UNIT-14 PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

UNIT STRUCTURE

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14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Elaborate the concept of mental health
- describe the scope of mental health
- identify the characteristics of a mentally healthy person
- discuss the role of the school in maintaining and promoting mental health

14.2 INTRODUCTION

Childhood is the most suitable period for laying the foundation of personality. The family is the first institution a child comes in contact with, and it plays a very important role in personality development. Apart from the family, the school also helps in expanding the knowledge and skills of learners. The development of such knowledge and skills helps in improving the quality of future life. However, if teachers and parents are not aware and careful, some negative effects may be seen.Another important point that needs to be mentioned here is that only good mental health can help in building a healthy personality. Therefore, the role of the school in developing a healthy mental outlook is extremely

important. If family problems disturb a child mentally, the healthy environment provided by the school can support and help the child. Creating a favourable environment for nurturing mental health is one of the main responsibilities of every school.Hence, the aim of this unit is to explain the concept of mental health and to create awareness about maintaining and promoting it. After studying this unit, you will be able to develop a clear understanding of mental health, positively influence students, and play a role in creating healthy awareness among parents.

14.3 Concept of Mental Health

Mental health is related to the development of every individual's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. This well-being influences our thinking, feelings, and behaviour. However, the concept of mental health cannot be explained in a completely fixed or definite way. Many studies have already been conducted to understand which conditions are related to mental health and which conditions indicate poor mental health.Mental health has become one of the most important needs for a developed and balanced society. In the modern age, we often come across people who suffer from mental problems, and the main reason behind this is the rapidly changing nature of society. Advances in science and technology have brought rapid changes in society. Social rules, traditions, moral values, culture, and lifestyle are continuously changing, which has made human life more challenging. In such situations, people who are mentally strong are able to face these challenges, while those who are mentally weak suffer the most. In this context, the concept of mental health has developed so that people become aware of mental health issues and understand them better.In simple terms, mental health means proper functioning of the mind, removal of mental health–related problems, and realizing one's full potential. The concept of mental health becomes clearer through the definitions given by various well-known organizations, psychologists, and educationists. Some important definitions are given below:

1. Definition by the World Health Organization (WHO):

"Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to his or her community."

2. According to W. W. Boehm:

"Mental health is a condition and level of social functioning that is socially acceptable and personally satisfying."

3. According to K. A. Menninger:

"Mental health is the adjustment of human beings to the world and to one another with maximum effectiveness and happiness. It is the ability to maintain emotional balance, alert intelligence, socially considerate behaviour, and a happy disposition."

4. According to J. A. Hadfield:

"Mental health is the complete and harmonious functioning of the whole personality."

5. According to Cutts and Mosley:

"Mental health is the ability that helps us seek adjustment in the difficult situations of life."

6. According to the White House Conference:

"Mental health may be defined as the adjustment of the individual to oneself and to the world at large with maximum effectiveness, satisfaction, cheerfulness, socially appropriate behaviour, and the ability to face and accept the realities of life."

14.3.1 Scope of Mental Health

Mental health is a very important issue when we talk about the existence of human society. Due to the advancement of science and technology, rapid changes are taking place in society. As human life becomes more complex, the number of mental health–related problems also increase. In such a situation, the scope of mental health has expanded and has become extremely necessary in the present time.

1. **Different mental health problems:**
   The study of mental health helps people understand various mental health problems and also helps in choosing suitable preventive measures to overcome them. Enjoying life, staying mentally healthy, and living a balanced life are very important for every individual.
2. **Causes behind mental disorders or disturbances:**
   There are several causes due to which a person may face mental health problems, such as childhood abuse, trauma, social isolation and

discrimination, poverty, debt, loss of loved ones, unemployment, homelessness, drug abuse, alcohol consumption, etc. Mental health awareness helps people understand these causes and take preventive steps to control or reduce them.

3. **Increasing awareness about the importance of mental health:**
   According to various research findings, every year about **19% of adults**, **46% of adolescents**, and **13% of children** suffer from mental disorders. Due to misconceptions about mental health, a large number of affected people do not receive proper treatment. Therefore, this is the right time to remove all false beliefs related to mental health and recognize it as an important social issue. Mental health should be made a compulsory subject in all educational institutions so that students can understand the importance of good mental health. This can also help in spreading awareness among the general public.
4. **Knowledge about the characteristics of a mentally healthy person:**
   A mentally healthy person has the ability to perform several important functions, such as the ability to learn, to experience, express, and manage both positive and negative emotions, to build and maintain healthy relationships with others, and to cope with and manage change and uncertainty.The study of mental health helps individuals develop these qualities and understand the importance of leading an active and positive life.
5. **Developing an integrated personality:**
   In an integrated personality, the mind, desires, determination, and mental activities work in a coordinated manner. Having an integrated personality is one of the main characteristics of a mentally healthy person. Parents and teachers play an important role in developing an integrated personality in children to promote good mental health. Integration includes:
   - Balance between the self (“I”) and one’s abilities
   - Balance between abilities and interests
   - Balance among personal interests
   - Balance between self-concept and social restrictions
   - Balance between life goals and social norms of behaviour

6. Mental health professionals:

There are various professionals who work to protect and promote mental health. They play a key role in identifying and treating mental health problems. These professionals include psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, counsellors, psychiatric social workers, and others. They provide services that help individuals lead a healthy life. They possess different skills to support mental well-being. The study of mental health helps individuals understand when and how to seek help from these professionals according to their needs.

Regarding the scope of mental health, it may be mentioned that the **COVID-19 pandemic disrupted critical mental health services in 93% of countries worldwide**. At the same time, the increasing complexity of modern lifestyles has raised the demand for maintaining good mental health. According to a recent WHO survey, the severe impact of COVID-19 on mental health services in **130 countries** has made increased investment in mental health an urgent need of the present time.

14.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF A MENTALLY HEALTHY PERSON

It has already been mentioned that both the physical and mental aspects of health are equally important components of mental health. However, in many cases it is seen that people tend to ignore mental fitness and focus more on physical health. Because of the highly developed human brain, human beings are able to control their lives. Therefore, for favourable results and performance in daily activities, a person should focus on improving mental health. Mental health includes how a person feels about oneself and how one adjusts to the events of life. The Mental Health Association has mentioned certain characteristics of mentally healthy people. These are as follows:

- They have self-confidence and like themselves.
- Emotions such as fear, anger, love, jealousy, guilt, or anxiety do not overpower them.
- They have stable, satisfying, and meaningful personal relationships.
- They know how to keep themselves happy and can also share in the happiness of others.

- Even when there are differences of opinion, they show respect towards themselves and others.
- They accept life positively and are able to accept disappointments in life.
- They are able to meet the demands of life and handle problems when they arise.
- Whenever possible, they shape their environment and, when required, can also adjust to it.

Due to certain misconceptions, many people are reluctant to make use of mental health services. This is because mental health is often viewed differently from physical health problems. When physical health problems occur, visiting a doctor is considered normal. But when a person faces depression, excessive fear, or other mental problems, one often feels hesitant to seek mental health treatment. Unfortunately, such an attitude harms both the individual and society. It is very important for everyone to understand that recognising an emotional problem and seeking help is not a sign of weakness; rather, such positive actions are characteristics of a strong person.

14.5 ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN MAINTAINING MENTAL HEALTH

"Mental health and behavioural health have become widely discussed issues in contemporary society. In the school environment, it is very important for teachers to keep a close watch on the mental health of students. Issues related to mental health include depression, anxiety, substance abuse, etc." Since even adults find it very difficult to deal with such issues, how can we expect children and adolescents to cope without the support of parents and teachers? In such situations, the responsibility of protecting mental health and safeguarding society largely depends on schools. For teachers, it is not easy to understand the psychology of every child without the active support and involvement of school administration. Therefore, in the promotion of mental health, the role of teachers and schools can be considered as important as that of parents.

[1] Have appropriate policies in place:

Generally, it is not mandatory for schools to have separate mental health policies. However, in the present time, it is observed that many private-sector schools include mental health and well-being in their policies for supporting students with other health needs or especially those with special educational needs. To ensure that students with

mental health problems do not face harassment, school authorities and teachers should adopt a positive, whole-school approach to ensure that every student receives appropriate support so that they can learn and succeed.

[2] Provide adequate support for pupils:

Schools need systems that can guide students in dealing with all kinds of issues—from everyday worries and emotional problems to diagnosed mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety disorders. Special measures should also be taken to identify and appropriately address problems faced by students suffering from conditions such as autism spectrum disorder, eating disorders, suicidal behaviour, and suicidal thoughts.

[3] Recognise the importance of positive early experiences in mental well-being:

Childhood is the foundational stage for healthy emotional development. During this period, positive early experiences are especially important. Feelings of safety and positive stimulation help children grow emotionally and socially strong and increase their potential for development. However, stress and adverse experiences experienced by some children can negatively affect the development of their mental health in later life. These include abuse, maltreatment, neglect, lack of emotional bonding among family members, parental separation, etc. Therefore, attention should be given from the primary level onwards to providing a healthy school environment so that mental development and well-being can be maintained.

[4] Provide support for parents:

Reducing children's stress and giving importance to mental health is a challenging task for parents. However, when parents or other family members themselves suffer from mental illness or mental disorders, caring for their children becomes particularly challenging. As far as possible, support should be provided to help parents with mental or physical health problems practice effective parenting. Teachers and other school staff should remain alert and sensitive to such situations.

[5] Establishing good relationships between teachers and students:

"Good relationships between teachers and students play a significant role in maintaining students' mental health." Teachers occupy a special place in the lives of children. Therefore, a teacher's personality and relationship with students gradually

influence both. A teacher who maintains warm relationships with every child, is patient, impartial, democratic in outlook, and firm becomes popular among students and plays an effective role in strengthening their mental well-being. Warm communication and good listening skills on the part of teachers help in building effective relationships with students and also assist in identifying and resolving various problems faced by them.

[6] Include mental health in the curriculum:

The best way to fight misconceptions about mental health and health sciences and to help young people adopt healthy coping strategies in different situations is to provide detailed knowledge about mental health. Therefore, from the early stages of education, it is necessary to include various topics related to mental health along with guidance on how to maintain good mental well-being.

ẅ CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q No. 1: Mention the definition of mental health given by the World Health Organization (WHO).

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Q No. 2: Mention any two characteristics of a mentally healthy person as given by the Mental Health Association.

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QNo. 3: What is meant by integrated personality?

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QNo. 4: What has J. A. Hadfield said about mental health?

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Q No. 5: Give any two causes behind mental disorder or mental disturbance.

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2 14.6 LET US SUM UP

- Mental health is related to the development of emotional, psychological, and social well-being of every individual. The development of this well-being influences our thinking, feelings, and behaviour.
- According to the definition given by the World Health Organization (WHO), *mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and effectively, and is able to contribute to his or her community.*
- The study of mental health helps people to understand different health-related problems and also helps in choosing suitable preventive measures to overcome them.
- Mental health problems may arise due to reasons such as childhood abuse, injury, social isolation and discrimination, poverty, debt, loss of close and loved ones, unemployment, homelessness, drug abuse, alcohol consumption, etc. Mental health awareness helps people understand these causes and take preventive steps to control them.
- The study of mental health helps an individual develop positive characteristics and understand the importance of leading an active and positive life.

O 14.7 FURTHER READING

- Crow L. D. and Crow (1962). *'An Introduction to Guidance Principles and Practices',* New Delhi : Eurasia Publishing House.
- Rao, Narayan (1981). *'Counselling Psychology'* MC Graw Hill Publishing Co. Ltd. New Delhi.

K 14.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to Question No. 1:

"Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the mental stresses of life, can work productively and effectively, and is able to contribute to his or her society."

Answer to Question No. 2:

(a) A mentally healthy person is self-confident.

(b) Emotions like fear, anger, love, jealousy, etc. do not overpower them.

Answer to Question No. 3:

An integrated personality means that the mind, will, determination, and mental activities work together in an organized and balanced manner.

Answer to Question No. 4:

According to J. A. Hadfield, “Mental health is the complete and harmonious functioning of the whole personality.”

Answer to Question No. 5:

Two causes behind mental disorder or disturbance are childhood abuse and poverty.

14.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Define mental health.

Q 2: Discuss the scope of mental health with examples.

Q 3: Describe the characteristics of a mentally healthy person.

Q 4: Discuss your views on the role of schools in maintaining mental health.

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