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# SEEK HELP WHEN YOU FEEL LOW

- Youth today are in a mad rat race to be successful in everything in everything they do — their careers, relationships and daily lives
- The stress that comes along with this is inevitable, and we find out more at a seminar conducted recently at Stella Maris College

● **Roshne B**

Recently broke up with someone and have been extremely stressed. I am not able to cope with life, but I know I need help..." confessed 20-year-old Anita, who was part of a seminar on 'Mental health and well-being in youth', organised by Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF) in collaboration with the department of Social work, Stella Maris College. With a huge populous of youth who are constantly in a rat race to achieve and accomplish — career, interpersonal relationships, love and other elements, life becomes extremely stressful. Stress, coping with love, suicidal tenden-

cies, sexual abuse and substance abuse are major issues that affect the mental health of youth, opine experts. From feeling guilty and dual-dilemma, victimisation, long hours on the internet to using alcohol and other drugs such as cocaine, tobacco and ecstasy as a maladaptive coping mechanism can lead to stress.

But, the universal question is how does one cope with it? Choosing a career of choice, doing something you are passionate about, having a healthy lifestyle by incorporating a nutritious diet, exercise and breathing techniques, learning something for the joy and resilience help in coping with stress. But, there should be an optimised level of stress, points Dr Mohan Raj, psychiatrist. "An optimal level of stress

helps in being alert, decisive and stimulative," he shares.

In an age where soul-mates are found in the virtual world and breakups are done over a single message, psychiatrist Hema Tharoor emphasises that coping with 'love in the 4G era' has to be one of the prime focuses. "I have people between age group 20 to 30 come to me for after a breakup. Sometimes it's after a week, a few months and sometimes even after a year! They think they are over it and avoid taking external help... but, they end up becoming depressed which leads to other issues." From stalking one's ex thinking of self-harm, the consequences are drastic.

**Tolerance level of people has decreased, and the ability to handle frustration, failure and responsibilities is very low. While everyone is taught to be successful, no one knows how to handle failure and that's the need of the hour** — Lakshmi Vijayakumar, psychiatrist



Students at the seminar



**DON'T BE AFRAID!**

Talk it out with friends and family.

Don't isolate your self and develop life skills that help in solving your own problems

Take to expressive therapies such as dance, drama and art.

Take help of experts to arrive at a constructive solution.

Develop real relationships and friends, and take a virtual-detox.

"They have to be encouraged to talk about their feelings and this lingo of 'giving space' needs to stop. One should identify when a person needs help. Also, travelling, pampering yourself after a break up, and maintaining a journal or expressive therapy helps a lot in coping up with love and the struggles after," she explains.

While most cases lead to binge drinking or substance abuse — for temporary relief, experts aver that this will later lead to other internal issues correlated to the liver and brain. "This will worsen over a period of time and leads to suicidal tendencies and psychosocial issues," she adds.

About 10-15% people with depression end their lives and in India, the number one cause of death among women between age group 15 and 23 is suicide. The three main factors that lead to suicides among the Gen Y and X are: problems in interpersonal relationships, academics, and career. "Seeking help at the earliest and talking to close associates will make a

huge difference," says Lakshmi Vijayakumar, psychiatrist.

Another looming issue is that of gender violence and sexual abuse, and Sudaroli Ramaswamy, Prajnya, highlights that she has been seeing a rise in the number of reported cases of sexual abuse and gender violence. "Though the issue is common to all genders, women in general are more vulnerable to it. But we have to see it as a very serious social concern. The victims shouldn't be blamed and have to be supported and encouraged to report cases or share their experience with their family. In a time when there is no safety for women to even travel alone, we have to support them," she shares.

With honour killing to premarital rape becoming a major cause of concern, she adds, "We should address this at the root level and stop saying 'it happens'. Everything that affects a person physically and mentally is a major issue. Violence at any point on anybody is not justifiable."