

Best Practices

Social Outreach

Objectives:

1. Inculcating social responsibility/awareness/ values.
2. Developing sensitivity/respectful mind/behavior towards social diversity/differences.
3. Creating sense of self worth in self/ others

The Context: During the COVID-19 pandemic, human relationships mutated in some very intriguing ways. While there was an enhanced concern for self-preservation, human tragedy became the dominant theme of all social narrative and discourse. Many lost lives and livelihood. In response, individual and collective efforts to reach out to those in trouble emerged as the only positive outcome of the pandemic. Students at GC Sanjauli were able to recognize the blessings they had enjoyed in comparison to the many who suffered personal, financial and mental crises. The desire to be of use socially, transformed into the will to reach out to those in distress.

The Practice: Students and teachers of the Sociology and Philosophy Club worked in groups to collect essential items like books, clothes, blankets, shoes, masks etc for the needy. They distributed these to people in the hospitals, construction sites and labourers' colonies. The NSS volunteers provided lessons to children affected by the pandemic. There were lesser privileged colleagues in the college ministerial staff who had suffered the pandemic in different ways. The teaching staff contributed money towards a common corpus that was then utilized for helping them. The clothes that were collected were kept in a room for a week before they were distributed to people outside the college. Students of the college were informed about these clothes and they were invited to come to the room in complete anonymity to pick up whatever they needed. This ensured that their dignity and self-respect was not compromised.

Evidence of Success: Teachers/students reported a sense of immense personal satisfaction/fulfillment. Economically weaker students benefitted from this programme without having to feel embarrassed. People in the hospital and colonies were happy and grateful to receive clothes, books, masks and blankets. Many children who were facing difficulty in learning online in their respective schools joined the online academic help sessions that our volunteers offered. There were other conversations too, during these sessions that allowed children cooped in their homes to interact with others outside the academic domain. They wanted to continue these interactions even after the pandemic had abated and these sessions were concluded.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required: We were able to make do with resources available to us through contributions and collective effort. But for the online endeavors, network connectivity and data usage cost became prohibitive for many volunteers and beneficiaries.

Mentoring

Objectives:

1. Offering judgment free counseling; solutions and guidance
2. Providing a safe space for personal outpourings
3. Responding to psychological needs of student
4. Being their guardians while the students are on campus

The Context:

The need to extend the scope of the mentorship programme was felt acutely during the session, 2020-21 owing to the unusual circumstances emerging from Covid-19. The psychological impact of the pandemic manifested itself in students' inter-personal relationships, their self-confidence, and their academic output. The college felt the need to reach out to its students who were unable to attend regular classes in person. There were many students who felt stranded in their villages and homes...and this added to their anxiety and caused varying degrees of mental health issues. The students in the outgoing batches felt anxious about their future prospects in terms of career and employability. It was then decided that the mentor program which was already in place could be extended to include non-professional counseling and guidance to students.

Practice and evidence of success: As per practice, our mentor groups were formed with 50-60 students and one teacher as mentees and mentors. The interactions took place as per the schedule notified by the college (which was about once a month). The mentees were free to talk to their mentors on topics like academics, life skills, career options, relationships etc. These interactions took place online during the Pandemic. The success of these sessions was evident in the repeated requests for interaction with the mentors beyond the scheduled hours. Many students shared some very intense and difficult problems, which was a challenge for the mentors to respond to. The sessions proved to be a learning experience for the mentors too. Other sessions on happiness and stress management were also conducted.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required: Students hesitate discussing their issues in presence of others so the mentors had to dedicate time even after the scheduled sessions. On many occasions, mentors felt incapable of providing solutions and had to refer the mentees to the Department of Mental health at Indira Gandhi Medical College and hospital. It was felt that the college now needs to have a regular Counselor who can provide this assistance professionally.