



## **Peer Counselling Training by Aaptha Salaha Kendra**

**Date of Session:** 05-12-2024

**Venue:** Audio Visual Room, Amar Jawan Block

**Location:** NHCE, Bangalore

**Target Audience:** Students (CR) of first-year Engineering students for Peer Counselling Program

### **Facilitators:**

- Mrs. Shubha Bhat (MCA, PG Diploma in Child Mental Health, PG Diploma in Counselling and Family Therapy)
  - Amit Sharma (IT Professional turned Social Worker, Counsellor)
  - Kaushik Bhakta (MTech, Management Development, Six Sigma Black Belt, NGO Leader)
  - Dr. Prema Bhargav (MSc, BEd, PhD, Project Leader at ASK, Experienced Counsellor)
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### **Introduction and Objectives of the Program:**

Aaptha Salaha Kendra (ASK) organized a training session aimed at equipping students with the skills needed for peer counselling. The session focused on understanding the basics of counselling, peer support techniques, and the importance of listening in helping those who are going through emotional or mental stress. The session aimed to provide the attendees with a deeper understanding of how peer counselling works, especially among young adults. The training was meant to prepare volunteers to facilitate as a bridge between peers and counsellors, help them in seeking help, and motivate them to take positive steps. The primary focus was on building empathy, active listening, and fostering a supportive environment for individuals facing personal issues.

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## **Session Overview and Speaker Contributions:**

### **1. Welcome and Introduction to Peer Counselling (10:00 AM - 11:00 AM)**

- **Speaker:** Mrs. Shubha Bhat (Counsellor, Peer Counselling Expert, and Volunteer in Youth for Seva)

- **Topic:** Adolescent Issues and Introduction to Peer Counselling

Mrs. Shubha Bhat started the session with a discussion on adolescent issues, covering topics like peer pressure, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), and the impact these challenges can have on young adults. She emphasized the difference between professional counselling and informal counselling provided by friends and family, explaining that while informal support is important, professional counselling offers a structured approach to solving emotional and psychological problems.

Mrs. Bhat's session lasted about an hour, during which she conducted an ice-breaking activity and highlighted common struggles faced by adolescents and young adults. Her session helped set the stage for understanding how peer counsellors can provide support without necessarily offering solutions.

### **2. Break and Arrival of Other Speakers (11:00 AM - 11:30 AM)**

- After Mrs. Shubha Bhat's session, the rest of the speakers arrived, and refreshments were provided. Participants were escorted to the A/V room for the continuation of the session.

### **3. The Importance of Listening and Emotional Support (11:30 AM - 12:15 PM)**

- **Speaker:** Mr. Amit Sharma (IT Professional turned Counsellor)

- **Topic:** The Role of Listening and Being There for Others

Mr. Amit Sharma took the floor next, focusing on the significance of active listening in peer counselling. His main message was that counsellors don't always need to solve others' problems; instead, they should be there to listen, provide emotional support, and motivate individuals to make decisions on their own.

Amit shared personal experiences from his volunteer work in the community, emphasizing that simply being present and offering a supportive ear can have a profound impact on individuals in distress. He stressed the importance of empathy, understanding, and patience in the role of a peer counsellor.

#### 4. Addressing Young Adult Issues (12:15 PM - 1:00 PM)

- **Speaker:** Mr. Kaushik Bhakta (M.Tech, Corporate Leader, NGO Founder)
- **Topic:** Relationship Issues, Body Image, Eating Disorders, and Hormonal Imbalance in Young Adults

Mr. Kaushik Bhakta discussed the complex emotional and psychological issues that young adults often face, including relationship difficulties, body image concerns, eating disorders, and the effects of hormonal imbalances. He shared insights into how these challenges manifest during adolescence and early adulthood, often affecting their mental well-being.

He highlighted the need for peer counsellors to approach these sensitive issues with care and empathy, providing guidance without judgment. Mr. Bhakta's session gave attendees an in-depth understanding of the specific concerns that young people may struggle with and the importance of a supportive and non-judgmental environment.

#### 5. Role Play and Practical Application of Counselling Skills (1:00 PM - 2:00 PM)

- **Speaker:** Dr. Prema Bhargav (Project Leader, Experienced Counsellor)
- **Topic:** Practical Role-Playing Scenarios and Peer Counselling Techniques

The final segment of the session was led by Dr. Prema Bhargav, who encouraged the students to engage in role-play scenarios to practice counselling techniques. She provided various real-life scenarios where students would need to counsel their peers, helping them think about how to apply listening skills, empathy, and advice in practice.

The role-play activity helped attendees visualize and understand the challenges and rewards of peer counselling. However, the training portion of the session was more focused on theoretical aspects, and the opportunity for participants to engage in deeper practical training was limited. The session provided great insights but lacked a hands-on, skills-based approach that is typically expected in peer counselling training.

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### **Key Insights and Takeaways:**

- **Importance of Active Listening:** The session highlighted that the key role of a peer counsellor is to listen and offer emotional support, rather than attempting to solve the individual's problems. Empathy and being a non-judgmental listener are crucial for effective peer counselling.
  - **Understanding Peer Issues:** The facilitators discussed common issues among young adults, such as body image, eating disorders, relationship problems, and the pressures of social media. These are some of the concerns that peer counsellors may encounter.
  - **The Role of Empathy and Patience:** It was emphasized that counsellors need to demonstrate empathy and patience, helping individuals find their own solutions, rather than imposing advice on them.
  - **Theoretical Knowledge vs. Practical Application:** While the training provided excellent theoretical insights, it was noted that the session lacked an extensive practical training component. The role-playing exercise was beneficial, but further structured skill-building exercises were missing.
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### **Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Training:**

The peer counselling training organized by Aaptha Salaha Kendra was informative and provided valuable insights into the role of a peer counsellor. The session focused on important topics like adolescent challenges, the significance of listening, and the importance of empathy.

However, for future sessions, it would be beneficial to incorporate more hands-on training, where students can actively practice counselling techniques under supervision. More in-depth role-playing exercises, case studies, and practical simulations could help attendees better prepare for real-life peer counselling situations.

Overall, while the children enjoyed the session and learned a lot about the basics of counselling, the program would be enhanced by more direct and interactive training in peer counselling techniques.