

Best Practice

The institution has two distinct best practices that cater to the student well-being both in and off campus. They strengthen the morale and integrity of the young women in a world of challenges.

Best Practice - I

Title of the practice: Counselling for Inner Healing

Objectives of the Practice:

The Counselling Forum is active with two full time professional counsellors and one part time counsellor. Teachers must not only impart knowledge, but also steer them to orient their focus towards desired goals.

- To empower the young women
- To develop progressive and positive attitude
- To enhance leadership qualities
- To eliminate impediments towards goal achievement
- To relieve from psychological disorders such as anxiety, hopelessness, depression and irritability
- To create the sense of mental wellbeing

Context of the Practice:

Thoothukudi is a semi-urban town. About 60% of the students come from marginalised section of the society consisting of fisher folk, labourers, masons and consequently uneducated background. The rapidly changing society, its demands and inadequacy to adapt perturb students creating psychological problems. Family conflicts, suspicious parents, sexual abuse, love affairs, phobias, failures, instability of the mind, learning difficulties, stress of performance, interpersonal relationships are some of the major issues to be addressed to help the students lead a balanced life. Realising the imperative need of the institutional responsibility to go beyond the 'classroom ceiling' for a holistic growth, the college has strengthened the counselling forum.

The Practice: All the students of the college benefit by the practice of periodical counselling. Counselling is given to students requiring special attention and are referred to counsellors by staff, or head of the institution. Their purview of counselling involves:

- **Orientation Programmes** offered both for the teaching and non- teaching faculty and students. Orientation on Mind and Yoga, Self-motivation, Women Today, Health and stress management are organised. Mental Health Awareness week organised to promote the well-being of the physic and mind.
- **Entry Counselling** given for Freshers on course, institution and self- awareness. An introduction on counselling is also given to gain the confidence of freshers. It enables them to come out of their fear and inhibitions. Topics like School vs College, Friendship, Infatuation and love, problems of youth and solutions, Language problem - medium of instruction, Self-confidence and self-control, Values of life and character building are dealt
- **Exit Counselling** given to outgoing UG and PG students on life orientation, human values and ethics. Class wise visit and discussion for about an hour or more on topics like Career guidance, Interpersonal relationship, Financial well-being, Job opportunity, Marriage counselling, Work place related problem, Suicidal tendency-how to overcome, Self-confidence and self-control, Emotional imbalance, Violence against women –Family, work place and study centres and Personality Development.
- **Group Counselling**-Students are met in groups, discipline wise and counsellors help them to better the way they think and understand their problems and sort it out on their own. Motivation to achieve greater success in academics like, Goal setting, Born to shine, Health and Stress management and interview tips are given
- **Personal Counselling** given as one to one, to resolve personal issues and conflicts. It is given to all I and III year students. The counsellors help the counselee to uncover her own insight, understand her problem and provide with mechanisms to resolve problems on her own. If needed therapies are adopted with sittings differing according to issues
- **Sports Counselling** offered to sports students to boost their morale, mental stability, sportive attitude, self-confidence, tolerance and team spirit. The special talks on ‘Health and Achievement, Failures and Success, Food and Nutrition, Mind Setting, Diet Management, Goal Setting and Health Issues, helps the sports students to overcome mental barriers, supporting their psychic needs, increasing confidence and motivation.
- **Counsellors-Parents Meet** specially oriented for parents on how to handle their wards. Parental counselling is given to the needed Issues dealing with single parenting, step

father/mother treatment, sexual abuse, addictive behaviour and so on. During Parents Teachers Association Meet, meeting the parents voluntarily come to meet the counsellors to discuss their child's problems and progress. Sometimes, if needed, parents are called by the counsellors.

- Percentage of students who seek counselling for different causes:
- Career counselling- 25%
- Family issues – 21%
- Financial issues - 20%
- Friendship issues - 20%
- Sports issue – 12%
- Lack of skills - 10%
- Father's drunkenness-10%
- Lack of love at home -8%
- Family loss-8%
- Problems with relationships/ friends -11%
- Health issues -5%
- Sexual harassment-3%
- Soft addiction – 5%
- Negative thoughts- 5%
- Phobia – 10%

Therapies adopted are conscious breathing, hourly movement, hand grip, thymus thump, EFT, Gestalt Therapy, V.K.D, (phobias and traumas) swish therapy, letting go experience, behavioural motivation and pranic healing.

Limitations and Constraints:

- Students do not disclose or confide due to their cultural and societal upbringing
- Restraint of approach because of peer stress and image consciousness
- Duration of time needed to spend for each student
- Fear of missing course classes by the students
- Lack of support and cooperation from parents

Evidence of Success:

The feedback from students who have recovered from problems is evidence to the success of the Best Practice

- Have expressed gratitude to counsellors
- Confessed feeling light, energized and having clarity of thought
- Have focus of attention in study and remarkable progress in academics
- Professed they were able to face reality with courage and confidence
- Issues detrimental to the individual students' normal behavioural patterns were found to be marginally decreasing
- Showed positive signs of interpersonal relationships Feedback from parents and teachers served as authentic proof of change in behaviour at home and in classroom.

Problems encountered and resources required: Fear and hesitation to approach the counsellors is a key factor. Time constraint is another issue that intervenes for effective functioning of Counselling Forum. Students are unable to meet the counsellors at the time of more crucial needs amidst their academic schedule. On the need for continual provisions for psychological counselling and the faulty attitude of considering counselling as stigma, parents hesitate to send their wards.

Best Practice II

Title of the Practice:

Adopt to Adapt- Community Development Programme (CDP) TOUCH

St. Mary's college orients its mission in educating youngsters to contribute to social progress. It believes in instilling the worth of every human being in each, so as to fulfill the purpose of living. The curriculum extension interface has educational values, Motto of the programme is Serve While You Learn. This aspect of education, emphasizes neighbourhood services integrated with curricula. The extension activities help students to serve reflect and learn.

Objectives

- To construct a mutual link with the students and society
- To generate conscious collective living
- To instill human and social concern
- To bring transformation for social betterment

- To adopt and adapt for good living

The Context

The younger generation, though 80% of them categorically belong to the underprivileged today lives in a make-believe world of ‘my space’ and ‘within walls’. There is little awareness or rather an attitude of indifference towards the social circumstances, the economic divide between haves and have-nots and marginalization. It is essential to make them realize the hardcore reality of life and harbor concern for the other which can only sustain life. Outreaching to society therefore, through an extension programme framed exclusively for the benefit of both the giver and receiver is made part of the learning process at St. Mary’s.

The Practice

CDP- TOUCH, Towards Upliftment and Community Healing is a programme made mandatory for all II year UG students earning them ‘one credit’. Nearly 1000 second year undergraduate students from 15 departments are involved in the activities. Each student is expected to complete 40 hours of community work. The department divides students into teams of 10-12 members with a team leader for more effective functioning. The CDP Director formulates plans to be executed in adopted areas. The institution formerly adopted one neighbouring backward area— Silverpuram, wherein students involved in awareness activities and undertook welfare measures for progress. From 2014, each department adopted the following villages Thalamuthunagar, Arockiapuram, Pandarampatti, Iyyarvilai, Kovilpillavilai, Anthoniarapuram, Mangalagiri, KeelaAlangarathattu, InigoNagar, ThaiNagar(Tsunami Area), Therespuram, Puthurpandiapuram, Vellapatti and focused their outreach services.

- Socio-economic surveys undertaken to assess the standards of the community
- About 80 awareness programmes organized on social related issues
- Organising nearly 26 Eye/Skin/Medical camps provided healthcare concerns
- 30 hands on training programme on vermicomposting, detecting food adulteration, herbal products preparation given.

- Adult literacy, computer literacy programme, communication skills for school children, health and hygiene awareness addressed
- Nearly 60 Gender equity programmes and cultural programmes organised
- Promoting Self Help Groups and aiding them to organize sales of products
- Introducing and enabling inmates to avail government welfare schemes
- Facilitating the villagers to start small scale enterprises
- Contributing to meet the essential needs of the underprivileged in the area
- Communal integration through celebrations of festivals
- Undertaking prison ministry and awareness for rehabilitation created
- Planting of saplings and awareness in ecological concerns promoted
- Relief camp at calamity affected areas were undertaken
- Enthusiastic response of students in involving in CDP
- Regularity in periodical conduct of welfare activities
- Sensitisation to issues of the marginalised has created a humanitarian impact

Evidence of Success

The CDP has led to the transformation of the college community as well as of the neighbourhood. Involvement of staff and students in the service of the rural and the semi-urban poor has enabled to create an impact in the quality of life and living, empowering the self and society.

Academics with such linkage to the society has been certainly a fruitful exercise. Students realize their responsibility towards social upliftment. It has forged them into pragmatic social workers. The people of the backward areas respond to awareness. As the extension activities are done on a weekend, approach to inmates of the neighbourhood is possible. Appreciation of service by the people and NGOs of the activities of the college has created credibility of the CDP programme.

It has emerged as a participatory, holistic and inclusive practice that leads to a positive and concrete development both to the student community and social community. Students are able to restore the health and hygiene of the self and natural environment. Measures to reduce poverty through imparting knowledge for self -employment and availability of government schemes have given positive response.

Problems Encountered

Problems encountered are overcome with the willingness to extend activities of social concern. However, the common constraints of time and distance are crucial. The time allotted by student visits is restricted. Sometimes a lag in continual follow up measures occurs. Implementation of longterm welfare schemes becomes hampered. 'TOUCH' touches 'Self' and 'Society'.