

Midterms?!

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# Wellbeing across the IIT system

*..... struggles behind excellence and pathways to support*



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# Mental Health

## ○ Mental Health

Refers to how a person thinks, feels, and behaves in everyday situations. It reflects a sense of well-being and the ability to live a fulfilling life while handling challenges and obstacles with resilience.

## ○ Mental Health Difficulties

Affect a person's thoughts, emotions, behavior, and daily functioning. They may arise from stress or painful events and sometimes resolve naturally.

## ○ Mental Illness

Refers to more serious mental health challenges, including conditions like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorders (OCD), eating disorders, and Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Students with mental illness need treatment and support from a Psychiatrist or Clinical Counsellor.

[The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017](#)



# Mental Health

More than **1/3** of students report symptoms of a **mental health disorder**

.. It's actually more

Suicide is the **2nd leading cause** of death among the students

Mental health concerns are the **2nd leading cause** of students **dropping out** from academics

**75**

% of mental disorders that emerge before the age of 25

**30**

Number of students suicides everyday in India

**10**

Average years to receive mental health care



# Some common thoughts (UG)

*"I use my phone to avoid interacting"*

*"I don't like talking in person or on the phone"*

*"I get really nervous to raise my hand in class"*

*"I hate walking into a crowded room"*

*"I don't talk to people I don't know very well"*

**"I can't initiate conversations"**

*"I get really nervous in large groups of people"*

*"I am always afraid I will embarrass myself"*

*"I worry that I will offend or burden others"*

*"□?⊗...↯   ⊘ ... ↯ ⇌   ∅ ⊙ ∴ ↘ △?"*

I've got so many things to do - from club activities to studying for the end sem exams and I don't even know where to start. I just can't bring myself to get out of bed.

*You know, whenever exam time comes around and things get extra stressful, I feel like someone is telling me to stop studying or telling me to skip my exam. What does this mean? Do you hear them too?*

Look at my resume. I've accomplished nothing. I have no friends and I thought things would be better once I get the internship I want. Looks like that's also out of my reach too. This was the last straw - nothing is going my way. I just wish I could end it all.

# Some common thoughts (PG)

## DOUBT

- Everyone else understands better.
- Not cut out for research.
- Research question not good enough.
- Don't belong here.
- Should already know this.

## UNCERTAINTY

- Papers don't make sense.
- Can't explain my work.
- Stuck with no direction.
- Progress unclear - going in circles.
- Work feels insignificant.

## SUPERVISOR

- Advisor updates trigger anxiety.
- Nothing to say in meetings.
- Always behind schedule.
- Avoiding advisor emails.
- Feeling harassed.

## ISOLATION

- Alone even in the lab.
- Avoid conferences.
- Not confident discussing work.
- Everyone else seems ahead.

## BURNOUT

- Guilt in rest, no focus when working.
- Writing keeps getting delayed.
- Too much to understand.
- Might never finish.
- Thinking of quitting.

# Some common thoughts

STUCK BEHIND GOING NOWHERE

DON'T BELONG NOT ENOUGH TOO LATE

CAN'T START TOO TIRED

TOO MUCH NO CLARITY





# IITs take when excellence meets struggle

**Recognize  
Response  
Refer  
Review**

Managed mostly by all IITs, under wellness centres





# Recognize (early detection)

## Academic Indicators

- Sudden reduction in quality of work and grades
- Repeated absences, missing classes, labs
- Seeks more personal support than academic support - excuses
- Continuous disruptions in the classroom



# Recognize (early detection)

## Safety Risk Indicators

- Inappropriate anger, hostility, or aggression
- Verbal, written, or implied references to suicide, violence, or self-injurious behavior
- Observable hopelessness, rage, worthlessness, isolation, despair, acting out
- Stalking, harassing, or threatening



# Recognize (early detection)

## Physical Indicators

- Notable deteriorations in physical appearance, grooming, hygiene, or weight
- Excessive fatigue or sleep problems
- Intoxication, hangover, or smells of alcohol or marijuana
- Observable signs of injury (*i.e.*, facial bruising or cuts)



# Recognize (early detection)

## Psychological Indicators

- Personal stress (family, relationship, past history)
- Disoriented, bizarre thinking, or out of reality
- Panic, irritability, or apathy
- Verbally abusive behaviors including taunting, badgering, and intimidation
- Expressions of concern about the student by peers
- Withdrawal

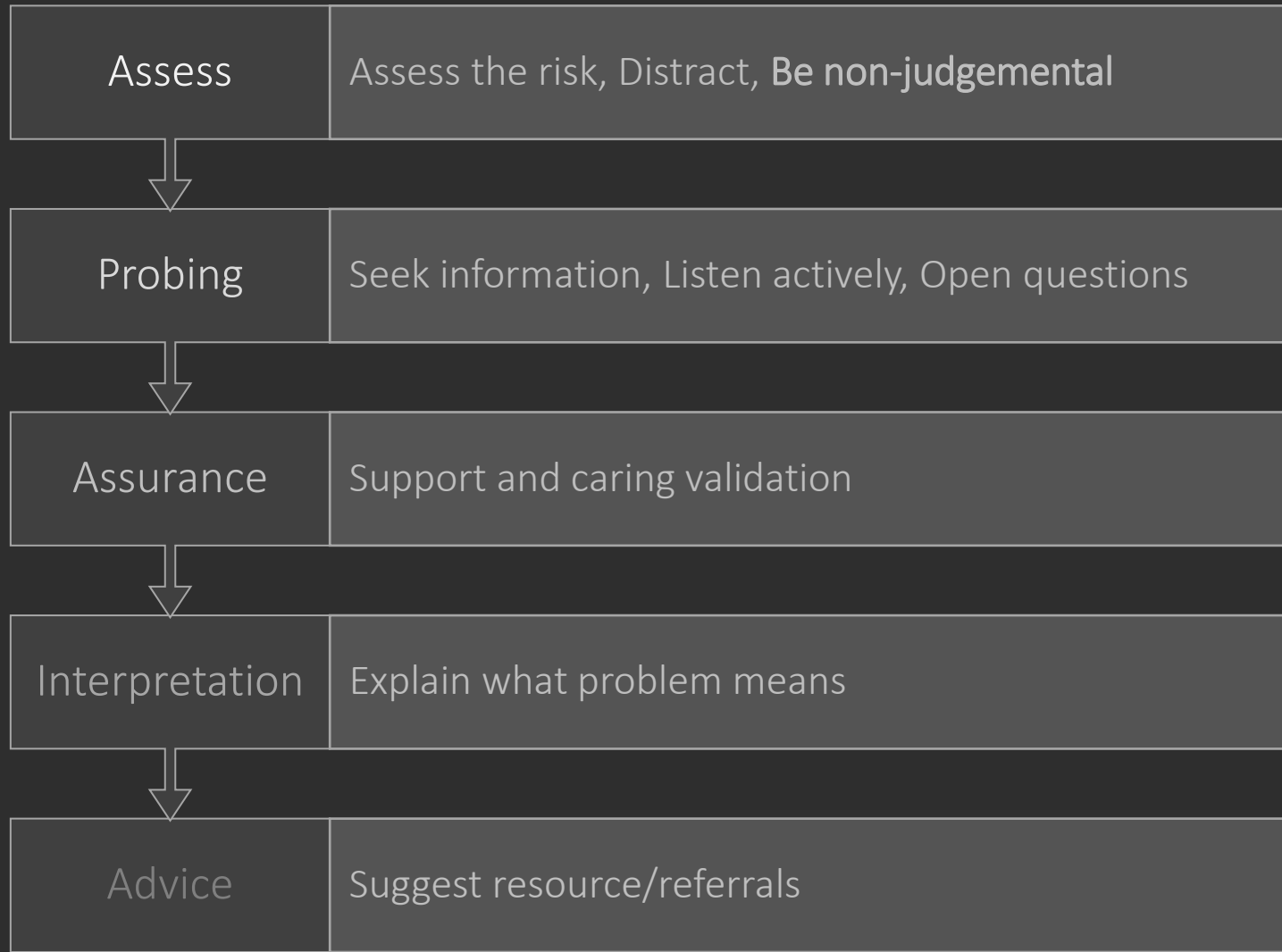
# Refer



- Psychology & Psychiatry are specialized subjects - and most of us not expert.
- Always refer to the psychologists and/or psychiatrists
- Maintain confidentiality / being non-judgemental



# Respond



What were you thinking?  
How did you behave?  
How did you feel?  
What was helpful and not helpful?

# Wellbeing Architecture on IITs



Level 1: Campus Culture & practices (preventive)

Level 2: Awareness & Behavioural Support

Level 3: Early Detection & Psychosocial Support

Level 4: Clinical Care & Professional Intervention



# Student Lifecycle within IITs

- Entry : adjustment, new environment, people
- Mid-phase : competition, performance, identity
- Final phase : placement anxiety (job, academics)



# Faculty-Student as first responders

- Various trainings for early identification
- Embedding mental health in pedagogy
- Structured faculty-student engagement time
- Institute/department level policies
- Capacity building program by the MoE



# Peer & Community Support Systems

- Robust Orientation program
- Alumni engagement for emotional/academic support
- Hostel-level wellbeing ecosystems
- Student-led mental health initiatives
- AI / chatbots / Wellbeing apps for early detection
- Ethical concerns: privacy, judgement etc.



# Inclusion, Equity & Governance in IITs

- Anti-discrimination mechanisms (SC/ST/OBC/DAP support)
- Anti-ragging policies / committees
- Gender-sensitive policies
- Safe spaces & grievance redressal (ombudsperson)
- Institutional accountability frameworks

# Best Practices vs. Gaps

- Counselling : 24/7 vs. limited access
- Health Center : with vs. without psychiatrists
- Mode : in-person or online or both
- Faculty training : structured vs. ad-hoc
- Peer systems : formal vs. informal
- Feedback : present vs. absent
- Governance : policy-driven vs. reactive



# Way forward

- Wellbeing guideline / policy (..in making)
- Institutionalize mental health as core academic pillar
- Leverage technology with human oversight
- Assessment of current resources
- Dedicated wellness building, clinics, relaxation rooms
- Research wing, data curation, analysis
- Build stigma-free campus ecosystems