

Block-IV

Self and Positive Growth

UNIT 9 CORRELATES OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING - I*

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9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you would be able to:

- *define mental health;*
- *explain factors affecting mental health;*
- *understand importance of emotions in mental health and well-being;*
- *know the meaning and functions of emotions;*
- *discuss the meaning and components of emotional intelligence; and*
- *explain the role of emotional intelligence in mental health and well-being.*

9.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Units you have learned about the self and developed an understanding about the various components and correlates of self. You have learned about the importance of these in forming a positive concept of self and preventing maladjustment. You have also learned about various mental disorders arising out of maladaptive coping, dysfunctional attitude and dysfunctional

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relationships. In this Unit, we will discuss about the concept of mental health and well-being going beyond the mental disorders. The ultimate aim of a human being is to function at an optimum level. This requires one to achieve good mental health so that it can facilitate positive growth in the individual. Hence it is important to discuss about the various correlates of mental health and well-being so that one can take steps accordingly to ensure good mental health just as we do for our physical health.

9.3 CONCEPT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Let us first see how do we talk about health. Usually we focus and emphasize more on physical health and neglect mental health and emotional wellbeing. In case of a physical disease, we do not hesitate in going to a medical doctor, but we do not do so quite easily in mental health related problems. There is a lot of stigma and avoidance in visiting a mental health professional for our mental health related issues and general psychological problems. For instance in case of depression or anxiety etc. we feel that we can get over it. But do we say this in case of diabetes, cancer or any other physical disease that one can get over it without visiting a medical health professional? We usually take appropriate treatment for it. Similarly in case of mental health related problems also, one needs to visit a proper mental health professional.

In case of mental health related problems, we tend to feel inferior and think that we lack in our mental capacities. Others also make us feel that we are somehow responsible for our condition. But physical diseases may not be characterized by self-blame or guilt or sense of inferiority to such an extent. An important reason is that in case of physical diseases, we think that some aspect of our entity is affected, e.g., lungs or heart or kidney etc. But in mental disorders we think that our whole entity is affected, most importantly, our mind which is related to one's mental health.

The dichotomous view of physical health and mental health may lead to ineffective health practices. As you have studied in Unit 1, both mind and body are related and influence each other. Hence physical and mental health, both are inter-related. The World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948 has defined health as a complete state of physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. So one needs to take a comprehensive approach when talking about health, focusing on all the aspects of health so that it can lead to positive growth and well-being of the individual self.

Now let us discuss the concept of mental health. Mostly mental health is explained in terms of absence of mental disorders. However, mental health is not merely the absence of disorders, but goes beyond it. If an individual is not having any mental disorders, it may not indicate that s/he is having good mental health. So the question is what needs to be 'present' for ensuring good mental health? Like for physical health, we say one needs to do exercise, eat healthy food, take proper rest, and observe good health practices; similarly, what does one need to do for achieving positive mental health?

This has led to define mental health on a continuum rather than the absolute presence or absence of it. According to Keyes Mental health continuum (Keyes,

2002), mental health can be categorized into four quadrants based on the presence and absence of mental health and mental disorders on a continuum. Thus a high presence of mental health and low presence of mental disorders will lead to a flourishing state characterized by optimal level of psychological well-being. Whereas low level of mental health and high level of mental disorders will lead to a languishing state which leads to low level of well-being.

Thus mental health is not a simple phenomenon, but can have various aspects and impacted by diverse factors and contexts. We will learn about the factors affecting mental health in the next section that will highlight the 'presence' of factors (as we have posed the question earlier regarding what needs to be 'present') for well-being of the individual. As we further discuss the meaning of mental health, this will also indicate the 'presence' of factors that can lead to good mental health in human beings. Mental health includes a sense of well-being. It refers to having adequate socio emotional capacities to deal with self and in relation to others. It requires one to be self-aware about one's various needs such as physiological, physical and psychological needs. Thus, mental health is characterized by positive emotions and maturity. Maslow's theory of development (Maslow, 1943) provides a hierarchy of needs that start from basic physiological and physical needs such as need for food, air, sex, sleep, security etc. to higher psychological needs like love, belongingness, self-esteem, self-actualization and the need for transcendence at the top of the hierarchy. Satisfaction of these needs leads to one's happiness and positive growth. Although Maslow's theory has contributed greatly to the field and focused on the importance of various needs in our effective functioning and health, the hierarchy has also been criticized that the needs can co-exist and not necessarily function in a lower to higher order. Individual can aspire for higher order needs even though lower needs are neglected or not fulfilled fully.

Erikson (1993) in his psychosocial theory of development, links positive growth and development of an individual to the achievement of the developmental tasks at each stage of human life span. He proposes eight developmental stages spanning across infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age. Each stage requires the individual to acquire certain skills and carry out certain responsibilities for proper development and smooth transition to the next stage. Inability to acquire these psychosocial skills results in a crisis and affects the mental health and well-being of the individual. For instance, the adolescence stage is characterized by an identity crisis if the adolescent is struggling to make sense of the rapid and diverse changes and expectations that occur during this stage related to different aspects of development, further influenced by peer pressure and the adolescent's socio-economic context. This can affect the mental health of the adolescents and may lead to emotional and behavioural problems, and in extreme cases to depression and suicide.

Thus mental health is related to achieving the self-related needs, the societal tasks and expectations and acquisition of skills to deal with life's challenges and function effectively. This is reflected in the definition given by WHO (2005) which states that mental health is a state of well-being where the individual is able to realize his potentials, cope with normal stresses, work productively and contribute to the community. The definition highlights four aspects of mental health: (a) realizing one's potential emphasizes self-awareness and self-

actualization; (b) coping with stresses reflects adaptability and resilience; (c) working productively includes creativity and problem-solving; and (d) contributing to the community refers to going beyond oneself and having a sense of purpose. Crucial factors here are a state of well-being, individual self, and community as important for well-being. Thus it focuses on one's self, one's work and going beyond it and working for a larger cause or purpose to achieve positive mental health and well-being.

The above components of mental health are also reflected in the six criteria given by Jahoda (1958) long back as empirical indicators of positive mental health. These include,

- Positive attitude towards self: It indicates having a sense of self-respect and self-acceptance for oneself. There is an awareness about oneself and a sense of identity. Basically it includes self-awareness and having a positive attitude for whatever one sees in oneself, thus a high self-esteem for oneself.
- Self-actualization: It refers to realizing one's potentials and working with one's abilities so that it leads to satisfaction and happiness. Striving towards a better version of oneself creates an inner sense of fulfillment.
- Resistance to stress: One needs to have effective coping strategies to deal with stress and anxiety. This helps in building up positive relationships important for one's happiness.
- Personal autonomy: It refers to being independent in one's thinking and action based on what is right for oneself. It involves self-determination and taking responsibility for one's thoughts and actions.
- Accurate perception of reality: It refers to perceiving the facts rather than having either an extremely negative or overly positive view of anything. Thus there is no distortions in thinking that affects one's mental health.
- Environmental mastery: One is able to adapt to situations, meet the demands and adjust to the reality in life. It indicates a capacity to solve problems and be flexible. Mastery or being competent is required in three main aspects of our life, personal self, family relationships and work place.

Carol Ryff's six-factor model of psychological well-being (1989) is a widely used model of mental health. It describes mental health and well-being in terms of the 'presence' of six factors such as self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, autonomy and positive relations with others. All these determine the happiness and well-being of human beings. Ryff has also developed a scale of psychological well-being for measuring the level of psychological well-being.

Mental health, according to Amartya Sen's Capability approach is conceptualized as a set of capabilities which help the individual to engage in doing things or being that which they value doing or being (Sen, 1992). Thus it reflects the aspects of autonomy, self-actualization, being able to cope with stress and being resilient. The reasons of being and doing may vary from satisfaction of basic needs such

getting good food to psychological aspects such as having self-respect and being of service to the community.

Ayurveda, India's traditional health care system considers a perfect balance of mind, body and soul as complete health (Behere et al., 2013). It is a science of life describing how to live by focusing on the care of physical, mental and spiritual health of the individual. According to Ayurveda, mental health can be described as a state of sensorial, mental, intellectual and spiritual well-being (Srikanth et al., 2009). It advocates for mental health care to stay healthy. It views that mind is like the stronghold of the horses ('indriyani' or sensory organs) of the chariot ('sharira' or body) led by 'buddhi' (intellect) for the Master 'Self' (soul). When one keeps the mind under control, the body functions proper and one can stay both physically and mentally healthy.

Self Assessment Questions 1

1. How is mental health defined by Keyes?
2. Name the components of psychological well-being model given by Carol Ryff.
3. Who has advocated the capability approach to mental health?
4. Provide the definition of mental health given by World Health Organization (WHO).

9.4 FACTORS AFFECTING MENTAL HEALTH

Factors affecting mental health can be broadly categorized into three groups:

Person/ Self-related factors: It includes aspects of the self which can have an influence on our own mental health and well-being. For example, one's thoughts, attitude and beliefs can help or hinder one's mental health. There is an inter-relationship between one's thoughts, emotions and behaviour which impact our mental health.

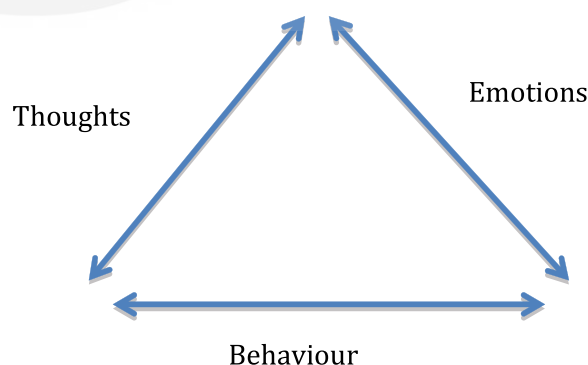


Fig. 9.1 Thoughts-Emotions-Behaviour Triangle

For example, your friend did not answer your phone call and also did not reply to your message. You may feel hurt and angry at your friend. Or you may feel concerned if your friend is sick. Here the stimulus (your friend not replying your call or message) can be interpreted in two different ways - you get upset and angry at your friend, or you get concerned and worry about your friend's health. Hence one needs to be careful in the appraisal of the stimulus event - what meaning

we assign to the stimulus, what do we think about it and what emotions follow this. Cognitive theories of psychology emphasize the role played by our thoughts in creating happiness or unhappiness in life.

In addition to one's thoughts playing a role in one's mental health, one's value and respect for oneself are also important factors affecting one's mental health. You have studied about the components of self and the correlates of self in Units 3 and 4. Self-esteem is an important component of self which indicates a sense of respect and value for oneself and impacts our mental health. Further, engaging in play and other leisure activities can help reduce stress and boost our mental health.

Mental health also involves a resilient attitude that helps deal with difficult situations and problems. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic that gripped the world in 2020 created an atmosphere of fear and anxiety, and resulted in crisis situation for the masses globally. Here, resilience is an important factor of oneself that will positively impact one's mental health. Coping strategies used can affect one's effective adjustment to situations of distress and subsequently affect one's mental health.

Relationships/Interpersonal-related factors: Interpersonal relationships including love, intimacy, family, friendships affect one's mental health and well-being. Forming relationships is crucial to satisfy the love and belongingness need of individual as indicated in Maslow's need hierarchy theory. Relationship with family members, peers, romantic partners, colleagues influence the sense of identity and growth of the individual. A satisfying and meaningful relationship with others improves one's psychological well-being. Family disturbances, domestic violence, and abuse create a dysfunctional environment at home which is not conducive for positive growth of individual. Such a family is characterized by a lack of warmth and proper communication among family members. Traumatic experiences and stigma due to disabilities also affect well-being negatively.

Social support here is a crucial factor that can mediate the influence of adverse conditions in one's life on one's mental health. In a qualitative study (Travasso, Rajaraman, & Heymann, 2014) on low income working mothers, it was found that social support from family, friends and colleagues led to reduced anxiety and depression.

Work related factors: Work life is an important aspect of one's life. It affects the sense of identity and being of the individual. In addition to providing economic benefits, it also provides a means of realizing oneself. Hence, deciding on a career, unemployment, the type of work one wants to do, the kind of work values and skills one has - all affect one's mental health. Various aspects of one's work such as role conflict, role overload, role ambiguity and role stress can impact the mental health of the individual. The work role of the individual may not be defined. There may be too much work assignment and deadlines. There may be lack of training and career prospects for the employees. Performance pressure may also lead to stress. Further, aspects of one's workplace in terms of physical and psychological work environment, if not conducive, can create dissatisfaction, conflicts, and anxieties in the individual. Spillover of things and emotions from work to family and from family to work affects one's work performance negatively and disturbs peace and harmony in the individual. In such case, work instead of

being a source of aspirations and happiness turns into a source of frustration, unhappiness and stress.

In addition to the above three aspects, mental health is also affected by higher order factors in one's life such as **spirituality, meaning and purpose in life**. This refers to going beyond the basic necessities of life, fulfilling one's duties and responsibilities, achieving at work, and striving to reach one's optimum to a higher level of consciousness and awareness where one aims at realizing one's inner being, finding one's purpose and reaching a level of transcendence marked by 'ananda' - bliss and pure happiness.

The influence of factors described above on our mental health can be mediated by the environmental factors (including physical and economic aspects) and socio-cultural contexts. For instance, the risk and vulnerability factors in the life of an individual, social discrimination, inequality, crisis and traumatic situations can impact our self and interpersonal relationships and work life. Emphasis needs to be on the protective factors present in the life of an individual that can be strengthened to improve mental health and happiness of the individual.

Self Assessment Questions 2

1. What are the self-related factors affecting mental health?
2. Name the higher order factors affecting mental health.
3. How does a dysfunctional home environment affect individual well-being negatively?

9.5 ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Let us now focus on emotions which is an important correlate of mental health and well-being in the individual. You will learn about the meaning of emotions, what functions do they serve, importance of regulating our emotions and how we can be intelligent about our emotions.

Shiny was attending her English class in the college. However, she has not been able to complete the assignment given by her teacher and so she could not submit it in the class when the teacher asked her. When the teacher scolded her, she felt very bad as she has always been punctual in her tasks. But she could not express to the teacher that she could not submit as her mother was ill and she was taking care of her, so could not find time to complete the assignment. When she reached home, she unnecessarily got angry on her younger sister for trivial reason. Her sister got upset, picked up a fight with Shiny and complained to mother.

The above example highlights emotions in individuals and how it has impacted their behavior and relationships. Shiny could not tell the teacher about the reasons, instead she vented out her frustration on her sister. In turn, the sister got upset and there was an atmosphere of unease at home with complaints between family members. This highlights the importance of knowing and understanding our emotions, how they affect our behavior and relationships, and in turn, our mental health and well-being.

9.5.1 Meaning and Importance of Emotions

Emotions are an integral part of our life. It is expressed and experienced by each one of us everyday in everything that we do or say. It plays an important role in our daily life. But what do we mean by an 'emotion'? It is so commonly used that we need to define it clearly so that we can identify and use it for improving our well-being rather than emotions causing distress in us.

Morris (1979) states that emotion is a complex affective experience that involves diffuse physiological changes and can be expressed overtly in characteristic behavior patterns. Thus an emotion consists of three parts: (a) certain physiological changes, e.g., rapid heartbeat, sweating, short breath etc. associated with the emotion, (b) a resultant drive to do or engage in some action, and (c) the actual behavior or action. Plutchik (2001) has also defined emotion as a complex chain of loosely connected events that begins with a stimulus and includes feelings, psychological changes, impulses to action and specific goal- directed behavior.

Emotion is the "feeling" aspect of consciousness, characterized by three elements: a certain physical arousal, a certain behavior that reveals the feeling to the outside world, and an inner awareness of the feeling (Ciccarelli & White, 2018). Emotions involve an internal response as well as an external response. Internal response involves the physiological aspects and the self-perception of the emotion. External response includes the action and behavior of the individual.

Thus emotion is a complex term in that it consists of feelings, physiological responses and actions by the individual. 'Feelings' are personal experience or perception of a specific emotion whereas emotion is a combination of different elements. Sometimes there may be a difference between what the individual perceives or 'feels' about an emotion and what others perceive the individual is 'feeling' based on her/his outer physical and behavioural aspects. Such situations result in lack of validation of the feelings of the individual by others. This can negatively affect the interpersonal relations and create conflicts and stressful situations.

Emotion can also be differentiated from 'mood', which are general pervasive feelings of low intensity and lasts for longer periods of time. Further, unlike emotions, moods can appear for no apparent reason, they are not specifically directed at something or someone. One key aspect of emotions is that they are responses to events or circumstances - they are "about" something (Kaplan et. al., 2016). That is, people do not just feel happy or angry - they feel joy about a recent meaningful success or they feel angry about an insult (Lench & Carpenter, 2018). Emotions do not occur in a vacuum. When we identify specific emotions as related to specific events or conditions, these are called discrete emotions. This helps us to focus on the functional aspects of emotions.

There are different types of emotions. The basic emotions or *primary emotions* are fear, anger, sadness, surprise, disgust, joy, anticipation and trust (Plutchik, 2003). These are represented in a wheel of emotions (refer Fig. 9.2) where each emotion is depicted as varying in intensity and giving rise to other related emotions. So combination of emotions in terms of types and intensity gives rise to more complex *secondary emotions*.

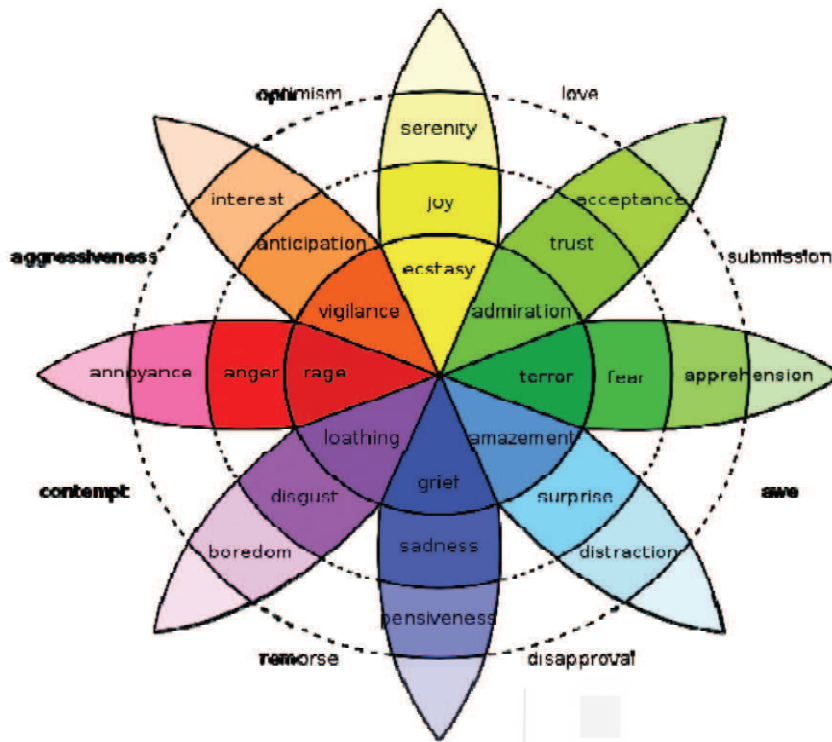


Fig 9.2: Plutchik's Emotion Wheel

(Source: Wikicommons)

Given the variety and richness of emotions in our life, we cannot just ignore them or undervalue their importance in our mental health. Emotions are also described as positive emotions such as joy, happiness, satisfaction, hope, excitement, love etc.; and negative emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, jealousy, guilt, anxiety etc. Positive emotions increase acceptance and ability to cope with stress. They improve our interpersonal relations and resilience. They reduce the effect of negative emotions and lead to better physical health as well as mental health. However, it is not that negative emotions need to be discounted altogether. Negative emotions are also beneficial in certain contexts and situations to perform effectively. As you learned in earlier section, each emotion has certain function and serves certain purpose. Hence whether it is positive or negative emotion, it needs to be assessed in terms of its function and effect. Does it help or hinder our effective functioning in life, our interpersonal relationships, and our growth and development? The appraisal of emotions will help us to behave intelligently with regard to emotions and take appropriate decisions and actions. Although it is not advisable to have exclusively only positive or negative emotions, definitely there needs to be a preponderance of positive emotions as compared to negative emotions in one's life.

9.5.2 Do Emotions help or hinder?

What do emotions do for us, do they facilitate our relationships and work; or do they hinder our functioning and create problems for ourselves and others? Emotions serve a variety of functions, but mostly they are seen as barriers and overwhelming in nature and not conducive at workplace. This is more so in the context of negative emotions which are thought to be managed and avoided. However, one needs to note that emotions are part and parcel of human life and ignoring or avoiding emotions will deprive us from taking the whole context of

the individual. Evolutionarily, emotions have always been instrumental in the survival function. Emotions always provide us some information. Hence it is important to identify each emotion and understand them. One needs to focus on what functions do they serve and what information do they provide. This will help one to respond in a better way and take effective actions.

Proper use of emotions will help us in our personal relationships to make it more satisfying, in social context to create more harmony, and in workplace to make one more productive and creative. Whether it is positive emotions such as joy and happiness etc. or negative emotions such as anger and fear etc. each emotion is associated with a certain function and knowing this will help us to manage that emotion and improve mental health of ours and others also. Emotions can have intrapersonal function - developing awareness about self in terms of likes, dislikes, attitudes, values, taking decisions etc.; interpersonal function - managing relationships with others and making it more satisfying; and social-cultural functions - transmitting socio-cultural values to foster a sense of group and cohesiveness. All these functions of emotions help the individual in managing emotions and improving one's mental health.

Thus the key with regard to whether emotions help or hinder is knowing the emotions and managing or regulating them to use it effectively for self-improvement and better interpersonal functioning. Hence one needs to use emotions intelligently. In the next section you will learn about the concept of emotional intelligence.

Self Assessment Questions 3

1. How emotion is different from mood?
2. What are the primary emotions?
3. What is the meaning of appraisal of emotions?

9.6 CONCEPT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI)

In the example of Shiny given earlier, think about how she could have behaved differently if she had paid attention to her emotions. Two things important here was identifying her emotions and expressing her emotions. This could have led her to express clearly to the teacher about the reasons of not submitting the assignment. The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) introduced by Salovey and Mayor (1994) and popularized by Daniel Goleman (1995) with his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ?* emphasizes being aware about one's emotions and using our intelligence in responding to these emotions. This prevents an impulsive reaction to the situation. Shiny's sister also could have used emotional intelligence to be aware about Shiny's emotions and respond to the situation appropriately.

Thus, emotional intelligence refers to being intelligent about emotions. It refers to the ability to understand emotions in oneself and others and use these to guide their action and behavior. EI considers emotions as important data source which provide useful information to regulate and manage our responses and actions. As Goleman (1998) has said, "Emotional intelligence is the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships".

Mayer, Salovey & Caruso (2004) define it as "the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth."

Reuven Bar-On (2002) have emphasized the adaptive function by EI by defining it as "an array of non-cognitive abilities, competencies and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures".

Thus emotional intelligence can be described to be aware about emotions in oneself and others; and being able to manage or regulate one's emotions and handle emotions in others. Emotional intelligence is measured in terms of Emotional Quotient (EQ) like intelligence is assessed in terms of Intelligence Quotient (IQ). Studies have reported EQ to be more important than IQ for overall success in one's life. Ability to identify emotions and perceiving how others feel facilitates social communication. Understanding one's emotions also helps in emotion regulation. These abilities related to socio-emotional aspects are important for academic success as well as personal-social success. EI also has importance in the work context as it helps avoid conflict, manage stress and form good interpersonal relationship at work.

9.6.1 Components of Emotional Intelligence

Goleman's model of emotional intelligence (EI) proposes five components.

Self-awareness: It refers to being aware about one's feelings and emotions. It involves being able to recognize the physiological impacts of emotions and identify the emotions associated. This is the first step in progressing towards managing emotions.

Self-regulation: Once the emotions are identified, one is able to regulate them or manage them. It helps in taking appropriate steps by reflecting on one's emotions and their consequences for oneself in the past. Accordingly one can manage one's emotions to engineer a good consequence or outcome.

Motivation: It involves having a perspective ahead, keeping a future goal-oriented attitude. Thus it includes self-control and thinking of others and future goals which helps in delaying immediate gratification of desires and needs.

Empathy: The ability to think about what others are feeling and thinking results in an empathic attitude which helps foster better interpersonal relationships. Hence it is a key ingredient in interpersonal intelligence as it helps to become aware of other person's emotions and feelings. Lack of empathy creates conflicts and stress in relations which affects mental health of everyone involved.

Social skills: This is also part of interpersonal intelligence which helps in handling emotions in others to form an effective relationship. Once you are aware of other person's feelings and emotion, that is, have empathy, you need to know how to use the knowledge of these emotions in others to achieve a desired goal, form a satisfying relationship, avoid conflict in relations and progress towards mutual benefit and harmony. Thus it involves communication skills, negotiation skills, ability to cooperate, and work in team.

The first three components - self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation can be termed as *personal competencies* which focus on individual's own growth and well-being; whereas empathy and social skills components can be termed as *social competencies* which focus on achieving social well-being. The first three are also called as intrapersonal intelligence and the last two components as interpersonal intelligences.

9.6.2 Can EI be Learned

Given the benefits of having a high emotional intelligence, the question is can one improve it? The good thing is that EI can be learned at any stage of life by focusing on improving the five components mentioned above. Learning the social and emotional skills will strengthen the relationship, reduce conflict and manage stress. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programme of Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (www.casel.org) forms a major part of school curriculum across many countries. In India, life skills education in schools addresses the social emotional learning aspects in children.

Emotion regulation is one of the key aspects in improving one's emotional intelligence.

It includes understanding and responding to the emotions in oneself and others. Emotion regulation refers to regulating or managing one's emotions. It is not controlling or suppressing one's emotions, or neglecting or dismissing emotions either in oneself or in others. It is also not eliminating the negative emotions altogether. Rather, it involves recognizing the emotion, understanding it and then taking proper steps to manage it. Emotion regulation requires one to understand that we do not always have control over our environment or situation or people around. In such a situation we may get the feeling that we cannot do anything or we can do something about it. ER focuses on the premise that even if we may not have control over external environment or people, we can definitely have control over our emotions and manage them successfully to improve our mental health.

Hence developing emotional competencies is important. One needs to develop emotional tolerance, i.e., accepting unpleasant or negative emotions arising in oneself and others. It helps to identify these emotions, understand their functions, and then use this information to manage or regulate emotions. Thus both emotion skills and thinking skills are important to deal with situations effectively. Thinking about the situation from alternative perspectives helps reduce the intensity of emotions experienced. Emotion regulation is a crucial skill that is influenced by parenting practices and behavior, family environment and socialization process. But one can learn and improve the skill to manage one's emotions at any stage of life and be emotionally intelligent.

Thus emotional intelligence is a significant correlate of mental health and well-being which places emphasis on the crucial role of emotions in our life. For long we have seen emotions in a negative way and denied understanding and using it to further our goals and achievement and maintain an effective interpersonal relationship.

As Aristotle has said, "*Anyone can become angry - that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way - that is not within everybody's power and is not easy.*"

This sums up the meaning and importance of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence does not mean that we just need to express all our emotions. It also does not mean that we appear nice to others and do not express our emotions. Rather it refers to the discerning ability to understand the emotions and to know when, where and how to express emotions so that it is a win-win situation for ourselves as well as others.

Self Assessment Questions 4

1. What is EQ?
2. What is emotional tolerance?
3. What are the factors that can affect emotion regulation?
4. What are the personal competencies according to Goleman?

9.7 LET US SUM UP

In the present Unit, we discussed the concept of mental health and well-being. There is no health without mental health. Without mental health, the conceptualization of health is incomplete. Hence one needs to emphasize mental health equally as physical health. The factors affecting mental health were also described. Among the various correlates of mental health, emotions play an important role in influencing our mental health and well-being. The Unit explained the meaning of emotion and highlighted various functions of emotions. The key to whether emotions facilitate our performance, our functioning in the world and our interpersonal relationships, or put a barrier depends on how do we regulate and manage our emotions. In this context the concept of emotional intelligence was elaborated. Emotional intelligence basically consists of being aware of emotions in oneself and others around us, and learning to manage emotions in ourselves and others. It was emphasized that since emotional intelligence has a great impact on our mental health, we can always learn it and improve it. One can focus on the various components of emotional intelligence including emotion regulation to improve one's emotional intelligence.

9.8 KEY WORDS

- Mental health** : A state of well-being where the individual is able to realize her/his potentials, cope with normal stresses, work productively and contribute to the community (WHO, 2005).
- Emotion** : A complex chain of loosely connected events that begins with a stimulus and includes feelings, psychological changes, impulses to action and specific goal- directed behavior (Plutchik, 2001).
- Self-awareness** : Being aware about one's feelings and emotions.
- Emotional intelligence** : The capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships (Goleman, 1998).

Appraisal of emotions : Assessing of emotions in terms of their functions and effect on performance and interpersonal relations.

Emotion regulation : It involves recognizing the emotion, understanding it and then taking proper steps to regulate or manage it rather than suppressing or avoiding it.

9.9 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Self Assessment Questions 1

1. Keyes has defined mental health on a continuum rather than the absolute presence or absence of mental health or mental illness.
2. The six components of psychological well-being model given by Carol Ryff are self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, autonomy and positive relations with others.
3. The capability approach to mental health is given by Amartya Sen.
4. WHO defines mental health as a state of well-being where the individual is able to realize his potentials, cope with normal stresses, work productively and contribute to the community.

Self Assessment Questions 2

1. The self-related factors affecting mental health are thoughts, emotions and behavior of self, the values and esteem pertaining to self and resilient attitude.
2. The higher order factors are spirituality, meaning and purpose in life.
3. A dysfunctional environment at home is characterized by a lack of warmth and proper communication among family members which is not conducive for positive growth of individual and affects well-being negatively.

Self Assessment Questions 3

1. Emotions are always about something whereas moods are general pervasive feelings of low intensity and lasts for longer periods of time. Further, unlike emotions, moods can appear for no apparent reason, they are not specifically directed at something or someone.
2. Primary emotions are fear, anger, sadness, surprise, disgust, joy, anticipation and trust (Plutchik, 2003).
3. Appraisal of emotions refer to assessing emotions in terms of their functions and effects which enables one to take appropriate decision and action.

Self Assessment Questions 4

1. EQ refers to Emotional Quotient, a unit of measurement of one's emotional intelligence.
2. Emotional tolerance refers to accepting unpleasant or negative emotions arising in oneself and others.
3. Emotion regulation can be affected by parenting practices and behavior, family environment and socialization process.

4. According to Goleman, personal competencies are self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation.

9.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Explain the meaning and functions of emotions.
2. Describe the five components of emotional intelligence given by Goleman.
3. Discuss the importance of emotional intelligence in various aspects of individual's life.
4. Explain the factors influencing mental health and well-being.
5. Discuss the inter-relationship between physical health and mental health.
6. How can one achieve positive mental health?

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9.12 FURTHER LEARNING RESOURCES

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**Correlates of Mental Health
and Well-being I**

Web links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7m9eNoB3NU>

- Daniel Goleman introduces Emotional Intelligence

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ADA5LcNzIE>

- Emotional Intelligence - with Dan Goleman



UNIT 10 CORRELATES OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING –II*

Structure

- 10.1 Learning Objectives
- 10.2 Introduction
- 10.3 Optimism and Hope
- 10.4 Resilience
- 10.5 Mindfulness
- 10.6 Spirituality and Meaning in Life
- 10.7 Happiness
- 10.8 Gratitude and Forgiveness
- 10.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.10 Key Words
- 10.11 Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 10.12 Unit End Questions
- 10.13 References
- 10.14 Further Learning Resources

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you would be able to:

- *Explain the meaning and approaches to optimism;*
- *Discuss the meaning and contribution of hope in mental health;*
- *Explain the concept of resilience and factors contributing to it;*
- *Understand the concept of mindfulness and measures to enhance it;*
- *Describe the role of spirituality and meaning in life in psychological well-being; and*
- *Discuss gratitude and forgiveness as significant positive psychological constructs to enhance mental health and well-being.*

10.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Unit, you learned about emotions as an important correlate of mental health and well-being. In this Unit, you will learn about some more factors that influence our mental health. These constructs are derived from research in the field of positive psychology which focuses on factors that can enhance well-being. These positive psychology constructs that will be discussed in this Unit are optimism, hope, resilience, mindfulness, spirituality, meaning in life,

happiness, gratitude and forgiveness. Traditionally, psychology has remained limited to the study of human weakness, suffering and mental illness. It has addressed mostly what is wrong with individuals, what is not functioning well in the individual. Definitely it has contributed a lot to understanding in this area. However, one of the goals of psychology is also to focus on what is right with individuals, what is good in life and how to enhance potential and nurture talent in human beings to make life more fulfilling, meaningful and reach a transcendental stage. The field of positive psychology emerged out of an overemphasis on studying sufferings and pathologies. It highlighted that we need to move beyond mental illness to mental well-being and character strengths in the individual. It answers what is good in individuals and emphasizes building human strengths. Positive psychology thus offers a balance to the earlier weakness-oriented approach by suggesting that we also must explore people's strengths along with their weaknesses (Snyder, Lopez & Pedrotti, 2011, p. 5). It helps in studying the human being as a whole focusing on their sufferings, deficits, challenges as well as psychological strengths, assets and resources.

Thus the present Unit will discuss some of the psychological strengths of human beings which significantly impacts their mental health and well-being.

10.3 OPTIMISM AND HOPE

The question “whether the glass is half full or half empty”? portrays the lens through which we view the world and our self. Do we have a positive or negative attitude towards ourselves and the world in general? You must have seen people in your family or friends who are always positive in their approach, hopeful of things turning out well, believing good things will happen, whereas there are others who always have a negative attitude and carry a pessimistic approach towards everything that nothing is going to work out. In other words, people with a positive view of self and world are termed as being optimistic and those having a negative view are called as pessimistic.

Thus optimism/pessimism is primarily seen as an individual difference variable describing people's general positive or negative expectations about the future (Baumgardner & Crothers, 2015). This affects various aspects of our life ranging from academic, career, personal and social, for instance, a student having positive expectation that s/he will complete the course on time, an employee looking forward to promotions in job, or being positive about having a great birthday bash or a vacation trip. Of course, situational factors may influence your perception of future, e.g., if you fell sick before your birthday, you anticipate that you would not be able to enjoy it to that extent or may not even be able to celebrate it. Thus our positive or negative expectations about future does get impacted by environmental factors. Nevertheless, optimism indicates an overall level of positive or negative attitude. Thus even if you are sick, you will try to look for whatever minimum ways it is possible to enjoy.

Scheier and Carver (1985) define optimism as the stable tendency to believe that good rather than bad things will happen. There is an expectancy towards the future in a positive perspective. The source of the expectations regarding a positive outcome may be due to various factors, either internal or external. The important point here is the outcome expectancies held by the individual that affects their

responses and actions in a positive way. Individuals with an optimistic outlook always believe that good things will happen.

Approaches to Optimism

Research studies indicate two major approaches to optimism: a dispositional optimism and an optimistic explanatory style.

Dispositional optimism views optimism as an individual trait or disposition to behave in an optimistic way. Scheier and Carver (1992) define it as a global expectation that the future will bring a lot of good things and less bad things. Accordingly, they have developed the Life Orientation Test (LOT) to assess dispositional optimism of individuals (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994). Individuals with dispositional optimism tend to be more confident of themselves, high in self-regulation and self esteem. Studies have shown its positive impact on one's mental health and well-being.

Optimism as an explanatory style refers to the characteristic way of interpreting things/situations/events in one's life. Seligman (1990) defines it as people's characteristic way of explaining negative events. It refers to how we explain bad or good events in our life in terms of stable-unstable, global-specific, and internal-external dimensions of causal factors. Stable causes are those that do not change over time, global causes apply in general to a person, and internal causes refer to the traits within the individual rather than to outside environmental factors. For instance, when it is said, Mohan is a shy individual, it refers to shyness being a stable, global and internal characteristic of Mohan. Hence, a pessimist would say



Fig. 10.1: Explanatory Style in Optimism

(Source: <https://gostrengths.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/explanatory-style.jpg>)

Mohan could not clear the group discussion as part of the interview process for job recruitment because he is a shy individual. Thus they will attribute the cause of the failure to do well in the group discussion (negative event) to internal, stable and global factors. Optimists, on the other hand, attribute causes of negative events to external, specific and transient factors so that it offers them possibilities that good things can happen. They explain positive events in terms of internal, global and stable factors, thus building up their expectancies of good outcomes. Optimism as an explanatory style can be assessed through Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ) (Dykema et. al., 1996) and the Content Analysis of Verbal Explanations (CAVE) (Peterson et al., 1992).

Development of optimism is affected mainly by parenting practices, early childhood experiences and the home environment. Parents as role models can influence the child to develop an optimistic explanatory style. Such parents view failures and setbacks as temporary and can be overcome. They attribute the child's failure in anything to external, specific and transient factors, thus reinforcing an optimistic outlook in them. Such children grow up to be having positive attitude, less depressed, achieve success in academics and other areas and well-adjusted (Gillham, 2000).

Critics point out that one needs to differentiate between *realistic optimism* and *unrealistic optimism* so that one can truly derive the benefits of optimism. When optimism is not based on reality, it may lead to adverse situations, e.g., the belief that bad things always happen to others, life threatening diseases or accidents will not happen to us etc. Further, it is important to take into account the resources one has and the situational factors while displaying an optimistic attitude so that it is based on reality. Importance of realistic optimism is reflected in **John Henryism** which refers to railroad folklore about John Henry who competed with a steam-powered spike driver and won, but died due to this. Optimism also points out the need to know what is controllable and what is not and accordingly develop expectancies about future outcomes. This is reflected in the famous Serenity Prayer used by many recovery groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous. Thus our optimism needs to be based on our realistic assessment of control we have over resources and situations. Instead of optimism per se, optimism tempered with realism can lead to positive outcomes for the individual and ensure better mental health and well-being.

The Serenity Prayer

*"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can; and
the wisdom to know the difference"*

- Reinhold Niebuhr

Interventions measures to enhance optimism

Attributional retraining focuses on changing the attributional or explanatory style of the individual from pessimism to optimism (Seligman, 1998). It is based on cognitive therapy models of Aaron Beck and Albert Ellis. It involves doing an *ABC analysis* where one needs to identify the belief systems or thoughts that

operate between a situation/event (antecedent) and its outcome (consequence). When these beliefs are based on a pessimistic explanatory style, it highlights the internal-global-stable factors related to adversity. Three skills that are used here to avoid pessimistic thinking and change to an optimistic explanatory style are distraction, distancing and disputation. Distraction includes diverting your attention from pessimistic thinking to something else, eg., saying aloud 'stop', focusing on something else etc. Distancing involves distancing yourself, i.e., considering that beliefs are not facts, and they are only one explanation of the situation. In disputing we ask four questions that centre on evidence, alternatives, implications and usefulness of the pessimistic explanation (Carr, 2004, p.87).

Cognitive approaches mostly emphasize on reducing the negative thinking. However, Riskind et al (Riskind, Sarampote & Mercier, 1996) modified it to focus on *strategies to enhance positive thinking or optimism* also. The premise here is that attempts to lessen negative or pessimistic way of thinking does not automatically lead to increase in optimistic thinking. One such technique used is **positive visualization** where the individual visualizes positive outcomes for adverse situations or challenges.

HOPE represents a combination of the goal directedness involved in dispositional optimism and the agency factor involved in optimistic explanatory style. As defined by Snyder, hope is a goal-directed thinking which includes pathways thinking (the perceived capacity to find paths or routes to desired goals) and agency thinking (the requisite motivations to use those routes) (Snyder, Lopez, & Pedrotti, 2011, p. 185). Thus hope theory given by Snyder is characterized by expectations to reach the goal, a confidence to find pathways to reach a desired goal, and the motivation or will power to progress in those ways to achieve the desired outcome. Expectations and agency combine to give rise to hope in the individual. Hope is defined by waypower (pathways thinking) and willpower (motivation or the agency) (Snyder, 1995). For instance, you want to buy clothing of a specific brand only to give as gift to your brother on his birthday. Pathways thinking will require you to explore the availability of the brand in nearby stores. Agency will need you to motivate and direct yourself to pursue these paths, that is, actually searching each store and checking on the product availability. Thus your thoughts about possible pathways and personal agency interact to influence the outcome. These two components also get influenced by how much you value the goal. Hope can be assessed through The Hope Scale (Snyder, 1994) which includes items to assess both the components of agency and pathways.

Development of hope is marked by the developmental experiences in different aspects of development through infancy, childhood and adolescence (Snyder, 2000). Children develop a sense of agency through their experiences. They learn to plan pathways and execute them to overcome barriers and achieve desired goals. In the process, they develop belief in their efficacy and being resilient to deal with adverse situations. Parenting practices, support and home environment play important role here.

Optimism and hope both positively influence our physical health and mental health. Interventions for hope makes use of hope therapy which includes forming

clear goals, formulating pathways to reach the goals and motivating oneself to follow the paths.

Self Assessment Questions 1

1. Mention the two approaches to optimism.
2. Hope is a learned experience. True or False.
3. What is 'waypower'?
4. What is positive visualization?
5. Who has given Hope theory?

10.4 RESILIENCE

Resilience refers to an ability to deal with adverse or crisis situations and exhibiting personal growth in the process. It involves believing in one's efficacy, being optimistic, confident, planning for future, hope, and use of effective coping. Thus a resilient person can grow and thrive in threatening and stressful situations by showing resilient personality characteristics. A resilient personality profile (John & Srivastava, 1999) indicates positive performance on all the factors in the Five-Factor Model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992). They explain personality in terms of factors or dimensions such as stability/neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Resilience is highly related to the personal strengths associated with each factor. For example, extraversion is associated with positive traits or strengths of outgoing, energetic, and sociable; agreeableness is related to being warm, and forgiving; conscientiousness is associated with lack of impulsiveness, being efficient and organized; openness is associated with curiosity and imagination; and stability is associated with being contented and confident.

Resilience in simple terms is described as the ability to bounce back in face of any challenge/ trauma and show post-traumatic growth, that is, the ability to recover and gain strength after trauma. While resilience can be termed as being back to normal, returning to pre-trauma level of functioning and state; post-traumatic growth refers to enhanced growth and functioning after the trauma, acquisition of varied strengths and skills for a better life. Thus resilience indicates optimism and hope, and significantly contributes to our mental health and well-being. As Ryff and Singer (2003a, p. 20) define, resilience refers to maintenance, recovery, or improvement in mental or physical health following challenge. It can be said to involve four components: presence of a significant risk situation, judgement of a favourable or good outcome, maintaining balance and recovering from the trauma experience, and exhibiting newer strength after crisis.

In the course of development, human beings face various life challenges pertaining to the tasks at each developmental stage. And most of us are able to show resilience and successfully navigate our life situation – this is termed as 'ordinary magic' (Masten, 2001). You can reflect on this by recalling examples of people you know who have faced adversities in their life and have overcome them and continued with their life. On the other hand, there are individuals who may not be able to cope with the stresses and suffer negative outcomes.

(Think of a family member or a friend or any one you know has faced an adverse situation in their life, e.g., death of their loved one, or an accident, disability, disaster or violence. Talk to them and find out what were their thoughts, emotions and behavior after the challenging situation, and how did they cope with the situation. Analyze their responses and assess if they showed resilient attitude and behavior.)

Hence one needs to understand the factors which affect the development of resilience. It is influenced by several factors related to self, family/home, and community. Self-related factors include psychological traits and resources, beliefs, sense of autonomy, competence and the skills one has. Family-related factors include the family environment created by the parent-child attachment relationships, interaction patterns and parenting styles. Community factors include experiences and interaction of children with various agencies such as school, peer group, religious activities, various agencies and institutions in the community. Thus we can see that it is a combination of individual and environmental factors that affect being resilient. The key here is to focus on the risk and protective factors. Risk factors predispose the individual for developing mental health related problems and disorders, e.g., dysfunctional family environment, domestic abuse and violence, poverty, marginalization, natural disasters. Protective factors are those that protect the individual from the adverse effects of risk factors, for example, presence of elderly, family support system, availability of friends, community resources etc.

Intervention measures to enhance resilience can focus on identifying the specific risk and protective factors in the life of an individual. Accordingly steps can be taken to minimize the impact of risk factors and strengthen the impact of protective factors. For instance, parental conflicts can be a risk factor in the development of depression or substance use in the child, whereas the presence of a supporting grandparent or a good friend or the child's singing skills can be taken as protective factors which can be utilized to make the child resilient.

10.5 MINDFULNESS

If you observe yourself and people around you, you may find that most people function in a mindless or an automatic way without being conscious of their feelings, thoughts and actions in the moment. For example, you are listening to a lecture, but there may be a mindless stare at the teacher, and your mind may be thinking of an argument you had with your friend in the tiffin break. Or you are reading for your exam, but your mind may drift to something else in between. However, when you are mindful, you are sensitive to the context and are attuned to the present moment. Consequences of not paying attention to what we are currently engaged in may have an adverse impact on our performance, relationship and functioning in daily life. This highlights the importance of regulating oneself. Self-regulation will bring more autonomy in one's choices and decisions.

It is important to be aware of one's reflexive and automatic behavior and move towards more autonomy by being aware of what is happening in the present moment rather than thinking about the past or worrying about the future. Mindfulness helps in greater autonomy by expanding our awareness of choices

by disengaging us from reflexive thought patterns and habitual/automatic responses. Thus mindfulness is defined as moment-to-moment awareness and focusing on the here-and-now. If you pause for a bit and think about it, there are so many moments in a day, and our life is as rich as we make these moments rich. Attention to the micro aspects in our life will automatically take care of the macro picture.

Mindfulness indicates living ‘in the moment’ or being present in the moment rather than living ‘for the moment’. The latter signals a carefree attitude having no concern for the future and may point at an unhealthy attitude. Whereas living in the present refers to paying attention to the experiences in the moment which empowers you to be more responsible and adaptive in your behavior. Further, mindfulness also involves non-evaluation of the here-and-now. It includes mainly awareness and attention to the here-and-now. Mindfulness has been defined as the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and in a non-judgemental manner (Kabat Zinn, 1994, p. 4).

Mindfulness is linked to the Eastern philosophies in the form of meditation. It has been influenced mainly by Buddhist tradition. However, mindfulness and meditation, as it is being studied in psychology, is not related to any religion. Mindfulness meditation has been adapted for secular purposes (Specia, Carlson, Goodey, & Angen, 2000). Mindfulness is a means of self-regulation aimed at self-change and self-enhancement. Since it involves awareness and attention, mindfulness has significant implications in personal life and relationships as well as work, friends and other spheres of life. Various therapeutic techniques have been developed based on mindfulness practices such as mindfulness based stress reduction, and mindfulness based cognitive behavior therapy.

Aspects of Mindfulness:

There are seven aspects or components of mindful awareness which are described below.

Non-judging: Most of the time our behavior reflects our values, beliefs and attitudes about a particular object rather than perceiving the object as it is. “We perceive the world not as it is, but as we are” – this indicates that we always judge whatever we perceive. This prevents us from seeing the objects in reality, categorizes our perception into narrower slots and hinders creative solution to problems. Cultivating a non-judgemental attitude will help in bringing awareness to the fact that our perception involves judging about things. Awareness and clarity regarding this will influence our mental health in a positive way.

Patience: Impulsive actions have always been detrimental to our health. On the other hand, patience opens up opportunities and new ways to progress and solve problems. It helps one to focus on the present moment.

Beginner’s Mind: We usually take things for granted in our life and do not pay much attention to routine things or tasks in our surrounding. This gradually leads to boredom, lack of energy and enthusiasm. Mindfulness helps in bringing a fresh attitude, a new perspective and opens up new possibilities.

Trust: An important component of mindfulness is being trustful or authentic to oneself, that is, being responsible for one’s own thoughts, feelings and attitudes. This helps one to be here-and-now.

Non-striving: This refers to non-expectation regarding the outcomes of mindfulness meditation. Striving towards a certain outcome in mindfulness meditation will blind us towards seeing what *is* actually happening. This will prevent our focus on the present moment.

Acceptance: Accepting who you are, is a first step towards improving yourself. Here, acceptance is not a sign of resignation, but becoming aware about yourself, acknowledging things as they are, and then taking actions towards betterment.

Letting go: This important attribute of mindfulness points at practicing non-attachment to thoughts and emotions that our mind wanders to again and again. Noticing these without judging them and then letting them go as clouds come and go away in the sky is very important for our mental well-being. Thus it refers to non-holding rather than suppression of thoughts, feelings and experiences.

Intervention measures to enhance mindfulness focus on developing the skill of attention and regulation. Mindful breathing involves focusing on the inhalation and exhalation. Similarly, mindful eating involves paying attention to and being aware about while eating food.

Mindful Breathing

- *Sit comfortably folding your legs on a mat or on a straight chair in a quiet place.*
- *Make yourself relaxed but alert.*
- *Keep your back straight and eyes closed.*
- *Focus on your breath as you inhale and exhale.*
- *Do not try to change your breathing pattern. Just observe your breathing, be it fast, slow, irregular, light, heavy whatever. Focus on it, bring awareness to your breath.*
- *If your mind wanders, notice it, and then gently bring back your focus to your breath.*
- *Do not worry even if your mind wanders from your breath number of times. Just notice and come back to your breath.*
- *Continue like this for some time. You can gradually increase the time duration.*

Self Assessment Questions 2

1. What is 'ordinary magic'?
2. What are risk and protective factors?
3. Define mindfulness.
4. Mention two intervention measures to enhance mindfulness.

10.6 SPIRITUALITY AND MEANING IN LIFE

Spirituality is described as ‘the search for the sacred’ (Hill et al., 2000, p.66; Pargament & Mahoney, 2009, p.612). Accordingly, it influences one’s thoughts, feelings and actions to engage in such practices and behavior leading to spiritual experiences. One’s ultimate goal is to gain the transcendental experience. It may be through a deep religious connection or connection to nature, or self-less service to the community. It involves going beyond the materialistic and worldly concerns to find the larger meaning in life. It explores one’s connection to the present moment experiences and its impact on living life in the best possible way. Spirituality also includes moving beyond finding meaning and purpose in life to connecting with the divine power.

Maslow’s hierarchy of need talks about the need for transcendence as the highest need that an individual can strive towards. It refers to going beyond the self or rising above and relating to a higher power which leaves you in awe and humility. You realize that you are a very tiny being in this world, for instance, when you look at the vast expanse of the ocean, mountain or the sky, you feel so humbled and bow down before a higher power which is larger than the self. Spirituality marks a transition from realization of self to a realization of something greater than the self; from being self-focused to other-focused aiming at higher goals in life.

As Maslow describes, transcendence refers to the highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating, as ends rather than means, to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature, and to the cosmos (Maslow, 1971, p. 269). Thus spirituality involves a deep sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves and is marked by a search for meaning in life. Viktor Frankl (1976) has emphasized on the search for **meaning in life** which is essential for survival and to live an effective life. It refers to the meaning one has for one’s existence/ life. It points at the reason for being here. Meaning in life gives a direction and purpose to life and one is able to view life from a larger perspective.

Spirituality differs from religion in the sense that the latter refers to specified practices, rites and rituals by various religions. Although these religious behaviours may offer organized pathways for the search for the sacred, it may not always lead to spiritual behavior. Religion primarily focuses on rituals, practices, right way of living, standard code of conduct; whereas spirituality involves questions about finding meaning in life, connecting with self, others and the world around, and the divine or sacred power.

All the religions emphasize on attainment of spirituality as the ultimate aim in human life. For instance, the four-fold stages of human life described in Hinduism highlights ‘*Vanaprastha*’ (*retiring from worldly duties*) and *Sannyasa* (*renunciation*), the third and fourth stage as moving towards spirituality – going beyond oneself, volunteering, doing community service/ selfless service in search of the higher power and gaining ‘moksha’ (liberation) in the process.

Spirituality can help in finding meaning in life and these have a positive impact on mental health and well-being of human beings. It gives rise to positive emotions, compassion, gratitude and a sense of awe and acceptance. Spirituality

and meaning in life both are protective factors in case of psychological distress at the end of life (Bernard et al 2017). Individuals who use their spirituality to cope with challenges in life experience many benefits to their health and well-being (Akbari & Hossaini, 2018).

Measures to enhance spirituality in individuals can emphasize on practicing mindfulness. By helping to focus on the present-moment awareness, mindfulness can facilitate connection of the individual with oneself and others around, and gaining a larger perspective and meaning. Meditation is also a spiritual practice that can enhance one's well-being. Further, practicing gratitude helps one to go beyond one's vested interests and limitations and become more accepting and look at the larger picture in life. One needs to be careful here that in practicing spirituality, one should not ignore or avoid problems or conflicts, giving it as an excuse. Rather Spirituality helps bring peace, harmony and compassion for all.

10.7 HAPPINESS

Happiness is a commonly used word and the most sought after goal in life. It is a positive emotional state having implications for all the aspects of our life.

It includes evaluation of life as a whole with regard to how does one perceive life in general. It is the overall judgement about the quality of one's life. Here we can distinguish between *hedonic* and *eudaimonic* sense of happiness. Hedonic approach focuses on deriving pleasure and enjoyment, e.g., eating good food, watching a movie or going on a picnic etc. It aims at maximizing pleasure and avoiding pain. It involves a cognitive component of evaluation in terms of life satisfaction and an affective component marked by prevalence of positive emotions rather than negative emotions (Di Fabio, & Palazzeschi, 2015).

As Kahneman puts it, hedonic happiness

‘...makes experiences and life pleasant and unpleasant, and is concerned with feelings of pleasure and pain, of interest and boredom, of joy and sorrow, and of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.’

Kahneman et al(1999: ix)

Thus hedonic approach to happiness refers to subjective well-being (Kahneman et al., 1999) which talks about individual satisfaction and fulfillment in life, whereas eudaimonic happiness is considered as psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2008).

Eudaimonic perspective to happiness focuses on a sense of engagement, achieving human potential and deriving meaning from whatever one is doing, e.g., dedicating oneself to one's favourite sport, music or dance etc., helping the poor and deprived in the society, volunteering in local clubs and activities, doing community service etc. In eudaimonic happiness, the person is not limited to or concerned with oneself only, but extends oneself to a larger cause and perspective. Well-being is not simply minimizing negative experiences and maximizing positive experiences in life but it also consists of achieving full human potential and to live life fully. It focuses on life meaning, authenticity and purposefulness (Waterman et al., 2010). Both hedonic and eudaimonic happiness contributes to one's well-being.

Hedonic (Subjective Well-being)	Eudaimonic (Psychological well-being)
Presence of positive mood	Sense of control or autonomy
Absence of negative mood	Feeling of meaning and purpose
Satisfaction with various domains of life, eg., work, leisure	Personal expressiveness
Global life satisfaction	Feelings of belongingness
	Social contribution
	Competence
	Personal growth
	Self-acceptance

Source: <https://www.counsellingconnection.com/index.php/2010/08/30/happiness-and-positive-psychology/>

Seligman (2003) has defined happiness in terms of pleasant life, good life and meaningful life. Pleasant life refers to increasing the positive emotions and decreasing the negative emotions. It reflects hedonic approach to well-being. Good life is where the individual uses their strengths and potentials resulting in growth and achievement in all areas of life. It includes feelings of competency, a sense of mastery, and self-development. Meaningful life is going beyond oneself and using one's strengths and resources to contribute to the larger cause. Thus good life and meaningful life reflect a eudaimonic approach. All these three elements of happiness combine to contribute to one's mental health and well-being.

Later in 2011, Seligman added two more elements and proposed the PERMA model of happiness which is more comprehensive. The acronym stands for Positive emotions, Engagement, Positive relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment. Thus PERMA postulates well-being as a multidimensional construct.

Further, in the Indian context, we talk about going beyond the meaningful life and entering the 'Ananda' stage, transcending the worldly limitations and entering into the divine world which gives the ultimate happiness – the blissful state of happiness. Maslow in his hierarchy of needs indicates the need for transcendence as the highest need of human beings which can lead to true happiness.

Another approach to well-being is Carol Ryff's six-factor model of psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989). The six factors in the model which contributes to well-being are Self-acceptance, Personal growth, Purpose in life, Positive relations with others, Environmental mastery and Autonomy. Attention to all these factors will lead to increased happiness in one's life.

Lybournirsky has advocated a model of happiness which delineates various factors affecting our well-being (Lybournirsky et al., 2005). Popularly called as the '**happiness pie**', it mainly points at three factors that govern our happiness: (a) a genetic predisposition, called as 'happiness set point', (b) life circumstances, and (c) volitional or intentional activities. Lybournirsky suggests that 50% of the variance in well-being is explained by genetic factors, that, there is a set level of

happiness for each individual. However, the crucial point to be noted here is that 40% of our happiness can be influenced by our own intentional actions which has implications for enhancing our happiness. Life situations and circumstances over which we do not have control explains only 10% of our happiness. Although Lybournsky's conceptualization of happiness has been criticized related to the percentage distribution of the three factors, role of mediating factors, influence of other factors, validity across cultures etc., it has been widely used in various settings of coaching and training etc.

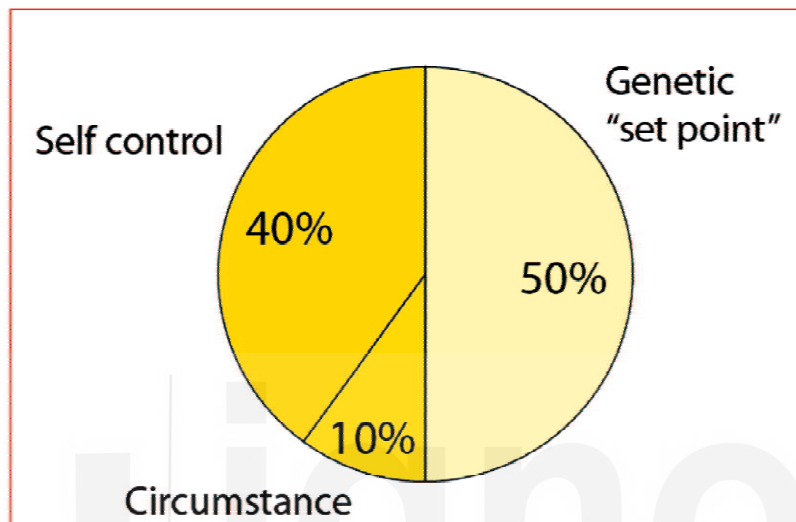


Fig. 10.2: Happiness Pie

Source: (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Happinesspercentages.png>)

Thus **measures to enhance our happiness** can follow a multi-pronged approach. It can focus on our own initiatives and actions impacting our happiness. An important concept here is the *Broaden and build theory of positive emotions* proposed by Barbara Frederickson (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). It emphasizes on creating positive emotions which in turn will broaden our awareness and response to events which then will build further skills and resources to deal with problems and challenges. Thus it emphasizes adding daily doses of positive emotions so that over time it builds up resiliency in the individual. It can be noted here that the theory does not avoid negative emotions and experiences, but it talks about adding positive emotions on a continuous basis so that it leads to resources that can help deal with negative emotions in life. One can also involve oneself in daily eudaimonic activity through engagement and meaning.

Self Assessment Questions 3

1. The highest need in Maslow's Hierarchy of needs is _____.
2. What is spirituality?
3. Differentiate between hedonic and eudaimonic approach to happiness.
4. What are the six factors in Ryff's model of psychological well-being?

10.8 GRATITUDE AND FORGIVENESS

Gratitude and forgiveness are two constructs which reflect the interpersonal strength in the individual and has significant implications for mental health and well-being of individuals. Gratitude refers to grace, gratefulness and graciousness (Emmons, McCullough & Tsang, 2003). It is valued across all cultures and

traditions, and highlights the beauty of kindness, giving and receiving. Gratitude as a character strength is marked by three aspects: you have received a positive outcome; the outcome carries value for you; it has been rendered intentionally by the giver. One can feel gratitude not only towards other individuals but also towards the nature, the universe and the divine. In Indian context, for instance, various festivals and worships are occasions of offering one's gratitude to the Sun god, river, food, elderly etc.

Gratitude has many benefits, for instance, it is related to hope, forgiveness, humility and empathy (Froh et al., 2009). It increases life satisfaction, optimism, Happiness and psychological well-being (McCullough et al 2002; Dickens, 2017). Measures for enhancing a sense of gratitude involves various activities, for example, writing gratitude letter, listing out three good things daily, writing a gratitude journal etc. (Sheldon & Lybournirsky, 2006; Emmons & McCullough, 2003). As the common saying goes, 'count your blessings', we need to focus more on the blessings in our life, be thankful than complaining always about negative things or problems.

Measures to cultivate gratitude can include various activities such as,

Three Good Things: One is required to reflect and write three good things that happened to oneself daily.

Naikan meditation: It is a Japanese form of meditation which requires one to meditate daily on three gratitude-related questions – what did I receive today?, what did I give today?, and what troubles and difficulties did I cause to others today?

FORGIVENESS is defined as 'a freeing from a negative attachment to the source that has transgressed against a person (Thompson et al., 2005). It involves giving up any grudge, complaints, hurt feelings or ill thoughts, or any desire to harm the transgressing person. Going beyond this, it involves developing a sense of acceptance, grateful and benevolent attitude towards the transgressor.

Forgiveness can be said to include the following aspects:

- There is a transgression against the individual.
- However, the individual chooses not to play the victim role.
- The individual gives up any negative emotions towards the transgressor and displays positive emotions and actions.
- The individual exhibits a benevolent attitude and behavior towards the transgressor.

Measures to cultivate forgiveness can be directed at forgiving another person, forgiving oneself, and forgiving a situation (eg., earthquake, flood etc.). The forgiveness model of Worthington (Worthington & Drinkard, 2000) basically involves five steps acronymed as REACH: *Recall* the hurt and injury caused; develop *empathy*; showing *altruistic* behavior; *commit* verbally to forgive; and *hold* onto the forgiveness.

10.9 LET US SUM UP

The present Unit discussed significant positive psychological constructs such as optimism, hope, resilience, mindfulness, spirituality, meaning in life, gratitude

and forgiveness as significant correlates of mental health and well-being. Optimism and hope indicate a future orientation in influencing our mental health. Approaches to optimism are also described. Resilience is described as the ability to bounce back from any adverse situation. Factors affecting the development of resilience are highlighted. Mindfulness is an emerging construct studied in psychology which has significant relation to our mental health. The various aspects of mindfulness are described in the Unit. Spirituality and meaning in life indicate a higher purpose going beyond the self and material world, and described as having great influence in impacting our mental health and well-being. Gratitude and forgiveness are two crucial pro-social behaviours that significantly impact our mental health and well-being. The Unit also highlighted various intervention measures and strategies to enhance all these psychological constructs.

10.10 KEY WORDS

Optimism	: The stable tendency to believe that good rather than bad things will happen.(Scheier &Carver, 1985).
Hope	: A goal-directed thinking which includes pathways thinking (the perceived capacity to find paths or routes to desired goals) and agency thinking (the requisite motivations to use those routes) (Snyder, Lopez, & Pedrotti, 2011, p. 185).
Resilience	: the ability to bounce back in face of any challenge/ trauma and show post-traumatic growth, that is, the ability to recover and gain strength after trauma.
Mindfulness	: Moment-to-moment awareness and focus on the here-and-now including non-evaluation of it.
Happiness	: a positive emotional state indicating an overall judgement about the quality of one's life.
Spirituality	: Involves a deep sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves and is marked by a search for the divine.
Meaning in Life	: refers to the meaning one has for one's existence/ life. It points at the reason for being here.
Gratitude	: Refers to grace, gratefulness and graciousness (Emmons, McCullough & Tsang, 2003).
Forgiveness	: A freeing from a negative attachment to the source that has transgressed against a person (Thompson et al., 2005).

10.11 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Answers to Self Assessment Questions 1

1. Two approaches to optimism are Dispositional optimism and Optimism as an explanatory style.
2. True

3. 'Waypower' refers to pathways thinking (the perceived capacity to find paths or routes to desired goals).
4. Positive visualization refers to visualizing positive outcomes for adverse situations or challenges.
5. Snyder

Answers to Self Assessment Questions 2

1. Most of us are able to show resilience and successfully navigate our life situation – this is termed as 'ordinary magic' (Masten, 2001).
2. Risk factors are those that predispose the individual for developing mental health related problems and disorders whereas Protective factors are those that protect the individual from the adverse effects of risk factors.
3. Mindfulness is defined as moment-to-moment awareness and focusing on the here-and-now without any judgement.
4. Two intervention measures to enhance mindfulness are mindful breathing and mindful eating.

Answers to Self Assessment Questions 3

1. need for transcendence
2. Spirituality is moving beyond finding meaning and purpose in life to connecting with the divine power.
3. Hedonic approach focuses on deriving pleasure and enjoyment whereas eudaimonic perspective to happiness focuses on a sense of engagement, achieving human potential and deriving meaning from whatever one is doing.
4. Self acceptance, Personal growth, Purpose in life, Positive relations with others, Environmental mastery and Autonomy.

10.12 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Differentiate between dispositional optimism and optimism as an explanatory style.
2. Define resilience. Explain the factors affecting development of resilience.
3. Describe the aspects of mindfulness.
4. How spirituality and religion are related?
5. Describe the measures to enhance spirituality.
6. How does the Broaden and Build theory of positive emotions enhance our happiness?
7. Explain Lybournsky's happiness pie.
8. Discuss the role of gratitude and forgiveness in promoting mental health and well-being

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10.14 FURTHER LEARNING RESOURCES

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UNIT 11 SELF IN A CHANGING WORLD*

Structure

- 11.1 Learning Objectives
- 11.2 Introduction
- 11.3 Aspects of A Changing World
 - 11.3.1 Use of technology
 - 11.3.2 Environmental issues, concerns and crisis
 - 11.3.3 Globalization
 - 11.3.4 Cultural diversity
 - 11.3.5 Changes in value system
- 11.4 Self-direction in A Changing World : The Challenges
 - 11.4.1 Focusing on human strengths
 - 11.4.2 Indian cultural perspective
- 11.5 Enhancing Self-direction and Personal Growth
- 11.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.7 Key Words
- 11.8 Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 11.9 Unit End Questions
- 11.10 References
- 11.11 Further Learning Resources

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you would be able to:

- *Explain the different aspects of a changing world;*
- *Understand self-direction as an important goal of human life;*
- *Describe the challenges to self-direction in a changing world;*
- *Explain Indian perspective on achieving self-direction and personal growth; and*
- *Discuss ways for enhancing self-direction and personal growth*

11.2 INTRODUCTION

We are living in a changing world. In fact, the world has been changing always. Human beings have attempted to control the environment and the world, they have tried to bring in changes in the world around to improve things and make it a better place. But what does the world consist of? It includes among other species, the human beings who are the most intelligent beings on this world. So, to bring in changes in the world, we human beings only need to change, each one of us.

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We need to take charge of our lives, direct our lives for higher cause and be responsible for ourselves and the world in which we are living.

However, many a times, the uncertainty, fear, anxiety created by the changing world due to natural or manmade factors affects our 'self' in a negative way and even question our identity. For instance, Moni from Nagaland went to Delhi for higher studies and then wanted to settle down there in the capital of India. However, she had to face marginalization and discrimination in the city because of coming from North-east region of India and looking different with different cultural values. It has affected her sense of identity, about who she is. She feels alienated and isolated. As Hogg (2020) points out, living in a changing world can create uncertainty about who we are, and make extremist groups, identities and ideologies attractive to us.

Hogg talks about the uncertainty-identity theory which indicates that context-induced self-uncertainty may result in radicalization, violent extremism, and support for populist ideologies and autocratic leadership. According to Uncertainty-identity theory, people are motivated to reduce self and identity uncertainty; and group identification satisfies this motivation. This can explain the young people falling prey to extreme ideologies and joining extremist groups such as the Naxalites, or the terrorist groups.

Hence understanding the 'self' is important and providing a direction to the 'self' to progress and function effectively in this world is crucial. This will help ensure proper decision making and good mental health and well-being for all.

11.3 ASPECTS OF A CHANGING WORLD

11.3.1 Use of technology

Technology is the hallmark of the 21st century. It has revolutionized the way we learn, work, engage in entertainment and socialize. It is a digital world now as compared to the earlier postal world. The netizens in this virtual world have developed different value systems, ways of working and interacting practices. Technology has offered many advantages but it has also resulted in negative impact on the mental health and well-being of users unless it is used properly.

Technology has given rise to a global outlook in individuals as it has reduced the distance and isolation, increased awareness about different people, places, societies and cultures. Communication has been revolutionized and the world has been transformed to a global village. Every aspect of life – every thought, act and institution – is influenced by what is happening in other parts of the world (Shah, 2007). Thus technology has resulted in greater interdependence related to use of technology, but it has lessened interdependence in the context of family and society. It has also impacted the value system.

Technology has permeated into all aspects of our life, eg., using it to get information, learning things, ordering products online to forming relationships. However, there still is 'digital divide' in developing countries like India and in the underdeveloped countries where not everybody has access to technology. This became quite evident in the COVID-19 pandemic in India in 2020 when schools had to impart education online in view of the closure of schools.

Given the ubiquitous presence of technology in our life and the role it plays in almost all aspects of our life, one needs to understand its impact on the 'self' and how does it affect one's choices and decisions.

11.3.2 Environmental issues, concerns and crisis

The world is facing a global crisis with regard to the health of our environment. Massive urbanization and destroying of the nature has resulted in many crisis situations like flood, tsunami, landslide, forest fire, earthquake etc. The present COVID-19 pandemic that has affected the whole world is a crisis which has made the lives of people very difficult and shifted their focus to the simple facts and simple values of life like taking care of oneself, nurturing family values, need for a simple living, being empathetic and having compassion for fellow beings.

Population expansion is a crucial factor that can adversely impact our environment. It can be a boon or burden on the planet earth. India is set to become the most populous country by 2027 surpassing China as per the UN's World Population Prospects 2019 and will have a vast number of young people. This demographic dividend in the form of large youth population who can be used for the development of the country can also be a burden on the nation if they are not literate and educated enough to be valuable resource for the nation. Further, the growing population will also put pressure on other resources of healthcare, food, water, shelter and education. It will be a challenge to provide for the basic necessities of individuals. In such a scenario, how do we understand ourselves, who are we, what is our purpose in life, how do we direct ourselves, how do we contribute to larger cause and derive meaning in life?

Also, there will be increase in population above 60 years of age at a rate of 19% in 2050 according to India Ageing Report 2017 by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This double challenge of population growth and rising number of old age dependents will put pressure on the education, socio-economic, employment and health care system.

11.3.3 Globalization

Globalization has opened the doors and windows, resulted in more fluidity and flexibility, and has increased efficiency and productivity. It has impacted the economic, social, cultural and moral fabric of India. There has been processes of assimilation and accommodation in many aspects as a result of globalization. It has made possible wider perspectives in solution of problems, and growing optimally as an individual and also as a nation. On the flip side, it has resulted in identity crisis, mis-direction, and socio-cultural problems also.

11.3.4 Cultural diversity

Globalization and migration brings in contact people from diverse cultures, languages, and social customs. Such cultural diversity requires people to be tolerant and understanding of each other's differences for effective functioning and progress. Otherwise, it may lead to prejudice, conflicts and discrimination. Multiplicity of identities affects the development of the self amid influence of various cultural facets. Cultural interconnectivity leads to adoption, assimilation

or rejection of different cultural practices and values. This shapes the process of identity development and acquisition of values in individuals.

Globalization affects not only political-economic-technological aspects but also the socio-cultural aspects resulting in cultural globalization. There are changes in interpersonal communication and interaction which also influences the development of the individual's sense of self and identity. As indicated by Ozer (2019), the contextual complexity arising out of cultural globalization impacts the process of developing a sense of belonging and a sense of self. Globalization-initiated acculturation (Jensen & Arnett, 2012) leads to integration of multicultural identities through the proliferation of intercultural connectivity (Hong, Zhan, Morris, & Benet-Martinez, 2016). One significant impact of cultural globalization is 'deterritorialization' where the culture is detached from geographical locations (Tomlinson, 2007). Thus we find fluidity of cultures, global flow of cultural ideas, practices and products, interacting and influencing each other. There is a dissociation of cultural elements from their context of origin and a multidirectional flow of these elements, exchanged at the global level (Ozer, Bertelsen, Singla, & Schwartz, 2017). The impact of cultural globalization is greater especially in the younger generation as they are in the process of exploring their identity, striving to realize their potentials and finding their path in life.

11.3.5 Changes in value system

The process of globalization and cultural diversity brings changes in value system also. In the Indian context, the good old system of joint family is giving way to the nuclear family system in a changing world. Family values are being impacted in the pursuit of higher achievement and success. In this context, we can differentiate between individualistic and collectivistic societies. Individualistic societies put emphasis on individual gains whereas collectivistic societies put premium on group, family and community. Here, collective gain is priority than the individual gain. There is more interdependence and need for conformity in collectivistic societies. This difference in approach influences the development of value system, the sense of identity and the life goals of individuals.

Thus our world is marked by various changes. How do we make sense of these changes? How do we understand this changing world? What impact these changes are having on our self-growth and self-direction? How do we grow and achieve our potentials? How do we look at our future in the face of the problems and challenges of our present world? Do we see problems only – the challenges of rising population, unemployment, environmental pollution, lack of infrastructure and basic amenities, poverty, lack of education, social inequality? Or do we focus on the human potential, the character strengths and the resilience of individuals to overcome the challenges of a changing world and steer themselves in the right direction so that we grow as a society and as a nation.

Self Assessment Questions 1

1. What is demographic dividend?
2. Explain cultural globalization.
3. What is 'deterritorialization' ?

11.4 SELF-DIRECTION IN A CHANGING WORLD: THE CHALLENGES

It is very important to keep a focus on 'self' in this changing world so that you can take yourself in the right direction and achieve your potentials. Self-direction requires an understanding of one's self and the world around so that one can grow optimally, deal with situations and function effectively in life. It also involves freedom and responsibility. Young generation want to live their life in their own way, but in the name of freedom, they may 'freeze up', i.e., become anxious in the face of difficult situations and important decisions ; or they may just be 'drifting', i.e., living as per status quo or living with no ties, traditions, purpose at all, a carefree, no-holds barred life.

One needs to take charge of their life and direct their life in a proper way so as to realize one's own self .

11.4.1 Focusing on human strengths

As a human being, the ultimate goal is self-actualization. According to Maslow's need hierarchy theory, human beings are characterized by various needs starting from basic needs for survival and progressing towards the need for self-actualization and finally, the highest need for transcendence. This helps provide meaning and direction to one's life. Achieving the higher growth needs makes the individual self-actualized. Self-actualization refers to achieving or realizing one's true potential. Self-actualized persons are characterized by acceptance, autonomy, and fulfilment. Such individuals are responsible, creative and have broader perspective. It focuses on the strengths of the individual.

The field of positive psychology also emphasizes moving beyond the sufferings of individuals to highlight the strengths and potentials of individuals so that they use these strengths to achieve self-actualization and develop a sense of purpose in life. Positive psychology focuses on the role of positive emotions, positive character traits and positive actions in the growth of individuals, in becoming what one is capable of being.

Thus a self-directed individual takes charge of her/his life and moves towards self- actualization and transcendence. They engage in altruistic behaviour.

During peak covid pandemic in India, 85 year old Narayanrao Dabhadkar of Nagpur, vacated his hospital bed for a young patient with family responsibilities when beds were in shortage and doctor warned him that he needs hospitalization. But Narayanrao was firm in his decision that he had already lived his life and the young patient have responsibilities to fulfil. After three days of returning home, Narayanrao died (Lokmat News Network, April 27, 2021).

The above incident reflects the compassion and altruistic act of Narayanrao. The choice lies in us regarding how to lead our life. As Viktor Frankl said, *the last of the human freedoms is to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.*

Further, self-actualization also involves taking calculated risks and making commitments in spite of uncertainty (Kirsh, Duffy, & Atwater, 2015). It is moving

beyond the status quo, taking the risks and challenges, showing the courage to move ahead and excel in their life. It requires one to be open to learnings and experiences, and engage in continual learning (Barnes & Srinivas, 1993). It may not always be possible to have conducive situations or opportunities to grow, but self-actualized persons have the resilient characteristics to capitalize on their strengths and turn challenges into opportunities for learning and growth.

11.4.2 Indian cultural perspective

Indian traditional way of conceptualizing self highlights a collectivistic approach where self is viewed in relation to the context of family and the society. The attributes of self and personality in this interdependent self are more plural and fluid (Cicarelli & White, 2018). According to the vedantic tradition of India, one's 'karma' (the actions and behaviours of an individual) directs one's life. Hence it is important to acquire good karma by thinking good and doing good. This directs one's life to a higher level of consciousness and transcendence.

The yoga philosophy (Taittiriya upanishad) talks about self as consisting of five layers which progresses from focusing on the physical body towards achieving a state of 'Ananda' or bliss. It focuses on directing one's self towards transcending to a higher level beyond the materialistic focus to achieve true self-realization (Refer Fig. 11.1 below).

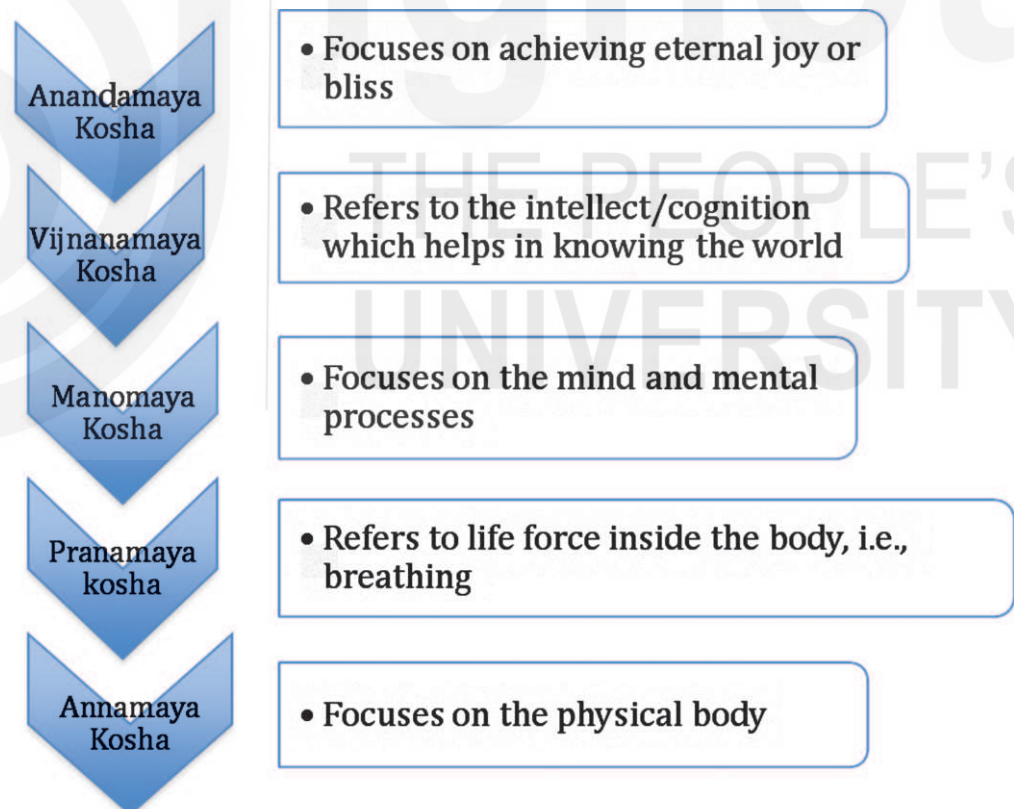


Fig. 11.1: The Five Layers of Self

These five koshas or 'pancha kosha' can be said to be five bodies starting from the physical body to energy body, mental body, intellect body and finally blissful body. It marks our journey from outer to the innermost layer of our consciousness which abounds with pure bliss and joy. We sometimes get this blissful experience, the feeling of expansion, but we may not have known it. For example, you feel so wonderful and in awe looking at the sun-rise from top of a hill, holding a new

born baby, so fulfilling when you give your best performance, or engrossed in writing an article or doing a painting.

Awareness of these five bodies and integrating them will lead one in the direction of personal growth. The main goal of human life is to understand each layer or kosha and work on them to make our life balanced, effective, peaceful and harmonious.

11.5 ENHANCING SELF-DIRECTION AND PERSONAL GROWTH

“Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself”.

- Leo Tolstoy

The world today as we see it has changed dramatically from the earlier one. Technological revolution has brought sweeping changes in the way we live, work and interact with others. This has brought in changes in our social-emotional fabric and influenced our value system. Consequently, there is intergenerational conflict, anxiety and stress within oneself and lacking of a sense of direction which may lead the individual to take recourse to maladaptive behaviour, substance use, and other mental health problems.

On the one hand the individual is spreading and expanding herself/himself through this vast world, but on the other hand, the individual is failing to look within herself/himself, understand the inner world, that will help achieve self-direction, growth, psychological well-being and meaning in life.

The external environment may not be under our control. The situation may be adverse and our life may be challenged by myriad problems. Our world and human beings have suffered from various calamities such as earthquake, tsunami, flood, pollution; pandemics like Spanish flu, H1N1 Swine flu, AIDS, and COVID-19 at present; and abuse, maltreatment, neglect, discrimination and human rights violation. All these shape the rules and values of the society by which we live, influencing individualistic or collectivistic approaches to life.

It is time to reflect on how we are living our life, where are we going in this life, what values colour our life and what meaning we are giving to our life? It is important to reach the stage of transcendence by developing a higher sense of awareness and consciousness.

Hence it is important to look within to understand our inner world, to enhance our self-direction, growth and well-being. We need to reach a higher level of consciousness to solve the problems around. Alternate perspective, flexibility and creativity will help look at problems in new light and reach solutions.

As the American author and speaker John C. Maxwell writes, *“Most people want to change the world to improve their lives, but the world they need to change first is the one inside themselves.”*

Mahatma Gandhi has said, *“Be the change you want to see in the world”.*

Changing the way you think will change the way you feel and act, thus impacting the world around you.

The important question is how to focus on our thoughts and emotions, how to achieve personal growth and how to reach the level of self-actualization and transcendence?

The following points may be considered in this regard.

- One needs to look for research-based evidence in an attempt to enhance personal growth and development. Further, it is not possible to realize oneself and grow just by reading books in this regard. One needs to actually live by the principles of personal growth and development and translate the scientific knowledge into actual practices. We read so many books, have access to so much of information at the click of a button, get advice and guidance from so many people and professionals also. But what matters is, to what extent do we transform this knowledge into action? Do we practice what we read or get guidance? There is a gap between our knowledge and our action which will hinder self-direction and growth. This gap needs to be closed to facilitate self-direction and personal growth.
- Changes in the family system and family structure, in the societies, environment and the global world has created an overemphasis on the individualism. This has led to conflict between the need for personal fulfilment and the interests of the family and the society. The clash between the old values and the new values results in confusion, argument, dissent and maladjustment. However, independence also requires interdependence to grow and prosper. A greater emphasis on individualism only will make people neglect the interests and progress of the society as a whole. Thus there needs to be a balance. Too much individualism will kill the spirit of the society. Ultimately human beings, in fact, every element on this earth are interdependent on each other for their survival, growth and progress. Too much collectivism also will smother the free spirit of individual human beings and stunt their growth. Hence there needs to be a realignment of the interests of self and society so that personal fulfilment can be realized in relation to others- through a web of shared meanings that transcend the isolated individual (Kirsh, Duffy & Atwater, 2015).
- An individual moving towards self-actualization is open to change and adapt. Some of us are comfortable with themselves and the existing situation in their lives and do not want to change anything in their personality characteristics. However, some others are willing to change and progress. The debate over to maintain the status quo and continue or to change depends on what priorities do we assign to stability or change in different aspects of our life, how much do we want to change, and live life differently. Although personality traits are more or less stable, individuals do change over time based on their personal beliefs, life experiences and reflection. Our personal *beliefs* can play a significant role in changing our personality across the life span (Dweck, 2008). Those who believe they can change are more flexible and able to deal with challenges in creative ways as compared to those who believe that their traits are fixed. Individuals with traditional values tend to exhibit a high degree of stability in their lives and it usually takes something dramatic (e.g., unwanted divorce, death, trauma, failure in career etc.) to make

them change (Kirsh, Duffy & Atwater, 2015). On the other hand, people who value change are amenable to change and they strive towards personal growth and self-actualization.

- This process or experience of personal growth can be said to follow a three-phase cycle (Kirsh, Duffy & Atwater, 2015):
 - (i) Acknowledgement of change within ourselves or our environment – usually we have a sense of stability in our life otherwise it would be difficult to live life if we are constantly aware of the changes in and around us. We become aware of changes when we get feedback or criticism or complaints from others, and also when there are major events happening in our life, e.g., job, marriage, child birth, moving to a new place/country, having an accident, disease etc.
 - (ii) A sense of dissonance or dissatisfaction within – Awareness of change leads to either a feeling of dissatisfaction, failure or a sense of mastery and success. It depends on how do we react to the changes that have occurred. If we accept it and see it as a challenge of personal growth, it leads us towards self-actualization. If we react to the change with anxiety and stress, then it will hamper our personal growth and sense of mastery.
 - (iii) Reorganizing our experience – Being aware of and acknowledging the change and consequently the positive or negative feelings created by the change leads to some sort of reorganization of inner experience of the individual. For instance, it may result in forming a new attitude toward ourselves or others, gaining a new perspective, more confidence, more acceptance and empathy towards other beings. It is integrated into the entire being of the individual. Thus it has the potential to move the individual towards a higher level of consciousness. Thus the three-phase cycle of personal growth looks at the individual as a whole and focuses on how we change as an individual.
- Rogers (1980) highlights the process of becoming which aims at self-direction and personal growth. It consists of two stages: (i) the stage of self-revision – It is characterized by criticisms and complaints received from others and also oneself. For instance, many a times, we express disliking about parts or whole of ourselves and value ourselves less; and (ii) the stage of greater self-direction and self-acceptance – As individuals mature and move towards exploring themselves, they become more open, flexible and accepting of themselves and others. They develop acceptance of their thoughts and feelings which empowers them to change for better. It is a continuous journey as “The good life is a process, not a state of being, it is a direction, not a destination” (Rogers, 1961, p. 186).

Change and growth are continuous process. They give meaning to human life. When aiming at personal growth, we need to move beyond individualism towards interdependence; it should not be ‘self only’, but ‘self related to others’ that will help achieve optimal personal growth and fulfilment. There needs to be a balanced approach between the ‘me’ and ‘we’, the self connected with family, friends, community and society where it recognizes the interests of all. This will lead to

a state of transcendence which is the higher aim of human life according to Indian traditions.

Self Assessment Questions 2

1. What is self-direction ?
2. Explain the aims of positive psychology ?
3. Name the five layers of self according to yoga philosophy.
4. What are the phases in the three-phase cycle of personal growth?

11.6 LET US SUM UP

The present Unit focuses on self-direction and achieving personal growth to reach the highest objective of life. It deliberates on the challenges and changes in the world and how these affect our self-growth and development. Technology has majorly impacted our life and the world. Cultural globalization has altered our value system and added newer dimensions to our interaction and functioning. The challenges to self-direction and personal growth are explained. The Unit highlights the need to focus on human strengths and talks about the role of positive emotions, characteristics and strengths in psychological well-being of individuals. In this context, the Indian perspective on self-direction and personal growth is described. Finally, the Unit describes various ways of progressing towards self-direction and personal growth.

11.7 KEY WORDS

- Self-direction** : Taking charge of one's life and directing one's life in a proper way so as to realize one's own self.
- Self-actualization** : Realization or achieving one's true potential, and directing oneself towards personal growth.

11.8 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Answers to Self Assessment Questions 1

1. Demographic dividend refers to the large number of youth population who can be assets for the development of the nation.
2. Cultural globalization refers to the impact of globalization on socio-cultural aspects.
3. 'Deterritorialization' refers to the impact of cultural globalaization where the culture is detached from geographical locations.

Answers to Self Assessment Questions 2

1. Self-direction refers to taking charge of one's life and direct one's life in a proper way so as to realize one's own self.
2. Positive psychology aims at studying the role of positive emotions, positive

character traits and positive actions in the growth of individuals, in becoming what one is capable of being.

3. The five layers of self according to yoga philosophy are Annamaya kosha, Pranamaya kosha, Manomaya kosha, Vijnanamaya kosha, and Anandamaya kosha.
4. The three phase cycle of personal growth consists of the following stages :
(i) Acknowledgement of change within ourselves or our environment; (ii) A sense of dissonance or dissatisfaction within; and (iii) Reorganizing our experience.

11.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the impact of technology on our life.
2. How does cultural globalization affect the process of identity development?
3. Explain the meaning and importance of self-actualization.
4. Discuss the challenges to achieve self-direction and personal growth.
5. Describe the stages proposed by Rogers to achieve personal growth.

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11.11 FURTHER LEARNING RESOURCES

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