

Two-Day Regional Workshop on Mental Wellbeing

Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme (MMTTP)

CELEBRATING MINDS From Academic Excellence to Sustainable Wellness



Date: 12–13 July 2026 (Two Days)
Venue: Terrace Hall (above Staff Canteen), IIT Madras

Department of Higher Education | Indian Institute of Technology Madras

Wellness Office, Dean of Students Affairs, IIT Madras

Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme

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1. Introduction

Building on IIT Madras' continued commitment to promoting mental health and wellbeing in higher education, the Institute organized a **Two-Day Regional Workshop on Mental Wellbeing** under the **Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme (MMTTP)** titled **"Celebrating Minds: From Academic Excellence to Sustainable Wellness"** on **12–13 July 2026 (Sunday–Monday)** at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras. The workshop focused on institutionalizing mental wellbeing as an integral component of the higher education ecosystem and encouraged holistic approaches to academic excellence and sustainable wellness.

The workshop brought together representatives from academic institutions, industry, healthcare, and humanitarian organizations across the Southern region of India. The event witnessed the participation of around **120 delegates** from leading institutions, including IITs, IISc, IISERs, NITs, Central Universities, and private higher educational institutions.

The workshop also featured **more than 40 distinguished speakers**, comprising academicians, mental health professionals, psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors, policymakers, and industry experts, who shared their expertise, experiences, and best practices in fostering mental wellbeing within educational ecosystems. Through interdisciplinary dialogue and collaborative learning, the programme provided a valuable platform for institutions to exchange ideas, strengthen mental health initiatives, and build resilient and inclusive academic communities.

2. About the Program

The workshop commenced with the registration of delegates, followed by the Welcome of Participants and the traditional Lighting of the Lamp ceremony.

The inaugural session featured welcome addresses by **Prof. V. Kamakoti, Director, IIT Madras**, **Prof. Satyanarayana Gummadi, Dean (Students), IIT Madras**, and **Ms. Rina Sonowal Kouli, Joint Secretary (Higher Education), Ministry of Education, Government of India**. The speakers emphasized the importance of prioritizing mental wellbeing in higher education institutions and fostering collaborative efforts to build resilient, inclusive, and supportive academic communities.

Following the inaugural addresses, **Prof. Satyanarayana Gummadi**, Dean (Students), IIT Madras, presented an overview of the two-day workshop, highlighting its objectives, structure, and multidisciplinary approach to promoting mental wellbeing. He outlined the thematic sessions covering governance reforms, student wellbeing initiatives, curricular innovations, psychiatry, counselling services, stress management strategies, resilience

building, and institutional best practices. The programme underscored the need to integrate mental wellbeing into institutional policies and practices as a cornerstone of academic excellence and sustainable wellness.

The two-day programme featured keynote addresses, expert talks, panel discussions, experience-sharing sessions, and interactive workshops delivered by more than **40 distinguished speakers**. These sessions provided participants with practical insights and evidence-based strategies to strengthen mental health support systems, promote sustainable wellness, and foster inclusive and supportive environments across higher educational institutions. The workshop concluded with discussions on institutional action plans and recommendations for embedding a culture of wellbeing across campuses, reinforcing the vision of "**Celebrating Minds: From Academic Excellence to Sustainable Wellness.**"

3. Workshop Registration

The registration of delegates commenced on the morning of **12 July 2026**, with participants from higher educational institutions, industry, healthcare, and humanitarian organizations reporting at the venue. Around **120 delegates** from IITs, IISc, IISERs, NITs, Central Universities, and private higher educational institutions across the Southern region of India registered for the two-day workshop. Upon registration, participants received the workshop kit, programme schedule, and resource materials before proceeding to the inaugural session.



4. Inaugural Ceremony

The workshop commenced with a formal inaugural ceremony. Participants were welcomed to IIT Madras and requested to observe the ceremonial proceedings. The dignitaries were invited to light the traditional lamp, symbolizing the beginning of the national workshop.

Dignitaries Present

- Padma Shri Prof. V. Kamakoti
Director, IIT Madras
- Ms. Rina Sonowal Kouli
Joint Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education
- Dr. Jitendra Nagpal
Director, Institute of Mental Health and Life Skills Promotion
- Other distinguished guests and faculty members

Invocation

The ceremony included the rendition of **Tamil Thai Vazhthu** followed by **Vande Mataram**, marking the formal commencement of the event.



Welcome of all participants and Lighting of the Lamp



4.1 Welcome Address by Prof. V Kamakoti, Director, IIT Madras

Prof. V. Kamakoti welcomed the participants and highlighted the growing importance of **student mental well-being** as a shared responsibility of educational institutions. He emphasized that ensuring a supportive and resilient campus environment requires sustained collaboration, evidence-based interventions, and a culture of empathy.

Prof. Kamakoti described IIT Madras's experience of five student suicides within six months in 2022–23, and the institution's response since: a 16-point wellness framework, Kushal/reverse-Kushal meetings, the Mitra listener network, and a dedicated Wellness Office — with no suicide reported on campus since April 2023.

He noted that roughly 75% of student distress cases have personal/interpersonal (not purely academic) roots, but institutions often absorb the blame.

A parental-engagement experiment — a simple two-question WhatsApp check-in ('Is your child happy?' 'Did you speak twice last week?') — drew a response rate of only about 2%, illustrating weak parent engagement despite its importance.

Reflecting on IIT Madras' journey, he shared how the institution transformed a period of crisis into an opportunity for systemic reform by strengthening counselling services, introducing structured wellness initiatives, promoting proactive student engagement, and fostering early intervention mechanisms. He noted that these measures have significantly strengthened the campus wellness ecosystem.

The Director underscored the importance of **holistic student development**, advocating equal emphasis on academics, sports, arts, culture, physical well-being, and emotional resilience. He also highlighted initiatives aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP), including sports and fine arts excellence admissions, wellness-focused campus infrastructure, and community-driven support systems.

He concluded by reaffirming that **students must remain at the centre of every institutional decision**, urging educators and administrators to adopt a compassionate, student-first approach in building healthier and more inclusive campuses.

Key Messages

The Director concluded with several important reflections:

- Wellness is everyone's responsibility.
- Prevention is more effective than crisis response.
- Institutions should learn from each other's experiences.
- Faculty members must see themselves first as mentors.
- Academic excellence and student well-being must go hand in hand.



4.2 Presentation of ISO 45001:2018 Certification

A special highlight of the inaugural session was the presentation of the **ISO 45001:2018 Certification** to the **IIT Madras Wellness Centre**, recognizing its Occupational Health and Safety Management System. The certification marks a significant milestone in institutional efforts towards creating healthier, safer, and more supportive campus environments and is believed to be the **first such certification awarded to an educational institution for its wellness initiatives**.

The organizing committee acknowledged the contributions of **Prof. Vijayalakshmi (Department of Management Studies)**, **Dr. Jeevan Das**, and **Prof. Sarathi** for their guidance and support in achieving this recognition. Officials from **TÜV Nord India**, **Mr. Vinod S. Panicker** and **Mr. Arun T.**, formally presented the ISO certificate to **Prof. V. Kamakoti, Director, IIT Madras**, commemorating the institute's commitment to fostering a culture of health, safety, and well-being on campus.



4.3 Address by Ms. Rina Sonowal Kouli, Joint Secretary (Higher Education), Ministry of Education

Ms. Rina Sonowal Kouli commended IIT Madras for hosting the workshop and appreciated the institute's leadership in developing a comprehensive and resilient campus wellness ecosystem. She acknowledged the commitment of the leadership in integrating student well-being with academic excellence and creating an empathetic campus environment.

She highlighted the Ministry of Education's ongoing efforts to strengthen institutional capacity through the **Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme**, under which regular capacity-building programmes on student mental health and well-being have been conducted since January 2024. In collaboration with Dr. Jitendra Nagpal and his team, the initiative has reached over **3,000 faculty members** across centrally funded institutions, equipping them to better support student well-being.

Emphasizing that campuses serve as a **second home** for students, she noted the importance of creating safe, supportive, and responsive institutional environments through effective counselling systems, crisis response mechanisms, and collaborative engagement. She encouraged participating institutions to learn from one another, share best practices, and collectively develop flexible frameworks that address the diverse well-being needs of students.

Concluding her address, Ms. Kouli urged faculty members to actively promote empathetic and student-centric campuses by strengthening counselling support and fostering a culture where **students remain at the centre of all institutional activities**.



4.4 Address by Dr. Jitendra Nagpal, Director (In-charge), Institute of Mental Health and Life Skills Promotion, New Delhi & Director, Expressions India

Dr. Jitendra Nagpal described the workshop as a significant step towards strengthening **mental health, resilience, and well-being** as integral components of higher education. Referring to the theme "*Celebrating Minds*," he emphasized that wellness should not be viewed as a standalone initiative but as an essential part of the educational ecosystem.

He highlighted India's unique demographic strengths, including its large youth population, diversity, and digital reach, and stressed that these present an opportunity to build globally relevant models for campus well-being. He encouraged participants to view themselves not merely as attendees, but as **change leaders** responsible for translating the workshop's learnings into meaningful institutional practices.

Dr. Nagpal further emphasized the importance of **family and alumni engagement** in nurturing student well-being and advocated for stronger community participation in campus support systems. He concluded by urging institutions to embrace wellness as a way of life and to foster educational environments that promote resilience, empathy, and holistic development.

4.5 Presentation on the IIT Madras Student Wellness Ecosystem

By Prof. Satyanarayana Gummadi, Dean (Students), IIT Madras

Prof. Satyanarayana Gummadi welcomed the participants on behalf of IIT Madras and expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Education for organizing the workshop at the institute. He shared the evolution of the **IIT Madras Student Wellness Ecosystem**, explaining how a series of campus challenges prompted the institute to develop a comprehensive, institution-wide framework for student well-being. He emphasized that student wellness is a collective responsibility, requiring the active participation of students, faculty, administrators, counsellors, and parents.

He highlighted the key components of the wellness ecosystem, including a structured grievance redressal mechanism, the **Kushal** and **Reverse Kushal** initiatives to strengthen faculty–student engagement and institutional feedback, proactive student support groups, peer mentoring, inclusive support for students with disabilities, and a strengthened counselling system. The **Be Happy** portal serves as a central platform integrating these initiatives and providing accessible wellness resources for students.

Prof. Gummadi also described the **Kushal** programme, under which faculty members interact regularly with their mentees to identify academic or personal concerns at an early

stage. Complementary initiatives such as **Kushal Dining** encourage informal interactions between faculty and students, helping build trust while also providing valuable feedback for continuous improvement of campus facilities and student services. Information gathered through these mechanisms enables timely intervention by the Wellness Centre and the administration whenever students require additional support.

Prof. Gummadi further explained the institute's mechanisms for **early identification and intervention** in student distress, including structured monitoring of high-risk cases, faculty and staff capacity building, alumni mentoring, parent engagement, and 24×7 emergency support systems. He also highlighted initiatives such as wellness surveys, orientation programmes for students and parents, flexible academic support for students facing mental health challenges, and extracurricular activities that promote holistic development. He concluded by outlining IIT Madras' vision of creating a comprehensive "**third space**" dedicated to student wellness and reaffirmed the institute's commitment to building a safe, inclusive, and student-centric campus through sustained collaboration and continuous improvement.



4.6 Presentation on Student Wellness Initiatives at IIT Madras

Col. Balaji, Senior Wellness Officer, IIT Madras

Col. Balaji presented an overview of the **student wellness framework at IIT Madras**, highlighting the diverse backgrounds of the student community and the importance of creating an inclusive environment that supports their academic, emotional, and social well-being. He explained the distinction between **stress and distress**, emphasizing that while stress is a normal part of student life, prolonged and unmanaged stress can adversely affect mental health, relationships, and academic performance, necessitating timely intervention.

Referring to findings from **NIMHANS**, he underscored the need for early identification of students experiencing psychological distress and the importance of encouraging help-seeking behaviour.

He outlined the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural indicators of distress and emphasized that **student well-being is a collective responsibility** shared by students, faculty, wardens, counsellors, medical professionals, and the institute administration. He described the institute's coordinated referral mechanism, through which concerns identified by peers, faculty, student volunteer groups, or healthcare professionals are systematically referred to the appropriate support services, ensuring timely intervention and comprehensive care for students in need.

Concluding his presentation, Col. Balaji highlighted the importance of **mental health awareness programmes, gatekeeper training, structured crisis response protocols, regular well-being check-ins, and accessible counselling services** in building a supportive campus culture. He reiterated that fostering an environment where every student feels noticed, heard, and supported is essential for promoting resilience, well-being, and academic success.



5. Day 1: Workshop Session/ Presentation/ Panel Discussion

5.1 Stress-Free Education: Discovering Inner Strength

Speaker:

Name	Organization
Swami Narasimhananda Ji	Ramakrishna Math, Kozhikode

Swami Narsimhanandaji shared insights from the Ramakrishna Mission's extensive experience in managing educational institutions across the country and emphasized that **student wellness must begin with healthy lifestyle practices**. Drawing upon the concept of the **circadian rhythm**, he stressed the importance of adequate sleep, disciplined daily routines, and alignment with natural biological cycles, noting that these are fundamental to students' physical and psychological well-being. He observed that irregular sleep patterns and excessive late-night use of digital devices are among the key contributors to stress and poor mental health in higher educational institutions.

He advocated institutional measures that encourage healthy routines, including regular sleep schedules, balanced nutrition, and opportunities for meaningful social interaction beyond digital platforms. Citing examples from the Ramakrishna Mission and other institutions, he highlighted how discipline, structured hostel life, and periodic digital detox initiatives can positively influence student well-being and resilience.

Referring to the holistic view of human development described in the **Upanishads**, Swami Narsimhanandaji emphasized that wellness extends beyond mental health to encompass physical health, breath, mind, intellect, and inner well-being. He concluded by reiterating that educational institutions should cultivate healthy habits and supportive environments that enable students to flourish both academically and personally.

During the interactive session, Swami Narsimhanandaji emphasized that higher education should move beyond **content delivery** towards fostering **critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities**. He observed that teaching methods in many technical institutions continue to focus on syllabus completion rather than nurturing students' intellectual and professional competencies, contributing to the gap between academic training and industry expectations.

Responding to a question on engaging students from diverse backgrounds, he stressed the importance of building **genuine rapport** with students by understanding their interests, experiences, and aspirations rather than relying on formal interactions alone. He also highlighted the role of **parents, alumni, and experienced community members** as

potential mentors who can provide guidance and emotional support, particularly for students lacking adequate family engagement.

Swami Narsimhanandaji also emphasized the importance of **psychological literacy** to reduce the stigma associated with mental health. Referring to the **Johns Hopkins University Psychological First Aid** course, he suggested that similar training could be provided to student volunteers to help them identify distress, listen empathetically without being judgmental, and facilitate timely support for peers. He further underscored the role of **spiritual well-being** in holistic education, drawing upon the teachings of **Swami Vivekananda's "Lectures from Colombo to Almora"** and the **Chandogya Upanishad** to stress that education should ultimately foster **self-awareness, purpose, and inner growth**, alongside academic excellence

Concluding his address, **Swami Narsimhanandaji** emphasized that the true purpose of education is not merely to produce engineers or managers but to nurture **complete, fulfilled, and content human beings**, in line with the holistic vision of the **National Education Policy (NEP)**. He recommended four key practices for promoting student well-being: adopting healthy sleep routines aligned with the body's circadian rhythm, fostering meaningful and non-judgmental faculty–student engagement, strengthening mentorship through faculty, alumni, retired faculty, and experienced community members, and integrating basic psychological training, meditation, and reflective practices into campus life. Drawing upon the teachings of the **Chandogya Upanishad**, particularly the dialogue between **Shvetaketu and his father culminating** in the principle of "**Tat Tvam Asi**", he underscored the importance of self-awareness and self-discovery as central to holistic education. He concluded by encouraging institutions to create supportive environments that cultivate purpose, resilience, and inner growth, while expressing the Ramakrishna Mission's willingness to collaborate in advancing student wellness initiatives.



5.2 Panel Discussion: From Stress to Success: Policy for Student Wellbeing

Panel Members:

Name	Designation	Organization
Prof. Prathap Haridoss	Dean (Academic Courses)	IIT Madras
Ms. Rina Sonowal Kouli	Joint Secretary (Higher Education)	Ministry of Education
Dr. Jitendra Nagpal	Director In-charge	Institute of Mental Health & Life Skills Promotion, New Delhi
Prof. Shailender Swaminathan	Professor	Sapien Labs, Krea University
Prof. K. Vipinendran	Director (Alumni Affairs)	Anna University, Chennai

The panel, moderated by Prof. Haridoss, opened with a discussion of the sources of student stress before turning to policy responses.

- **Sources of stress:** academic pressure, placement/career anxiety, family and relationship baggage students carry into campus, and a widening gap between faculty and students' lived experience (e.g., awareness of youth media habits such as Korean dramas).
- **Faculty wellbeing:** panellists cautioned against treating faculty as infallible; faculty also need structured support, and communication style (softening refusals, offering alternatives) reduces perceived stress transmitted to students.
- **Building resilience to failure:** encouraging participation in sports and other “win-or-lose” activities was proposed as a low-cost way to normalise setbacks.
- **Mind/brain science:** an experiential demonstration illustrated how a single suggested thought (“you are weak” / “you are strong”) measurably changes physical response, used to explain the mind–body connection and the importance of positive framing in teaching.

5.3 Panel Discussion: Building an Ecosystem for Student Support

Panel Members:

Name	Designation	Organization
Mr. Sridhar Boovaraghavan	President, IIT Madras Alumni Association	IIT Madras
Dr. Manimala	Psychiatrist	Kauvery Hospital, Chennai
Dr. Senthil	Medical Officer	ACS Medical College, Chennai
Shri Devendra Kumar Sharma	Director, Department of Higher Education	Ministry of Education
Mr. Rahul Mahamalla	Student and Mitr Head	IIT Madras
Mrs. Richa Singh	Founder	YourDOST

- **IIT Madras support architecture:** presented via student contributions — Mitra (peer first-point-of-contact, trained in barefoot counselling), Sati (mentor–mentee & academic-buddy programme), the Wellness Centre (professional counsellors across departments/hostels), Inclusive Education cell (for students with disabilities), and the “Be Happy” portal integrating Kushal faculty–student check-ins.
- **GN (General) elective courses:** including a popular “Happiness” course, cited as reducing academic stress by giving students room to explore non-disciplinary interests.
- **YourDOST's role:** a four-year partnership offering online/offline counselling, screening surveys for incoming students, and capacity-building for peer supporters and faculty.
- **Clinical perspective:** roughly one-third of students nationally report depressive symptoms and about a quarter report moderate-to-severe anxiety (NIMHANS data cited); more than a third of students with suicidal ideation had shared these thoughts with someone beforehand — reinforcing the value of peer “listeners” networks and early recognition.
- **Ministry capacity-building:** described as shifting focus from crisis response to prevention, from individual counselling to institution-wide, student-led ecosystems with multiple support pathways.



5.4 Building Resilience and Life Skills for Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing

Members:

Name	Designation	Organization
Dr. Geetha Mehrotra	Senior Master Trainer in Life Skills	Resilience Building and Mental Health in Universities
Prof. Edamana Prasad	Professor	IIT Madras
Col. Jaykumar (Retd.)		IIT Madras

Led by Dr. Geeta Mehrotra and Col. Balaji, this session used a balloon-protection game to model peer-pressure resistance strategies (refusal, avoidance, seeking alternatives) before turning to a frank discussion of substance abuse.

- **Scale of the issue:** cited WHO data suggesting roughly 80% of mental-health-related presentations have some link to substance use; India was described as the world's largest illegal exporter of cannabis (bhang/ganja/charas) and an importer of LSD, cocaine and other high-risk substances, often via the “Golden Triangle” route.
- **Cultural normalization:** panelists noted that customs around alcohol/opium in some regional and ceremonial contexts can normalize early exposure, complicating prevention messaging.
- **Institutional response at IIT Madras:** a vigilance mechanism identifies substance use in hostels; a disciplinary committee handles consequences, while the Wellness Centre concurrently supports affected students psychologically, including cases with self-harm risk following disciplinary action; a semester break/de-addiction pathway is available for severe cases. Any testing (e.g., urine-based screening) is treated as strictly voluntary and confidential, not mandatory, given legal constraints.
- **Institutional Wellbeing Checklist:** Shri Devendra Kumar Sharma introduced a Ministry-issued self-assessment checklist (distributed to delegates) spanning governance and leadership, faculty/staff capacity-building, student-led support structures, hostel and residential wellbeing, inclusion and safeguarding, monitoring/documentation, and community engagement — intended as a living, evolving diagnostic tool for centrally funded institutions, reinforced by a 2024 Supreme Court directive (*Sukanya vs. Union of India*) mandating periodic faculty/staff sensitization on wellbeing.

5.5 Managing Stress: Clinical Demonstration and Case Studies

Members:

Name	Designation	Organization
Dr. Srividya	Psychologist	Myndwell
Prof. Sarith P. Sathyan	Advisor (Wellness)	IIT Madras

Dr. Srividya (Psychologist, Mindwell Consultants), in conversation with Prof. Sarath P. Sathian (Advisor, Wellness, IIT Madras), reframed stress through an evolutionary and behavioural-neuroscience lens rather than a purely symptom-based one. She described three interacting brain structures: the amygdala (which detects threat and stores emotional salience), the hippocampus (which supplies memory context for that threat), and the prefrontal cortex — the “thinking brain” responsible for planning, reasoning and decision-making. This survival circuitry, she explained, evolved roughly 50,000 years ago to guard against a narrow set of threats — physical danger and social exclusion from the tribe — but in modern life is increasingly triggered by a third category, psychological threat (deadlines, comparison, fear of missing out), for which it was never designed. The resulting hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) response releases adrenaline and cortisol regardless of whether the threat is a predator or a pending exam, and the brain's built-in “negativity bias” makes it quicker to register threat than reassurance.

She distinguished acute, short-lived (and often adaptive) stress from chronic stress, noting that a single stress response can take roughly 8–10 hours for the body to fully recover from physiologically; when a new stressor arrives before that recovery is complete, the nervous system never resets. Left unregulated over time, she said, this contributes to a wide range of downstream effects — weakened immunity, gastric reflux (from stress-elevated stomach acid), migraine, and metabolic disorders including thyroid dysfunction, PCOS, diabetes and hypertension — and cited case examples from her practice, including a fertility-treatment case in which conception followed after stress regulation, and a case of worsening vitiligo that stabilized once stress levels were addressed. She offered delegates a simple four-question self-regulation practice — what is my brain trying to protect me from; is this actually a physical, social or psychological threat; what response does the situation genuinely require; and what can I do to support my nervous system right now — and closed the session by leading all delegates through a guided body-scan and breathing relaxation exercise.



5.6 Ceiling-Fan Safety Device Demonstration

Dr. Balaganesan (IIT Madras) demonstrated a low-cost engineering intervention: a spring-loaded ceiling-fan mount that detaches under loads above ~35 kg, designed to prevent hanging deaths in hostel rooms. Since 2020, roughly 9,000 units have been installed at IIT Madras hostels, 4,500 at IIT Hyderabad and 2,500 at IIT Palakkad, with 15,000 more planned at IIT Kharagpur; no hanging incidents have occurred at IIT Madras hostels in the last 3–4 years since installation.

5.7 Field Visit to Hostel and Mess/Dining Hall – Discussions

Interaction with Hostel Managers, Wardens, Buddies, Mitr Volunteers and Students, followed by a Post-Visit Discussion

Delegates were divided into six groups and taken on guided visits to IIT Madras hostels (Mandakini, Sindhu, Swarnamukhi, Saburmati and others) and mess facilities, meeting hostel wardens, the Chairman of the Council of Wardens (CCW), and observing student-run mess-monitoring committees, hostel affairs secretaries, counsellor visiting schedules posted on hostel doors, and inclusive-education accommodation for students with disabilities. Feedback highlighted the well-maintained infrastructure, student-led mess governance (including fines for caterers on hygiene lapses), 24×7 medical/ambulance support, and the visible integration of counselling contact information into everyday hostel spaces.

5.8 Practical Demonstration: Cultivating Wellbeing through Life Skills and the Indian Knowledge System (IKS)

Speaker:

Name	Designation	Organization
Dr. R. Shailaja	Medical Officer	Siddha–AYUSH, AIIMS Jodhpur
Dr. G. Kavitha	General and Sleep Physician	Founder, Nannalam lifestyle clinic, Anna nagar Chennai

Dr. G. Kavitha (General Physician & International Sleep Disorder Specialist): noted the American Heart Association's recent addition of sleep as an “eighth pillar” of cardiovascular health, and that memory is consolidated and organized specifically during sleep — making poor sleep a direct academic cost, separate from its metabolic effects. She offered students a “SMART” framework (study in a properly paced way aligned to the syllabus; master a fixed daily schedule; achieve a balance between emotional and social wellbeing; practice regular self-care; and keep thoughts and focus on one's own growth rather than comparison with peers), quick anxiety-relief techniques (simple deep breathing; the “4-7-8” method — inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 7, exhale for 8; and grounding techniques such as walking barefoot, holding a cold object, or verbally describing a calming scene), and an “8-3-2-1” pre-sleep routine — no caffeine within 8 hours of bedtime, dinner finished 3 hours before, physical activity completed 2 hours before, and screens off 1 hour before sleep. She cautioned against equating sleep quality with duration alone: consistent circadian timing (a fixed bed/wake schedule, broadly 11 p.m.–6 a.m.) matters as much as total hours logged.

Strategies

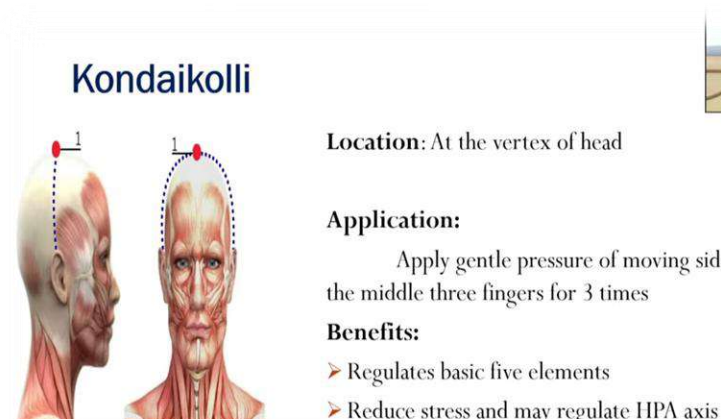


Coping Strategies And Self Care Activity and Mindfulness



Siddha Medicine, Varmam Therapy and Sleep Science

- **Dr. R. Shailaja (Medical Officer, Siddha, AIIMS Jodhpur):** introduced Siddha as the traditional Tamil medical system, tracing its earliest references to the ~5,000-year-old grammatical text Tolkappiyam and to the teachings of eighteen Siddhars headed by Sage Agastya. She outlined its foundation in three humors - Vaadham (air), Pitham (heat) and Kapham (mucus/secretion), arising from the permutation of five elements — and traditional dietary guidance (e.g., thinned buttermilk rather than curd for hypertension or acidity, moderate ghee, and boiled-and-cooled water stored in mud or copper vessels). She then led a live demonstration of Varmam therapy - very light, precisely sequenced pressure applied at eight energy points mapped to specific chakras: Kundalikkozhi (crown of the head, Sahasrara), Sunami Kolam (above the ears, Sahasrara), Pachivam (between the eyebrows, Agna), Thumikkalam (the suprasternal notch, Vishuddhi), Nervam and Adappalam (solar plexus and lower ribs, both Anahata), Anaikkalam (the navel, Manipura) and Kalidai Kolam (six finger-widths below the navel, Swadhishtana). Prof. Sarath Sathian, co-presenting, reported approximately 425 patient footfalls a month at IIT Madras's newly established Siddha wellness centre, with faculty and students most commonly seeking relief from anxiety and frozen shoulder.
- **Dr. Pranjul Singh (Assistant Professor, Psychiatry, AIIMS Jodhpur, joining via video):** described how, after parents of children referred to IIT Madras's Siddha unit reported improvements in hyperactivity, sleep and behavioural regulation, her psychiatry department began referring adult patients as well, including cases of OCD and emotional-dysregulation, and a patient with PTSD whose recurrent drug-allergic reactions had been limiting pharmacological treatment options — Varmam therapy was associated with fewer allergic episodes and reduced hospitalisation in that case. She also referenced a University of California study applying Siddha-style practices (intermittent fasting, gratitude) that reported improved subjective wellbeing — described by participants as a state of “flow” — even among patients with significant physical illness such as obesity or cardiac disease, while cautioning that rigorous, profile-specific research on who benefits most from Varmam therapy remains limited and is still needed.



6. Day 2: Workshop Session/ Presentation/ Panel Discussion

Day 2 began with the registration and welcome of participants, during which they were warmly received and oriented to the day's schedule. As part of the initial engagement, Dr. Jitendra Nagpal introduced and explained the university booklet, which serves as a comprehensive welcome kit. He highlighted that the booklet contains all essential details, guidelines, and resources related to the programme, designed to support participants throughout the workshop.

Following this, participants were asked to casually review the last four pages of the *University Public Institution Well-being Indicators* booklet. These pages outline key domains for implementation across higher education institutions as part of a provisional checklist for establishing a wellness paradigm. Participants were encouraged to reflect on these basic minimum standards and consider how they could be applied within their own institutions, noting that the framework may be further refined in the future. They were also invited to share preliminary observations and suggestions regarding institutional readiness and possible areas of improvement.

The programme formally commenced with a request for participants to be seated, followed by a welcome address and a brief announcement regarding a minor schedule adjustment. The first session featured **Prof. Sivakumar**, Professor, Department of Applied Mechanics and Biomedical Engineering, IIT Madras, who was felicitated before delivering his address on student wellbeing and life skills. The day's discussions focused on translating the workshop's learnings into practical strategies for building a sustainable culture of mental wellbeing across higher educational institutions.



6.1 The Progressive Mindset: Pathways to Happiness, Wellbeing and Success

Speaker:

Name	Designation	Organization
Prof. Siva Kumar	Professor, Department of Applied Mechanics and Biomedical Engineering	IIT Madras

Prof. Sivakumar delivered an engaging and highly interactive session on cultivating a progressive mindset as the foundation for happiness, wellbeing, and success. Through experiential activities, storytelling, and reflective discussions, he emphasized that wellbeing is shaped not only by academic achievement but also by resilience, self-awareness, and supportive institutional practices.

Using simple demonstrations, including a pencil-catching activity and everyday life examples, he illustrated the importance of being selective in responding to life's challenges, letting go of setbacks, and focusing on opportunities for growth. He highlighted that "wellbeing begins when one difficult moment does not occupy the many moments that follow," encouraging participants to help students recover quickly from failures and disappointments.

A key message of the session was that students should never be defined solely by numerical indicators such as CGPA or examination scores. Instead, faculty members should strive to understand students beyond academic performance by recognizing their strengths, personal growth, and unique circumstances. He encouraged institutions to replace judgment with meaningful engagement and empathetic listening.

Prof. Sivakumar also demonstrated the importance of institutional support through a structural engineering analogy, explaining that just as a structure requires support to withstand increasing loads, students need timely guidance, mentoring, peer support, and humane academic systems to build resilience under academic pressure. He stressed that institutions should create pathways for recovery, balance academic expectations with adequate support, and progressively strengthen students' capacity to handle challenges.

Drawing upon IIT Madras' initiatives, he shared several best practices, including life skills courses, personal development electives, peer-listening programmes, and campus-wide wellbeing initiatives that integrate mental wellbeing into both the curriculum and institutional culture.

The session concluded with a reflective group exercise in which participants identified practical interventions that could be implemented in their own institutions to reduce unnecessary stress, strengthen support systems, and foster a progressive mindset among students. Prof. Sivakumar reiterated that lasting institutional wellbeing begins with faculty members who model empathy, resilience, and a growth-oriented approach, ultimately creating campuses where academic excellence and sustainable wellness go hand in hand.

Discussion Highlights

- ✓ Mental wellbeing should be embedded within institutional policies, teaching practices, and campus culture to create a supportive learning environment.
- ✓ Faculty should promote a progressive mindset by helping students recover from setbacks, recognizing their strengths beyond academic performance, and encouraging resilience.
- ✓ Institutions should strengthen mentoring, peer support, life skills education, and counselling



6.2 Panel Discussion: Lifestyle Issues and Preventive Strategies for Student Wellbeing

Panel Members:

Name	Designation	Organization
Dr. Gowrishankar	Medical Officer	IIT Madras
Prof. Mathangi D. C.	Professor and Head, Body Mind Medicine and Lifestyle Sciences	Sri Ramachandra Medical College, Chennai
Dr. Krishnamurthy	Senior Dietitian	Sundar Super Speciality Hospital, Chennai
Dr. Yamini Kannappan	Psychiatrist	Kauvery Hospital
Dr. Bharath Rathnam	Psychiatric Social Worker	

The panel discussion brought together experts from medicine, psychiatry, nutrition, lifestyle sciences, and social work to examine the lifestyle factors influencing student mental wellbeing and to identify preventive strategies that higher educational institutions can adopt.

- **Dr. Gowrishankar**, Medical Officer, IIT Madras, highlighted the importance of preventive healthcare through regular health check-ups, early diagnosis, and health awareness programmes. He noted that many students experience lifestyle-related health issues due to inadequate sleep, irregular routines, and poor self-care. He also emphasized the importance of monitoring nutritional deficiencies, particularly **Vitamin D deficiency**, which is common among students and can contribute to fatigue, low energy levels, poor concentration, and low mood. He further stressed the need for routine screening for common deficiencies and promoting healthy sleep hygiene practices.
- **Prof. Mathangi D. C.** discussed the strong connection between lifestyle and mental wellbeing. She emphasized that regular physical activity, exposure to sunlight, adequate sleep, mindfulness practices, and stress management are essential for maintaining emotional resilience and preventing burnout. She encouraged students to adopt healthy daily routines rather than relying on short-term solutions. She also highlighted the importance of digital wellbeing and reducing excessive screen time, especially before sleep.
- **Dr. Krishnamurthy**, Senior Dietitian, emphasized that nutrition plays a vital role in both physical and mental health. He highlighted the importance of consuming a balanced diet rich in proteins, fruits, vegetables, and essential micronutrients, while

reducing processed foods and sugary beverages. He also discussed the role of nutrients such as **Vitamin D, Vitamin B12, iron, and calcium** in supporting brain function, energy levels, and emotional wellbeing. He further recommended hydration awareness and mindful eating practices among students.

- **Dr. Yamini Kannappan**, Psychiatrist, addressed the increasing prevalence of stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout among students. She stressed the importance of recognizing early warning signs, reducing stigma associated with mental health, and ensuring timely access to professional psychiatric care and counselling. She also emphasized the need for crisis support systems and accessible helplines within campuses.
- **Dr. Bharath Rathnam**, Psychiatric Social Worker, highlighted the importance of psychosocial support through peer networks, mentoring, and family engagement. He emphasized creating safe and inclusive campus environments where students feel comfortable seeking help and supporting one another. He also underscored the role of life-skills training, including communication skills, emotional regulation, and coping strategies.

Discussion Highlights

- **Sleep:** described as the most under-valued, zero-cost health intervention. Panelists urged aligning sleep with circadian rhythm (melatonin/cortisol cycles), noting that late-night academic “productivity” often trades short-term output for long-term metabolic and cognitive costs; a two-week sleep-hygiene reset was cited as sufficient to normalize a disrupted cycle.
- **Nutrition:** the “plate method” (half vegetables/fruit, a quarter whole grains, a quarter protein), diversifying cereals, avoiding single-source starch-heavy meals, adequate hydration, moderate ghee intake, egg consumption (including yolk) for protein and B12, and earlier dinner timing (around 8:00–8:30 p.m.) to support metabolism were recommended. Practical institutional actions included encouraging mess vendors to serve proper dal and protein portions.
- **Physical activity:** even brief “micro-activity” — calf raises, stretch breaks every 30 minutes, short walks — was shown to meaningfully affect blood-sugar regulation and cognitive performance (via BDNF and endorphin release), alongside encouragement of regular sport participation.
- **Psychological lifestyle:** beyond sleep/diet/exercise, panelists highlighted the need to address technology and media consumption, chronic loneliness (distinct from solitude), and social-connection deficits, describing loneliness as reaching “epidemic proportions” even amid hyper-connectivity.
- **Vitamin D & B12:** clarified that Vitamin D deficiency in India is less strongly linked to wellbeing outcomes than in Western literature (given greater sun exposure), whereas

B12 deficiency — common among vegetarians — is clinically significant and a treatable cause of reversible cognitive decline.



6.3 Institution Wellbeing Review Checklist and Initiatives taken up by the Ministry of Education

Panel Discussion on Early Identification and Management of Red Flag Signs

Members:

Name	Designation	Organization
Dr. Jitendra Nagpal	Director In-charge	Institute of Mental Health & Life Skills Promotion, New Delhi
Prof. Manish Anand	Head, Inclusive Education	IIT Madras
Ms. Sonakshi Nay	Clinical Psychologist	YourDOST
Prof. Shailender Swaminathan	Professor	Sapien Labs, Krea University
Ms. Vyjayanthi Manian	Career Development Expert	Columbia University

The panel discussion focused on promoting student mental well-being through early identification of psychological concerns, inclusive education, and evidence-based institutional practices. Experts emphasized that creating a supportive campus environment requires collaboration among faculty, administrators, counsellors, and policymakers.

Prof. Manish Anand shared IIT Madras' experience in fostering an inclusive campus by providing assistive technologies, reasonable accommodations, and academic support for students with disabilities. The discussion highlighted the importance of recognizing and supporting students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs), such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia, through timely assessment and appropriate academic accommodations.

The panel stressed that mental health concerns often appear through subtle behavioral changes before academic performance declines. Faculty members, being the first point of contact for students, were encouraged to recognize early warning signs such as social withdrawal, reduced classroom participation, emotional distress, and declining engagement, and to refer students to professional support services when necessary.

Discussions also emphasized the value of evidence-based interventions and continuous monitoring of student well-being. Research findings highlighted the impact of healthy lifestyle practices—including adequate sleep, regular physical activity, balanced nutrition, and reduced exposure to unhealthy habits—on improving students' mental health and overall well-being.

The session further explored the relationship between career aspirations and mental wellness. Panelists observed that increasing academic and career pressures often affect students' emotional well-being, making it essential for institutions to integrate career guidance with counselling and psychological support.

Representatives from the Ministry of Education highlighted ongoing national initiatives to strengthen institutional capacity through faculty training, awareness programmes, and implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016. Participants were encouraged to adopt inclusive policies, establish effective support systems, and promote a campus culture that prioritizes mental health, accessibility, and student success.

The session concluded with a strong message that student well-being is a shared institutional responsibility. Through early identification, inclusive practices, faculty sensitization, and collaborative support systems, higher educational institutions can create safe, healthy, and enabling environments where every student can thrive academically and personally.

Key Takeaways

- Promote inclusive and accessible campuses for all students.
- Identify early warning signs of mental health concerns.
- Provide timely support and appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities.
- Strengthen faculty awareness through regular training and capacity building.
- Use evidence-based approaches to improve student well-being.
- Foster a campus culture that values mental health, inclusion, and student success equally.

6.4 Practical Session: Experiential Learning Through Interactive Activities

The practical session was designed to demonstrate how simple, engaging activities can effectively teach participants about **stress management, peer pressure, decision-making, resilience, and mental well-being**. Instead of traditional lectures, the facilitators used experiential learning techniques that encouraged active participation, reflection, and discussion.



Energizer Activity

The session began with a short energizer where participants were asked to stand, stretch, clap, jump, and perform simple movements. This activity helped refresh participants after a long session, increased energy levels, improved concentration, and prepared everyone for active learning.

Balloon Activity – Understanding Stress and Peer Pressure

Each participant received a balloon and was instructed to inflate it, tie it to one foot, and protect it while trying to burst others' balloons once the game began. Background music created an energetic environment, encouraging participants to think quickly and react under pressure.



Participants adopted different strategies during the activity:

- Some actively tried to burst others' balloons.
- Some focused only on protecting their own balloon.
- A few stayed away from the crowd to avoid conflict.
- One participant creatively obtained a second balloon, showing an alternative approach to problem-solving.
- Others chose cooperation rather than competition.

After the activity, the facilitators encouraged participants to reflect on their decisions and connect them with real-life situations.

Key Learning from the Activity

The discussion highlighted that people respond differently when faced with stress and peer pressure. The balloon represented an individual's well-being, while the surrounding participants represented external pressures from society, colleagues, friends, or institutions.

The facilitators emphasized that:

- There is rarely only one solution to a problem.
- People naturally adopt different coping strategies depending on the situation.
- Decision-making should be thoughtful rather than impulsive.
- Respecting rules while finding creative solutions is an important life skill.
- Stress can be managed effectively through awareness, planning, and emotional control.

Participants also discussed how similar situations arise in educational institutions, workplaces, and personal life where individuals must balance responsibilities, expectations, and personal well-being.

Discussion on Stress in Educational Institutions

The facilitators invited participants to share real-life stressors experienced in their institutions. Common challenges included:

- High expectations from students and administration.
- Pressure to meet deadlines.
- Managing hostel and campus issues.
- Maintaining discipline while supporting student welfare.
- Balancing professional responsibilities with personal well-being.

Participants explained that unrealistic expectations, perfectionism, and constant demands often become major sources of stress for faculty and administrators.

The discussion concluded that stress is unavoidable, but developing healthy coping mechanisms, emotional resilience, and supportive institutional systems can significantly reduce its impact.

Session on Substance Abuse and Mental Health

The second part of the practical session focused on **substance abuse, addiction, and student mental health**.

The facilitators explained that peer pressure often leads students to experiment with tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, and other addictive substances. While many students initially try these substances to fit into social groups, occasional use can gradually develop into addiction and eventually affect mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being.

The discussion highlighted several important points:

- Peer pressure is one of the strongest influences leading to substance use.
- Legal substances such as tobacco and alcohol often become the gateway to more harmful addictions.
- Digital addiction, gambling, and substance abuse are all behavioural addictions that require attention.
- Educational institutions should prioritize awareness, early identification, counselling, and rehabilitation rather than punishment alone.
- Confidential counselling and family support play a crucial role in helping affected students recover.

Participants also discussed institutional challenges in identifying substance abuse, handling disciplinary issues sensitively, and balancing student welfare with institutional policies.

7. Overview of the Session

This was the concluding session of a two-day national workshop on mental health and well-being hosted at IIT Madras for representatives of centrally funded higher education institutions (IITs, NITs, IIMs, central universities, IIITs, and other institutes of national importance), organized under the aegis of the Ministry of Education.

The session was chaired by Ms. Rina Sonowal Kouli, Joint Secretary (Higher Education), Ministry of Education, along with Prof. Suresh Kumar Rayala (IIT Madras), Sri Devinder Kumar Sharma (Director, Higher Education), and Dr. Jitendra Nagpal (Director-in-charge, Institute of Mental Health and Life Skill Promotion). Institutional teams were invited, in turn, to share their key learnings from the workshop, the concrete steps they intend to take back to their campuses, and the support they were seeking from the Ministry.

Around 30 institutions presented — including central universities, IITs, NITs, IIITs, IIMs, a national law university, a school of planning and architecture, and specialized institutes — making this one of the broadest cross-sections of institutional wellness practice captured in a single forum.

7.1 Key Cross-Cutting Themes

While each institution spoke to its own context, a small number of themes recurred across almost every presentation:

- Institutionalization over ad-hoc activity — moving mental health from occasional workshops or awareness days to a continuous, embedded institutional priority (some proposed making it part of the academic curriculum or a mandatory credit course).
- Faculty and staff capacity building — orientation and sensitization of faculty, wardens, non-teaching staff, and even support/security staff to recognize red flags, not just students.
- Peer support structures — recurring interest in adopting IIT Madras's "Mitra" (peer listeners) and "Sathi" models, listening rooms/clubs, and student-led wellness committees.
- Documentation and data — several institutions candidly noted they run good informal practices but do not document them, weakening their case for recognition, funding, or accreditation credit.
- Grievance and escalation systems — strong interest in IIT Madras's "Kushal" portal as a model for automated, confidential escalation of at-risk cases to counsellors and faculty.
- Inclusivity and reach — extending wellness support beyond the main campus to hostel support staff, women's cells, persons with disabilities, affiliated colleges, and, in a few cases, surrounding local communities.
- Resource and infrastructure constraints — newer or remote institutions (tribal universities, newly established NITs/IITs) flagged limited counselling staff, absent hostels, and difficulty securing funding for wellness relative to academic infrastructure.

- Well-being of faculty and counsellors themselves — a repeated point that faculty, wardens and counsellors are also at risk of burnout and need their own support systems, not just a duty to support students.
- Requests for Ministry-level standardization — clearer guidelines on who should sit on institutional wellness committees, mandatory online training modules, and possible incentivization (workload relief, credits) for staff who take on wellness responsibilities.

7.2 Institution-Wise Takeaways and Action Plans

A summary of the specific commitments, plans, and requests shared by each participating institution, in the order presented.

Central University of Karnataka — *Dept. of Psychology*

- Will brief the Vice Chancellor on implementing capacity-building programs split across faculty, non-teaching staff, and student representatives.
- Requested Ministry support for organizing offline (in preference to online) capacity-building programs.
- Raised the challenge of extending wellness infrastructure to institutions in remote areas that lack it, noting such institutions educate the majority (85%+) of higher-education students.

Central University of Tamil Nadu — *Dept. of Applied Psychology / Biotechnology*

- Aims to make mental health an everyday institutional priority rather than a once-a-year observance.
- Plans to train faculty via the counselling cell / student council / applied psychology department, and adopt a peer-listener ('listeners') model.
- Requested Ministry-funded resource persons for capacity building and dedicated funds for mental health programs, citing infrastructure and remote-location constraints.
- Will review compliance on the reservation system for students with learning difficulties.

Central University of Andhra Pradesh — *Dept. of Media Studies*

- A young university (established 2019); will brief the Vice Chancellor to bring out formal policies and SOPs on mental well-being and establish a peer support group.
- Currently operates from a transit campus without hostels; flagged that full implementation will take time given infrastructure constraints.

Central Tribal University of Madhya Pradesh / National Sanskrit University, Tirupati — *traditional Shastra university (26 shastras)*

- Currently runs student welfare activities under different names/frameworks; plans to formally adopt counselling centres, listening clubs, and a student-involved model along IIT Madras lines.
- Will brief the Vice Chancellor and seek more such sessions to be scaled across India.

Pondicherry University — *Dept. of Applied Psychology and team*

- Plans to institutionalize mental health as a formal framework (moving from ad-hoc departmental activity) covering all teachers and staff.
- Intends to extend services to 150 affiliated colleges (~50,000 additional students) and, where possible, to the local community, citing regional youth suicide-rate data.
- Will initiate a campus-wide mental health survey to generate an institutional well-being indicator and pursue ISO 45001 certification for the wellness function.
- Plans to extend counselling access to on-campus women hostel residents and hostel support staff.
- Recommended Ministry guidelines on cafeteria food quality (limiting junk food) — the Ministry representative noted institutions already have autonomy to regulate this themselves.

University of Hyderabad

- Will build on its existing anti-ragging, GS-Cash, anti-discrimination, hostel and counselling infrastructure, adapting new elements to the university's ethos of empathy, social justice and critical thinking.
- Noted a gap between reported wellness-checklist scores and actual documentation; found several indicators (institutional leadership/collaboration, monitoring & review) are being met in practice but not recorded.

IIT Hyderabad — *hosted the first national well-being conclave, 2024*

- Introduced a mandatory mental well-being course for undergraduates (second IIT to do so, after IIT Bombay); students cannot graduate without passing it.
- Runs an informal escalation channel to the counselling cell, an onboard psychiatrist, and structured peer/parent-orientation networks.
- Plans to extend dedicated wellness programming to faculty and support staff (security personnel, hostel attendants), citing faculty burnout risk.

NIT Calicut

- Newly joined faculty member; plans to organize parent-guardian awareness sessions, monthly yoga/meditation sessions, and classroom stress-reduction activities.

NIT Tiruchirappalli — *Counselling & Guidance Cell (CGC)*

- Already runs classroom sessions, staff orientation, craft workshops, marathons; plans to add a therapeutic garden with music therapy, ISO 45001 certification for the counselling cell, and a Kushal-style mentorship portal.
- Will integrate existing on-campus Siddha medicine practitioners into the wellness program and promote NPTEL/Coursera courses (mind-body wellness, psychological first aid) among student volunteers.
- Plans to establish an inclusivity club for persons with disabilities.

NIT Puducherry

- A young, fast-growing institute; plans to adopt Kushal-style digital escalation and a listening-room model, and to formally document existing (informal) hostel well-being and safeguarding practices.
- Requested more focus on gender-specific (including women's) mental health needs in future workshops; flagged the challenge of faculty-student ratios (up to ~120 students per faculty member) limiting individual attention.

NIT Andhra Pradesh — *two hostel wardens*

- Plans a mandatory mental health orientation for all newly joined students, a student-run wellness club, and an open elective titled 'Happiness', modelled on an IIT Madras course.

IIIT Dharwad / IIIT Tiruchirappalli / IIIT Kancheepuram / IIIT Tirupati

- Plan to publish a detailed report and key-takeaways list via institute newsletters and social media.
- Will strengthen counselling capacity (currently part-time only), expand services from a central cell to departments and hostels, and adopt a Kushal-style multi-stakeholder feedback loop and peer-listener training.
- IIIT Tirupati's Guidance & Counselling Unit (~30 members) plans a wellness conclave and adoption of full-time clinical psychology support.

IIT Palakkad

- Raised concerns about the density/pace of the two-day program relative to attention span, and asked for clearer national guidance on required composition of institutional wellness committees.
- Recommended structured training/supervision modules specifically for institutional counsellors (who face their own burnout risk) in addition to faculty sensitization.

School of Planning and Architecture, Vijayawada

- Already runs several wellness initiatives given its small, close-knit campus; plans weekly informal Saturday evening events run by student clubs (music, dance, film, quiz) for informal faculty-student bonding.
- Requested more Indian Knowledge System (IKS)-based wellness workshops; flagged the need to formally address emerging gender-identity-related grievances alongside existing ICC processes.

National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research, Chennai

- Runs 5-day faculty/industry development programs; recently added a dedicated sound-healing lab and yoga sessions as part of trainee wellness offerings.

National Law University (Nalsa University of Law, Hyderabad) — *Student Mental Health Policy Group*

- Plans to adopt Mitra-style peer listening groups and awareness programs on substance abuse, and to train student representatives in crisis management and preliminary counselling.
- Flagged that documentation and capacity building are current gaps, and that parents remain an under-engaged stakeholder.
- Noted the near-absence of national law schools from such Ministry convenings and requested wider outreach to law schools.
- Suggested a mandatory cluster of online training courses for faculty and an incentivization model (workload credit, inclusion in appraisal/accreditation norms) for staff taking on wellness roles.

IIM Visakhapatnam

- Plans include fortnightly informal faculty-student dinners, regular check-in messages to parents, and posting helpline numbers on every hostel room door.
- One institution described a newly signed MoU and an upcoming orientation covering sleep, nutrition, physical activity, family contact, digital-detox, and academic-pressure management, aimed at reaching at-risk individuals early.

7.3 Consolidated Requests to the Ministry of Education

- Dedicated, ring-fenced funding for mental health and wellness infrastructure, particularly for institutions in remote locations.
- Clear national guidelines on the mandatory composition and function of institutional wellness/student welfare committees.
- A standard set of online training modules that can be made mandatory for faculty and staff across institutions.
- Consideration of incentives (workload relief, formal recognition in appraisal or accreditation norms) for staff who take on counselling, mentoring, or wellness roles.
- Wider outreach of such capacity-building workshops to institutions currently underrepresented, including national law universities and other centrally funded institutes.
- Continued monitoring to ensure regular (at least twice-yearly) sensitization/orientation of faculty and non-teaching staff, in line with the Supreme Court's directives in the Aishwarya (Suicide) vs Union of India matter.

7.4 Ministry's Response and Existing Support

Responding to institutional requests, Sri Devinder Kumar Sharma clarified that centrally funded institutions are autonomous statutory bodies, and the Ministry's role is to issue guidance rather than direct regulation. He highlighted existing Ministry mechanisms institutions can draw on:

- The Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Program, a capacity-building program with 16 components run through 151 teacher-training centres nationally — many represented institutions are themselves training centres, though not all are aware of this.
- A national leadership-and-wellness framework guideline issued in 2023, with ongoing online workshops (though participation from centrally funded institutions has been limited).
- The forthcoming 'Guru Setu' program — a purely online, high-quality curriculum across nine themes to build core faculty competency, expected to launch within about a month of the workshop.
- A Supreme Court directive (in the Aishwarya Suicide vs. Union of India matter) comprising 15 directives, including a requirement that centrally funded institutions ensure faculty and non-teaching staff receive well-being orientation/sensitization at least twice, which the Ministry noted is now a binding legal requirement, not an optional best practice.

The Ministry also confirmed that the institutional wellness indicators checklist used in the workshop is a dynamic, pilot-phase document that institutions may recommend additions to over time.

7.5 Closing Remarks and Acknowledgements

In closing, IIT Madras organizers thanked the Ministry of Education, the Department of Higher Education team, the IIT Madras Wellness Office (noted as the only ISO-certified centre at the institute), the Dean of Students' team, student Mitra/Sathi volunteers, and partner agencies (Mindwell, Cauvery Hospital, and Your Dost) for their support throughout the two-day workshop. The Ministry's Joint Secretary and Director, Higher Education, thanked all participating institutions and indicated that further regional wellness conclaves are planned, including in Hyderabad and Mumbai, where feedback and suggestions gathered at this session are expected to be discussed further.

7.6 Conclusion

The closing session surfaced a consistent pattern across a highly diverse set of institutions — from long-established IITs with mature, ISO-certified wellness infrastructure to newly formed universities still building their first hostels. Almost every institution left with concrete, near-term commitments: peer-listener networks, faculty sensitization, digital grievance/escalation systems modelled on IIT Madras's 'Kushal' platform, and better documentation of existing practice. The recurring requests to the Ministry — funding, standardized training, incentivization, and wider institutional outreach — point to institutionalization and documentation, rather than awareness alone, as the primary gap to close going forward.