

School Counseling Model for Indian Schools

A school puts in the best of its efforts to help every child perform to his/her best potential. In spite of this, not all children rise up to the expectations of the school or teachers or parents. One in five children and adolescents suffers from a mental disorder of some kind, and one in 10 children has a serious emotional disorder that affects his or her ability to function normally. Unfortunately, four out of five children who need mental health services do not receive them.

Children may suffer from a wide range of psychiatric illnesses such as conduct disorders, eating disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), adjustment disorders, anxiety disorders, psychotic disorders, mood disorders, substance abuse and dependence. Suicide is relatively rare in childhood, but its incidence rises rapidly in adolescence. Most common disorders in India are enuresis, ADHD, learning disorders, conduct disorders, behavioral disorders and more importantly cultural transition and technological development. Children are prone to all kinds of advancements but they lack guidance in adapting to these advancements. Sound mental health leads to academic success in school and is essential for overall health.

Children also feel unhappy, anxious, fearful, and angry. They may lack concentration, be forgetful, impulsive, have difficulty in controlling anger, and indulge in physical, emotional and verbal abuse. They may have difficulty in getting their mind off certain thoughts; may suffer unexplained headaches, stomachaches, anorexia, or insomnia; may have trouble maintaining friendships or dealing with people; may feel like hurting themselves or others. These are not uncommon scenarios. All these indicate that 'all is not well' with this child and should be taken seriously. On many occasions these reflect a child's reaction to his/her circumstances of life or his/her phase of development. In fact, most parents, teachers and other adults are not sensitive in picking up these subtle forms of behavioral indications and often ignore or neglect them. It is only when the problem becomes severe and disabling that some attention is paid to the child. In fact, in early stages it is much easier and simpler to intervene and push the developmental trajectories into a healthier and adaptive course.

Untreated mental health problems in children can cause negative and oftentimes tragic long-term consequences. Some of these consequences include dropping out of high school, substance abuse, a lack of vocational success, an inability to live and function independently, health problems and suicide.

As a school psychologist, I will be responsible in addressing all these issues with a vision to uplift the overall health of the school. My work will include establishing rapport with children, conducting group classes for children, implementing programs for the holistic development of the children, counseling children for their personal issues, taking care of the referrals from the school side, assessing children, addressing learning disabled students, working with teachers, addressing and empowering the parents, addressing the non teaching staff, reporting to the management and offering suggestions for the overall development of the school.

The process will be as below

- Establishing rapport with children
 - A series of group classes will be planned to start with and these classes will help me to establish a good rapport with the children and make the children feel comfortable.

- Conducting group classes
 - Group classes will be conducted class wise in groups on any particular topic which may enlighten them on some aspects of life or their age or living.
 - Group classes will be conducted through LCD projector or through activities or through any other preferred mode.
 - Group classes will also be conducted separately for adolescent boys and girls too.
 - Group classes are almost like value education classes.
 - Group classes will be used to establish rapport and at the same time to understand and find out the students issues.

- Implementing programs for the holistic development of the children
 - Various programs will be designed as per the school culture and requirement to empower the students' holistic health.
 - Programs will be implemented after consultation with the management and with the cooperation of all other staff members.

- Counseling children for their personal issues
 - During group classes children will be encouraged to fix appointments for personal counseling.

- Forms will be distributed.
- Interested students will be counseled for their issues.
- Students will be guided and will be empowered to solve their issues (won't be advised).
- Student counseling is a special science which is far different from other forms of counseling. Here at schools, the counseling should be instant without wasting too much of students' academic time. Metaphors will be used as medium and techniques like Time travel will be used to resolve the issues.
- Student empowerment will get its due importance.
- It won't be psychotherapy alone but a holistic approach encompassing all other therapeutic techniques like CBT, NLP, Alpha Stage Hypnotism, Client Centered Counseling, Play therapy, etc.
- The cases will be recorded and will be reviewed.
- A report of monthly counseling cases will be submitted to one of the top management official either the principal or any other person as the school decides.
- The names pertaining to cases will not be disclosed unless there is a necessity.
- For cases out of counselors' control, interventions will be discussed with the person in charge (either the principal or any other person as the school decides).
- In need of parents' or teachers' assistance, it will be decided on consultation with the person in charge (either the principal or any other person as the school decides).

Assessing children

- Problem-oriented assessment.
- General mental health assessment.
- Overall school assessment.
- All the assessments will be informal and will be done based up on the individual capacity of the child.
- Personally I don't believe in formal standardized testing as it is designed based on general criteria which tend to differ for every child.

Addressing learning disabled students

- Assessing to find out the disorders.
- Preparing IEP, IAP and IHP.

- Working with the training staff in providing proper coaching based up on the designed P's.
- ☑ Taking care of the referrals from the school side
 - The school management will be encouraged to provide referrals regarding problematic children or children with issues.
 - Teachers will also be encouraged to provide referrals regarding problematic children or children with issues.
 - The referrals will be dealt as required.
- ☑ Working with teachers
 - Empowerment programs for teachers will be organized as per the requirements.
 - Discussion sessions will be held with teachers.
 - Personal counseling for teachers in need will be provided.
- ☑ Addressing and empowering the parents
 - Empowerment programs for parents will be organized as per the requirements on topics like positive parenting, bonding, value addition, etc.
 - Discussion sessions will be held with parents if the management wishes so.
 - Family counseling for parents in need will be provided with the permission of the school management.
- ☑ Addressing the non teaching staff
 - Empowerment programs for non teaching staff will be organized as per the requirements.
- ☑ Reporting to the management
 - A report outlining all the work done with future work, suggestions to management, etc. will be submitted to the management once in two or three months.
 - Discussion with the management on future plans and past work.
- ☑ Continuous professional development to address the demands of the job.

This work can be done on a day to day basis. I wish to be a freelancer visiting your school twice or thrice in a week, say two or three continuous days at your school. First, will have to understand the climate and culture of the school, with that will start having group classes and group interactions with the school community. This will help to establish a good rapport with one. Later, we will start to receive personal counseling requests from the students and start initiating every step of the process listed out. Full time practice at the school campus may not require to start with and if the demands arise then I will be adapting to the needs of the school.

For the child, school is the second home and the mental health of a child cannot be conceived without paying proper attention to the school mental health. I will deliver my duties in all ways possible with sheer dedication and honesty towards enhancing the school mental health as a whole. Thank You.