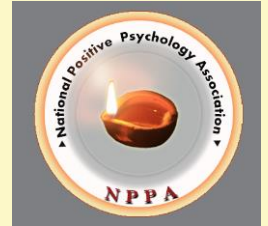


National Positive Psychology Association



Contents

01: The Scholarly Nook

02: The Oracle

03: Latest Updates

04: Members Section

The Scholarly Nook

The Scholarly Nook brings to you articles written by scholars either on some of their own research or regarding the latest ongoing research in the field of Positive Psychology. In this edition we present an article on Adolescent Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. Read ahead to know more!

Adolescent Mental Health & Suicide Prevention

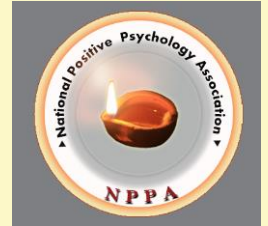
"I never thought I would end up letting all of you down. Do not miss me. I don't deserve it, I am not worthy. Thank you for being the best parents. I am sorry I turned out to be such a

waste". The above excerpts are from a suicide note written by a student from IIT Hyderabad who just like many other students in India felt that he is a burden and disappointment to his parents and to the society and gave up on life.

Where on one hand India takes pride in having the highest youth population in the world, the mental health and well-being of these young people is highly vulnerable. They are prone to anxiety and depression due to various life stressors; quite evident from the number of suicide cases around us every day.



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The world is changing at a fast pace with much faster developments, leaving one to continuously strive to keep pace with it so as to not be left out. Young minds go through the most important developments of their life from seeking their identity in this world to establishing meaningful connections with others. According to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (1959), in the stages of adolescence and young adulthood, they either find their identity or dwell in confusion; they either form healthy intimate relationships or become lonesome. Among all these struggles it's often not very easy to balance one's mental health and happiness.

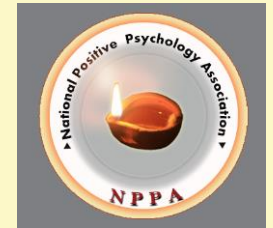


According to the World Health Organization, in the year 2012 there were 2,58,000 suicides in India and much to everyone's despair suicide has now become the second leading cause of death among adolescents at the global level. Death tolls by suicides among

students aspiring for highly competitive entrance exams for engineering, medical and civil services have been rising day by day. Recently the Tata Institute of Social Studies conducted a survey in Kota (Rajasthan) which is known as the coaching capital of India.

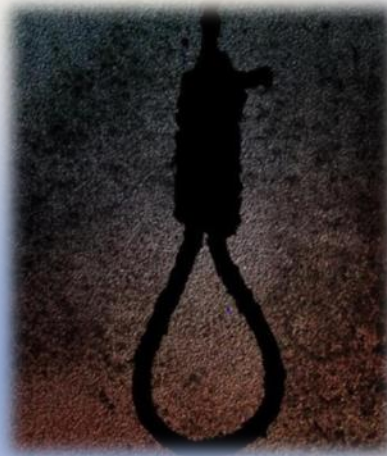
Every year around 2 lakh young students leave their homes and join these coaching centers to prepare for engineering and medical entrance exams. The sad state of affairs is that there were around 58 suicide cases by such students between the years 2013 to 2016. A large proportion of students in the survey expressed that they were nervous and worried and felt stressed (Sriram et al., 2018) The feelings of hopelessness and helplessness were predominant in such students. They felt they would disappoint their parents and family members who have high expectations from them. Further the report also highlights that there are cases of students dealing with issues like substance abuse, self-harm,

National Positive Psychology Association



possibility of adolescent pregnancies and bullying. The psychological distress is caused mainly due to their inability to get top ranks in various academic tests, parental expectations, lack of proper sleep and not being able to receive social and emotional support in times of need (Prajapati & Singh, 2015). These feelings of constant anxiety and stress later lead on to suicidal ideations and many resort to ending their life as they give up on their last ounce of hope.

According to Thomas Joiner (2007), a leading expert in Suicide, 'the desire' to die by suicide is constituted by two psychological states of mind i.e. perceived burdensomeness and a sense of low belongingness. Perceived burdensomeness refers to the misperception where people believe that they are being a burden to their family, friends and environment and their death would be of more worth than life. Low belongingness refers to social alienation or isolation and the feeling that one is not an important part of the family or society in general. Both these factors have been



robust predictors of suicidal ideation among diverse populations (Joiner, 2007).

Over the years there has been an increased attention to adolescent mental health and several policies have also been formulated to address such issues. A recent study has tried to assess the impact of these policies in implementation and also charted their strengths and gaps. The results indicated that these policies were able to identify the common mental health issues like stress, anxiety, depression and suicidal ideations and recommended that preventive and treatment interventions be delivered through schools, communities and health facilities.

While these interventions focused on school attendance and creating a supportive school environment, it failed to address the other social determinants like the norms of the society, discord with family and early childhood experiences which equally affects the mental health of an adolescent (Roy et al, 2019).The involvement of the youth in creating these

National Positive Psychology Association



interventions is also minimal which again makes these policies less impactful. The other reasons identified for the lack of its overarching impact has been attributed to scarce resources and improper governance. Issues related to mental health have also not been dealt with in depth taking into account the different psychological disorders and the specific measures to deal with them. The involvement of the youth in planning, implementation and governance would provide a better success rate for these interventions.

Use of more technology and apps would further enhance the process and make it more feasible and yield better results (Roy et al, 2019).

There are various NGO's and governmental organization that have started suicide prevention and training programs. One such program is conducted by NIMHANS (National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences), called the 'Gatekeepers Training for Suicide Prevention'. The training program involves only twenty people at a time and uses multiple methods like role plays, lectures and case vignettes with skill based participatory approach. It is conducted by a multi-disciplinary

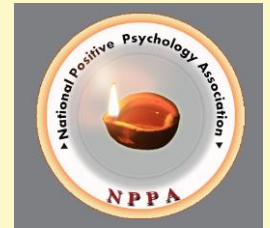
team of psychiatrists and psychiatric social workers.



Another such organization is the SPIF (Suicide Prevention India Foundation). It aims to create a community-based platform so that people who are interested in creating mental health awareness can come together and fight against suicide in India. They create content to educate people at schools, colleges and workplaces on how to deal with depression, anxiety and other mental health issues.

The need of the hour is such organizations, and collaborative effort from different sectors of our community like education, health care, justice, law etc., efficient

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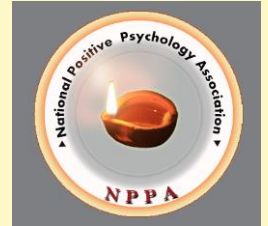
governance and use of latest technologies in implementing the interventions to reach out to these young aching hearts.



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National Positive Psychology Association



The Oracle: Interview Series with Esteemed Professors

In our Fourth issue we are delighted to introduce all NPPA members to **Prof. Kiran Kumar**. He retired as a Professor from University of Mysore where he has been teaching since 1982. He obtained his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences, Bangalore, India.

He was a Fulbright Post-Doctoral Fellow, at Saybrook Institute Graduate School and Research Centre, San Francisco, between 1990-91 and carried out research on meditation. He is a recipient of Psycho-Oration Award from the Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists in 2006. He has been serving as an editorial board member of the International Journal of Transpersonal Studies, USA. He has been actively involved in teaching, guiding and researching in Clinical Psychology, Indian Psychology, and Positive Psychology. He has authored the book 'Psychology of Meditation: A Contextual Approach' and has to his credit multiple research

publications, especially in the area of Indian indigenous concepts.

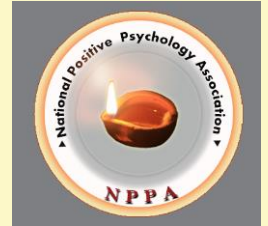


Read on to know more about his views and experiences of being in the field of Positive Psychology.

1. What had stimulated your interest in Psychology?

There is no definite answer to this question. There was no specific factor to which I can attribute a causal significance in choosing Psychology. At most, I can say that destiny

National Positive Psychology Association



pushed me to it. I can only narrate the sequence of events that led to it.

I was 17 years old when I completed the Bachelor of Science degree. I wanted to be on my own but couldn't find any job as I was underage. My brothers and sister encouraged me to continue my education and asked me to join Engineering. Since that was also not of my interest, I came up with the suggestion that if they are willing to support my education further, notwithstanding the financial constraints we had, I would instead study Psychology!

I recall seeing some Psychology books in the library but I had no further idea about the topic. Since University of Mysore does not provide M.A. in Psychology without having studied it at Bachelor's level, I decided to study Psychology from Bachelor's degree itself. When I applied there, the HOD and the Registrar were quite astonished to listen to my request and they felt like I was wasting my time. But when they realized I was quite determined, I got special permission even though the classes had commenced. I continued my education there till

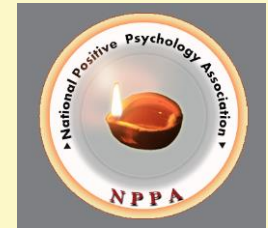
Master's in Psychology. I passed B.A. with second class and Master's in Psychology with first class (2nd rank)! I went on and completed Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at NIMHANS! That's the journey.



2. How did your association with positive psychology begin?

In the year 2001, I was attending the NAOP conference at Kollam, where I met Prof. Jane Henry, a British psychologist. Since I had worked on 'altered states of consciousness' we were discussing consciousness research. She informed me about the First European Positive Psychology Conference which would take place in July 2002 and asked me whether I would be interested. I

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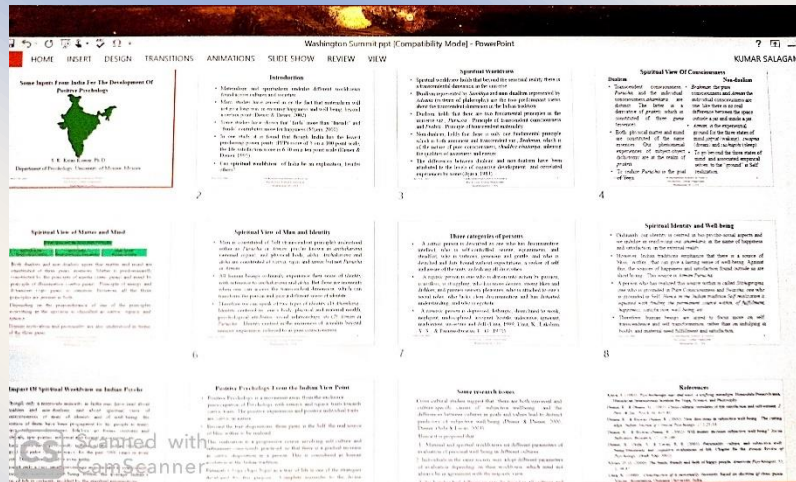


did not know what Positive Psychology is and asked her to share some information on it. When I read the literature she sent, I realized it is all about happiness and well-being! Since I had already begun to focus on Indian psychological thought, I decided that I should present a paper on happiness and well-being concepts present in our traditions. I presented the paper with the title "**An Indian Concept of Well-being**" that was published in the proceedings of the Conference.

I could also meet Prof. Martin Seligman there. I interacted with him, and he informed me that there would be First Positive Psychology Summit at Gallup Organization in Washington DC, the USA in October of 2002 and they are on the lookout for Asian representation. I received full financial support and I made a poster presentation with the title "Some inputs from India for the development of Positive Psychology." In essence, I concluded in the poster that Psychology is turning its focus of study **from *tamas* and *rajas* to *satva***.

There I also had the opportunity of interacting with the pioneers in the field. I was invited again

as a Key Note speaker to the 5th Summit in 2006 to Washington DC!

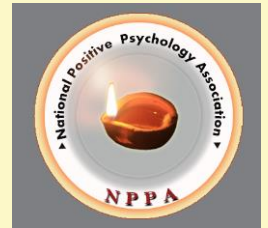


Prof. Kiran Kumar's poster entitled "*Some inputs from India for the development of Positive Psychology,*" that he presented at the First Positive Psychology Summit, held at Washington D.C. (2002)

3. What do you feel about the way Positive Psychology has been developing in India, and where do you see Positive Psychology in India, in the next five years?

I feel happy that Positive Psychology has been developing in India at par with its development anywhere else in the world. At the academic level, Positive Psychology is gaining popularity as a

National Positive Psychology Association

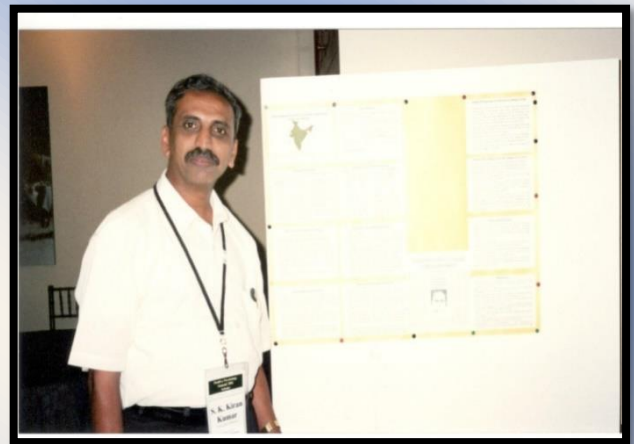


course in the curriculum, and there has been an increase in research in this area.

But more importantly, it has developed much more outside academia. Many NGO's have come up with different kinds of programs to enhance happiness and well-being. Three months ago, I was attending a workshop organized at IIT, Kharagpur, by the "Rekhi Centre for Happiness Science" which is an independent unit established there by an alumni Dr. Satinder Singh Rekhi. I was overwhelmed by the number of people working in this direction. I was struck by the different kinds of programs people who are not psychologists, have engaged themselves in.

It is also heartening to note that the idea of happiness promotion has entered the executive level. For example, the Government of Madhya Pradesh has established a Ministry to enhance the quality of living, and they have different programs aimed at enhancement of "*ānanda*." In the next five years, undoubtedly Positive Psychology will be a much sought after course.

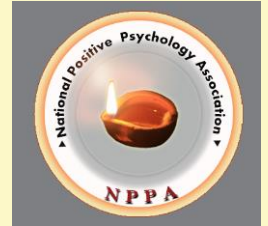
After all, everyone is interested in happiness and well-being.



4. What would you say is the value of Positive Psychology to the general population?

As a subject of scientific inquiry, the developments in the field will undoubtedly help to get a better sense about what is right for personal and collective well-being. We are witnessing this happening. There are many initiatives to promote well-being emphasizing on positive emotional states, traits, and communities. That will undoubtedly benefit the general population.

National Positive Psychology Association



5. As someone who has been teaching, training, and guiding scholars in Psychology for several years, what kind of training would you suggest for students of Positive Psychology?

In the present times all around in real life, there is a decline in moral and ethical values. We get more information on that from print, electronic, and social media. In many ways, distorted values are becoming the new norm. We witness more incidents of suicide, crime, violence, divorce, breakdown of families, and so on. In this context, talking about Positive Psychology to students in the classroom can cause "cognitive dissonance" because what they learn in the school and what they encounter outside are often a mismatch. So, teaching that as a course for a few credits for examination purpose is not the way to imbibe its essence. They should visit those places, institutions, communities, and persons where the many aspects of positive psychology are practiced and lived. Active participation in community activities through fieldwork, not dissertation, must be a significant part of the course syllabus. Such exposure serves as models and role models

for young minds to absorb the essence of positive psychology. Personal experience will enrich it. They will also develop confidence, grit, and resilience to lead the life in future in consonance with what they learn about positive psychology. Mere classroom teaching and some research work as a Master's dissertation and Ph.D. thesis will not go a long way in actualizing the goals of Positive Psychology.

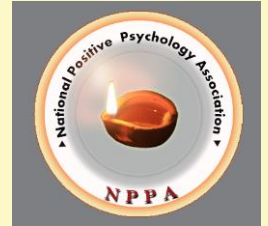
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Latest Updates

Upcoming Conferences & Workshops:

- Conference on Emerging Technology Assisting Wellbeing, 10th August 2019, Melbourne, Australia.
- A one-day workshop on Is Tech Making Us Miserable? Policymaking for the Psychosocial Impact of Screen-time and Technology, on 10th September 2019 at Cambridge, UK.
- Training workshop 'Give shape to your research idea... Reflect, share & grow-Applying Positive Psychological

National Positive Psychology Association



perspective in Research' organized by National Institute for Mental Health and Neurosciences on 12th September 2019, Bangalore, India.

- Workshop on Promotion of Mental Health and Psychological Well-Being of Adolescents Using Life Skills Approach organized by National Institute for Mental Health and Neurosciences on 16th to 18th September 2019, Bangalore, India.
- Conference on Mental Health and Wellness 2019, London, UK, on 16th to 17th September 2019.
- Stress, Depression, Anxiety and Resilience Summit 2019 Conference from 18th to 19th September 2019 at Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
- 7th Asian Congress of Health Psychology 2019 Conference on 19th to 21st September 2019 at Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia
- 5th International Congress of Indian Academy of Health Psychology ICIHP-2019, Focal Theme: Depression and Suicide: Issues Challenges and Management, 20 to 22nd October 2019, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Members Section

Team NPPA looks forward to hear from you about your ideas, thoughts and research work in the area of Positive Psychology.

We welcome original contributions in the form of brief write-ups about your research and practice initiatives focused on Positive Psychology in India. Mail us your articles at admin@nppaassociation.org

- Contributions should be **upto 200 words only** and include appropriate citations wherever required.
- Each issue will carry **selected contributions** covered under the section 'NPPA Members Section'

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