly in his early years. For protecting mental health and adjustment during adolescence it is necessary to make a scientific study of all his problems.

Many problems get automatically solved when studied scientifically. By scientific study it means a proper diagnosis and treatment of a problem after its thorough study. Some traditional methods and approaches are quite common in helping people with mental health problems. These include, medication, counseling, cognitive behavioural therapy, exercise and a health diet. Nowadays apart from these traditional methods and approaches, new technologies are also been used quite frequently. Adolescence is the most crucial period of life so every care should be taken to keep it healthy and happy not only physically but most important mentally too. As it is rightly quoted by Noam Shpancer, “Mental health...is not a destination, but a process. It’s about how you drive, not where you’re going.”

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