

Record of Discussion of Online Session of Capacity Building Programme for Promoting Positive Mental Health, Resilience, and Wellbeing, held on 12.01.2026 at 10:00 AM

1. An online session under the Capacity Building Programme for Promoting Positive Mental Health, Resilience and Wellbeing was conducted on 12th January 2026 as part of the Ministry of Education's sustained efforts to integrate mental health, resilience, and wellbeing into the higher education ecosystem. The session was organised for nominated members from centrally funded Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). A total of 59 participants joined the session out of which 50 were faculty members.

2. This was the first session of the new year and the 35th online session in the ongoing fortnightly series since the launch of the programme in May 2024. The initiative continues to support the development of institutional ecosystems that are sensitive to student wellbeing, aligned with objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Till date, more than 2400 faculty members from more than 160 HEIs have participated in the programme.

3. In his opening remarks, Mr. D. K. Sharma, Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Department and informed that this was the 35th online session under the Capacity Building Programme for Promoting Positive Mental Health, Resilience, and Wellbeing. He noted that the programme focuses on mental wellbeing, resilience building, and creation of enabling and supportive environments within the higher education ecosystem. He introduced the panel of eminent resource persons participating in the session, briefly outlined the structure of the session and invited Prof. Kumar Suresh to deliver the opening address.

4. The following resource persons were part of this session:

- ❖ Dr. Jitendra Nagpal, Senior Psychiatrist and Programme Director, Expressions India
- ❖ Ms. Geeta Mehrotra, Expressions India
- ❖ Dr. Ashish Pandey, IIT Bombay
- ❖ Prof. Shailender Swaminathan, Sapien Labs, KREA University

5. Prof. Kumar Suresh, NIEPA, in his opening address, emphasised that the programme is not a random initiative, but one that flows directly from the vision and mandates of the NEP 2020, particularly its emphasis on equity, inclusion, and holistic development in higher education. Prof. Suresh elaborated on the three-layered responsibility framework envisaged in NEP 2020 for addressing issues of inclusion and wellbeing: the role of governments, the role of higher education institutions, and most critically, the role of faculty members. He highlighted that faculty constitute the backbone of the higher education ecosystem and serve as the most consistent point of contact for students, thereby placing them in a pivotal position to recognise, respond to, and support student mental health and wellbeing needs.

6. Emphasising institutional ownership, Prof. Suresh stated that faculty participants should not view themselves as individual attendees, but as representatives of their respective institutions, entrusted with the responsibility of translating learnings into concrete actions at the campus level. He stressed that while guidelines and compliance mechanisms are important, the creation of a positive and supportive ecosystem for wellbeing must go beyond compliance and emerge from intrinsic institutional commitment and faculty engagement.

7. Mr. D. K. Sharma highlighted that adolescence and early adulthood constitute a critical developmental phase during which students face multiple pressures related to identity formation, emotional regulation, academic expectations, digital exposure, social isolation, and career uncertainty.

He emphasised that mental health challenges among students are not episodic or marginal issues, but systemic in nature, with serious implications for learning outcomes and life trajectories. Citing national data, he drew attention to a significant rise in suicides over the past decade, with a particularly sharp increase among students, underscoring the urgency of preventive and institutional responses.

8. Mr. Sharma outlined a paradigm shift in the approach to mental wellbeing in higher education, moving from crisis-driven interventions to prevention-oriented, ecosystem-based models. He stressed the need to normalise conversations around stress and anxiety, and to embed wellbeing as an institutional responsibility rather than an individual concern. Key elements of this shift include the establishment of independent and well-governed counselling centres, clear referral and escalation mechanisms, early identification through wellbeing check-ins and peer support systems, and the responsible use of technology to support early care and prevent long-term harm.

9. He further emphasised the central role of faculty as first observers of student distress, underscoring the importance of faculty capacity building in mental health literacy, mentoring boundaries, and referral protocols, alongside attention to faculty wellbeing itself. He noted that students must be engaged as active partners in wellbeing initiatives and that mental health should be addressed holistically through life skills, sleep and nutritional health, physical activity, mindfulness, and culturally rooted practices such as yoga and meditation, complemented by modern psychological approaches.

10. Dr. Jitendra Nagpal, senior psychiatrist and Programme Director, Expressions India, framed his address around the need to shift from crisis-driven responses to the deliberate creation of resilient, compassionate, and life-affirming campus cultures. He emphasised that national progress depends not only on academic excellence and employability, but also on nurturing life skills, emotional competence, character, and effective communication. He underscored that students must be viewed not merely as beneficiaries, but as partners and co-creators of wellbeing policies and campus culture, with education aimed at sustaining meaningful, healthy, and harmonious lives rather than only economic outcomes.

11. Dr. Nagpal cautioned that an over-emphasis on academic and livelihood competencies, without equal attention to emotional intelligence (EQ), life skills, and wellbeing, risks deepening distress and disillusionment among young people. He drew attention to the growing burden of mental health conditions among adolescents and young adults, noting that nearly one in eight individuals may experience diagnosable mental health concerns, while professional mental health resources in the country remain severely inadequate. In this context, he emphasised the crucial role of faculty as gatekeepers, first responders, and strength providers, and called for an ecosystem approach in which wellbeing is embedded institutionally through counselling centres, wellbeing teams, peer support, family engagement, and sustained dialogue rather than episodic interventions.

12. Ms. Geeta Mehrotra, life skills educator and faculty associated with Expressions India, focused her session on the practical integration of life skills and socio-emotional learning into everyday teaching-learning processes. She emphasised that mental wellbeing is not limited to counselling or crisis intervention, but is deeply shaped by daily classroom interactions, relationships, and the emotional climate created by teachers. She highlighted that simple pedagogical practices such as active listening, reflective questioning, validation of student emotions, and inclusive communication can significantly strengthen students' sense of safety, belonging, and self-worth.

13. Ms. Mehrotra underscored the importance of self-awareness and emotional regulation among faculty as a prerequisite for supporting students effectively. She noted that teachers' responses to stress, conflict, failure, and student behaviour model coping strategies for learners, often unconsciously. Emphasizing empathy, boundaries, and consistency, she encouraged faculty to move

from a directive role to a facilitative one, where students are guided to reflect, problem-solve, and develop resilience rather than being judged or labelled.

14. She concluded by reiterating that life skills such as communication, empathy, decision-making, and emotional literacy must be viewed as core educational outcomes, aligned with the vision of NEP 2020. Faculty were encouraged to embed these skills organically within academic contexts, mentoring interactions, and institutional culture, thereby contributing to sustainable wellbeing ecosystems within higher education institutions.

15. Prof. Ashish Pandey, Professor at IIT Bombay, presented a research-informed perspective on flourishing and wellbeing, drawing from positive psychology, organisational behaviour, and Indian knowledge systems. He emphasized the need to move beyond deficit-based mental health models that focus only on stress and pathology, towards frameworks that identify protective factors and predictors of flourishing. Based on multi-site empirical studies, he highlighted that academic stress alone does not explain student distress; rather, self-direction, sense of agency, values clarity, identity, and social connectedness emerge as the strongest predictors of flourishing, while family cohesion primarily prevents languishing but does not guarantee wellbeing.

16. Prof. Pandey argued for a holistic and culturally rooted framework, proposing the *Panchakosha* model from Indian philosophy as an integrative lens encompassing physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual dimensions of wellbeing. He demonstrated how this framework aligns with and complements contemporary models such as PERMA (Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning & Accomplishment), self-determination theory, and capability approaches, while addressing gaps in Western-centric wellbeing paradigms. He cautioned against the uncritical commercialization of wellbeing initiatives and stressed the importance of scientific rigor, validated assessment tools, and data-driven policy design.

17. He further shared insights from longitudinal research and institutional interventions at IIT Bombay, showing that integrating yoga, mindfulness, and wellbeing practices into formal coursework—rather than as optional add-ons—leads to improved engagement, resilience, academic performance, psychological capital, and pro-social behaviour. He concluded by advocating for scalable, institution-level wellbeing systems supported by centralized dashboards and periodic assessments, enabling higher education institutions to track wellbeing profiles, identify risk patterns early, and foster sustainable ecosystems that promote both excellence and holistic human development.

18. Prof. Shailender Swaminathan, drawing on large-scale, continuously collected global and Indian data, presented a data-driven perspective on the youth mental health crisis, situating India's experience within a broader global context. He highlighted that mental wellbeing among young people has declined sharply over the past decade, with recent data showing that nearly half of Indian youth (18–24 years) report significant mental health struggles, alongside high levels of suicidal ideation and disengagement. He noted a structural shift from the earlier U-shaped wellbeing curve across age groups to a pattern in which younger cohorts now consistently report poorer mental wellbeing than older populations.

19. Prof. Swaminathan emphasised that mental wellbeing is closely linked to functioning and productivity, citing evidence that lower wellbeing correlates with increased absenteeism and reduced academic engagement. He identified several interrelated drivers of declining youth wellbeing, including early and intensive smartphone use, reduced physical activity, processed diets, environmental exposures, and weakening family and social bonds. Importantly, his analysis demonstrated that strong family relationships can offset the negative effects of economic

disadvantage, while higher income and academic performance do not necessarily protect against poor mental health, particularly among female students, underscoring the limitations of narrowly outcome-driven educational cultures.

20. He concluded by stressing the need to move beyond reactive counselling-only models toward preventive, root-cause-oriented institutional strategies informed by continuous data collection. He advocated for interventions that address technology use, social connectedness, lifestyle factors, and learning environments, supported by trans-diagnostic, scientifically validated wellbeing measures aligned with WHO definitions. Prof. Swaminathan reiterated the importance of sustained collaboration among higher education institutions, researchers, and policymakers to translate evidence into scalable, context-sensitive approaches for strengthening youth mental wellbeing in India.

21. The session concluded with a summarisation and vote of thanks by Dr. Dharma Rakshit Gautam from NIEPA.

**List of Attendees
Faculty Members**

S. No	Name of Institution	Faculty Nominated	Attendees	Absentees
1	Central University of Jharkhand	No Faculty Nominated		
2	Tripura University	1. Anirban Chandra 2. Anjana Kalai 3. Anjana Bhattacharjee 4. Arabinda Ghosh 5. Maitreyee Chakrabarty 6. Paramasree Dasgupta 7. R Jyoti 8. Rajesh Chatterjee 9. Rakhi Sutradhar 10. Samrat Goswami 11. Surajit Debnath	1. Anirban Chandra 2. Anjana Kalai 3. Anjana Bhattacharjee 4. Arabinda Ghosh 5. Maitreyee Chakrabarty	1. Paramasree Dasgupta 2. R Jyoti 3. Rajesh Chatterjee 4. Rakhi Sutradhar 5. Samrat Goswami 6. Surajit Debnath
3	University of Hyderabad	1. Aliba Ao 2. B. Ramaswamy Shamanna 3. Chivukula Venkata Usha 4. Joby Joseph 5. Krishna Reddy Chittedi 6. Meera Padhy 7. N.D.S. Naga Seema 8. Ravula Krishnaiah 9. Suvashisa Rana 10. Vemireddy Vamshi Krishna Reddy	1. Aliba Ao 2. B. Ramaswamy Shamanna 3. Chivukula Venkata Usha 4. Joby Joseph 5. Krishna Reddy Chittedi 6. Meera Padhy 7. N.D.S. Naga Seema 8. Suvashisa Rana 9. Vemireddy Vamshi Krishna Reddy	1. Ravula Krishnaiah
4	Visva Bharti	No Faculty Nominated		
5	Central University of Andhra Pradesh	1. Akriti Srivastava 2. Chelli Kavya 3. Dipankar 4. Haripriya 5. M.S.R. Anjaneyulu 6. Manasa 7. Mariya Raju	1. Akriti Srivastava 2. Chelli Kavya 3. Dipankar 4. Haripriya 5. M.S.R. Anjaneyulu 6. Manasa 7. Mariya Raju	-

		8. Niranjana 9. Ragini Gupta 10. Rajesh Kota 11. Shema Abraham	8. Niranjana 9. Ragini Gupta 10. Rajesh Kota 11. Shema Abraham	
6	Central Tribal University of Andhra Pradesh	No Faculty Nominated		
7	Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)	1. Biplab Jamatia 2. Kakoli Gogoi 3. Monika Misra 4. Mridula Rashmi Kindo 5. Neha Benada 6. Niradhar Dey 7. Rukshana Zaman 8. Shashank Yadav 9. Sunita Dhal 10. Swati Patra	1. Ashwini Kumar 2. Biplab Jamatia 3. Kakoli Gogoi 4. Monika Misra 5. Mridula Rashmi Kindo 6. Neha Benada 7. Niradhar Dey 8. Rukshana Zaman 9. Shashank Yadav 10. Sunita Dhal 11. Swati Patra	-
8	Indian Institute of Information Technology, Surat	No Faculty Nominated		
9	National Institute of Technology, Goa	1. Amol Rahulkar 2. Lalat Indugiri	1. Amol Rahulkar	1. Lalat Indugiri
10	National Institute of Technology, Uttarakhand	1. Abhinav Kumar 2. Anant Milan Khalkho 3. Dungali Sreehari 4. Meenakshi Rana 5. Sanat Aggarwal 6. Sarita Yadav 7. Sourav Bose	1. Abhinav Kumar 2. Anant Milan Khalkho 3. Meenakshi Rana 4. Sanat Aggarwal 5. Sarita Yadav 6. Sourav Bose	1. Dungali Sreehari
11	National Institute of Technology, Andhra Pradesh	1. Choudhary Shyam Prakash 2. J Krishnamurthy 3. Jayanthi Nv Prathyusha 4. K. Himabindu 5. Kiran Kumar Gurrala 6. Kuldeep Roy 7. Rajeswara Reddy Erva 8. Seenivasan Ayothiraman 9. Srikanth Allamsetty	1. Choudhary Shyam Prakash 2. J Krishnamurthy 3. Kuldeep Roy 4. Rajeswara Reddy Erva 5. Seenivasan Ayothiraman 6. Srikanth Allamsetty 7. Sunita Deb	1. Jayanthi Nv Prathyusha 2. K. Himabindu 3. Kiran Kumar Gurrala 4. Sudharm Rathore

		10. Sudharm Rathore 11. Sunita Deb		
12	National Institute of Technical Teachers Training & Research (NITTTR), Chandigarh	No Faculty Nominated		

Affiliation Details	Name of the Attendees
Ministry Officials, Resource Persons, Officials from NIEPA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr. D. K. Sharma, Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education 2. Dr. Jitendra Nagpal, Senior Psychiatrist & Program Director, Expressions India 3. Ms Geeta Mehrotra, Faculty, University and School Life Skills, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Expressions India 4. Prof. Ashish Pandey, IIT Bombay 5. Prof. Shailender Swaminathan, Sapien Labs, KREA University 6. Prof. Kumar Suresh, NIEPA 7. Prof. Dharma Rakshit Gautam, NIEPA 8. Mr. Ajay Kumar Sinha, Under Secretary, D/o Higher Education 9. Ms. Richa Shrivastava, Consultant, D/o Higher Education