

J. N Heredia Centre for Counselling: End of Year Report 2018-2019

In the months of June and July 2018, the counsellor introduced herself to all students and staff at the college by speaking at the orientation programs for the new batch of students for each course and paying visits to every second year and third year class for each course. The purpose of this exercise was to familiarise staff and students with the counselling centre and its activities: the services it provides and the ways in which these services can be accessed by the students. Additionally, suggestions were taken from students about topics they would like covered as part of group sessions to be able to better plan group interventions and understand the issues that students are dealing with. These rounds proved to be very effective and acted as an ice-breaker between the counsellor and students seeking counselling while giving an idea of what to focus on.

Between June 2018 and April 2019, 160 individual sessions were conducted (first-time sessions and follow-ups included).

Dr. Andrea Coutinho from the Department of Education, requested a session with students enrolled in the second year Bachelor of Arts programme so as to cover a part of their syllabus titled "Role of A Counsellor". An interactive lecture was prepared and delivered to the students on the 20th of August. It covered the exact nature and scope of a counsellor's job, different schools of thought in counselling, professional qualifications required, ethics and responsibilities towards client and self, and the counsellor's personal journey to being a counsellor. Guidance about how to choose subjects of study aligned with the ambition of being a counsellor was discussed. Questions were encouraged and answered. Support was extended in terms of an



invitation to visit the counselling centre should they require more information, or want to try out counselling therapy for themselves.

The academic exposure to these topics and general concepts in psychology also encouraged students to introspect and evaluate if they felt like they required emotional or practical assistance in any arena of their lives and how a psychologist could help. A lot of questions related not only to the academic topics covered, but of personal relevance came up during the lectures which were addressed within the classroom and were encouraged to be followed up personally later.

Expressive Arts Therapy makes use of various creative modalities to foster expression and resolution of conflicts and emotions. The counsellor has training in expressive arts therapy and other group techniques such as Theatre of the Oppressed which are helpful tools apart from traditional talk therapy, to facilitate reflection, bonding and address specific issues agreed upon by the group. Four group sessions were planned and executed between June 2018 and April 2019 as detailed below:

Handwritten signature

1. Goal setting, time management and stress management workshop for TY- BSc IT students:

This session was requested by Miss Hema- Head of Department of the BScIT course, for students enrolled in the Third Year that were finding it difficult to handle the workload and stress of the assignments and impending examinations. A session was conducted on the 20th of December 2019 with 20 students, that began with a general discussion on current stressors in the lives of the students, based on which the session proceeded. Time management was viewed in terms of prioritising activities that are important/take up time and activities that are not important/take up time. Stress was considered to be a function of an inability to manage time appropriately and goals were set with regard to the specific tools and techniques of time management that were shared with the group.

2. Time Management and Goal-setting workshop for FY-BMM Students:

A sign up sheet was circulated among student and 8 registered for the session on time management and goal-setting. The session was conducted on 29th October, 2018 at the counselling centre and covered topics of :

1. Time wasters and eliminating them
2. Prioritising and goal setting
3. Procrastination and techniques to counter it
4. Conceptualisations of Time: Newton-ion versus Einsteinian Time

[Handwritten signature]

3. Raising self-esteem workshop for FY-BMM Students:

A sign up sheet was circulated among students and 8 registered for the session on raising self-esteem. The session took place on November 1st, 2018 at the counselling centre. Self-esteem was addressed by:

1. Reflecting on how we view ourselves,
2. Becoming aware of thinking errors and cognitive biases that contribute to low self-esteem,
3. Role of comparisons with others, conditional self-acceptance and fatalistic thinking,
4. Linking thoughts with feelings- the CBT model of self-esteem,
5. Need to hide aspects of self: **masks we wear!** (art activity),
6. Giving self unconditional positive regard.

4. Group Bonding session for FY-BMM Students:

All 70 students enrolled in the First year BMM course were invited for a bonding session requested by the Head of Department Dr. Colaco. The session took place on the 22nd of October, 2018 in Room 30 and focused broadly on therapeutic games that foster teamwork, familiarising members of the group with each other and conflict resolution. The large group made the session challenging to facilitate, however the games were enjoyed by all.

Prender

5. Bonding and teamwork session for EXAP members:

As part of the EXAP orientation, members are invited for a bonding session facilitated by the counsellor. As most members knew each other, the focus was on finding common ground, working with people they did not necessarily know that well, dealing with conflict and building effective communication. Activities were planned covering these topics.

The counsellor attended all Unfair Means Committee meetings between June 2018 and April 2019. The meeting with students caught cheating during examinations, was aimed at discussing the outcome of their actions as well as finding better ways to cope with unpreparedness. The counsellor attended the meeting in the capacity to extend any help possible to deal with the outcome of the committee's decision against the use of unfair means, to provide practical problem resolution skills to discourage the use of unfair means in the future and address any underlying issues causing it currently.

During this period, some students whose concerns were beyond the scope of the help that could be provided within the organisational set-up due to severity of their disturbances, were encouraged to seek help from psychiatrists and psychologists externally. Parents and college authorities were informed using written and verbal means whenever such cases arose and required more action.

Mendes