

## Self-Development Centre



**Faculty In-charge:** Mrs. Kavita Jajoo and Mrs. Sudarshana Saikia

### **About the center:**

The Self-Development Center functioning at R.A. Podar College of Commerce & Economics (Autonomous) has been fully operational in the aftermath of COVID-19 receding and yet kept bringing stimulating and diverse scenarios through the academic year 2023–24. The students and faculty members both welcomed the realignment, and the guidance and counseling services were provided with sustained enthusiasm as per a hybrid model. The Self-Development Center started functioning in June 2023, and biweekly sessions were conducted in person on Thursdays and online on Tuesdays between 10.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m.

The **Self-Development Center** was involved in conducting multiple programs and activities along with biweekly student support sessions throughout the year. Some of the highlights of the various programs conducted are as follows:

*Podar: Nurturing Intellect, Creating Personalities*

- **Student Awareness and Induction Programme:** Under the guidance of respected Vice Principal Kavita Jajoo and Ms. Sudarshana Saikia, an in-person program was conducted by the Self-Development Center under the aegis of RUSA 2.0 in collaboration with the Disha Counseling Center.

The counselors conducted an in-person workshop for all students of the F.Y.B. COM/Self-Financed Programs. The total number of students was 900; hence, 4 batches were conducted across the divisions on the 5th and 8th of September 2023 (8.00 am–10.00 am; 11.00 am–1.00 pm consecutively) from morning till afternoon on both days. The program was conducted with the support of the entire committee of student volunteers and teachers. The workshop aimed to generate a dialogue about the varied emotional, mental, psychological, social, physiological, and environmental concerns that are faced by today’s youth in these challenging yet stimulating years of young adulthood. The concepts covered were raising understanding of the importance of mind-body connection and awareness of self-concept, self-care, understanding the link between ‘thoughts-emotions-behaviors’, communication skills and supportive social skills, interpersonal efficacy, emotional intelligence, and effective self-help strategies to manage challenging areas. Lastly, understanding today’s transitioning times and integrating self-compassion into their mind frames to create an all-around personality development and growth. Similarly, the students were informed, and discussion was generated about the availability, accessibility, and reach of the Self-Development Center. They were further informed that the services can be availed of at no extra cost, and utilizing them will help them build a stable base towards self-empowerment and all-round development in these crucial years. Informative videos, interactive activities, open-ended questions, group discussions, self-reflection exercises, and brainstorming discussions were used to help learn the energy and wholesome impact of the concepts introduced. A compiled exercise workbook was also provided to the students to practice their learning, write down reflections, and as a takeaway for them to reconnect whenever necessary in the long run. This was aimed at ensuring student participation, connectivity, and internalization of the themes of the workshop.

- **Awareness Workshop for Parents of Students of R.A. Podar College: ‘Art of Parenting of Gen Z’: A Workshop for Parents**

Under the guidance of respected Prof. Kavita Jajoo and Ms. Sudarshana Saikia, an in-person program was conducted by the Self-Development Center under the aegis of RUSA 2.0 in collaboration with the Disha Counseling Center.

With the onslaught of a plethora of information by way of social media and the internet, it is paramount to know that parenting has become a very tricky and challenging role to fulfill. The parenting awareness program was aimed at covering facets that could help understand the very real difficulties faced by teenagers and young adults as they are growing up. The aim was also to address and discuss ways to raise peaceful, overall healthy teenagers and young adults to help them lead purposeful lives and become balanced, well-adjusted adults. Some of the salient aspects of the workshop were as follows:

1. Challenges that today’s parents face while parenting.
2. Which parenting style should I adopt, and is there one good method of parenting?
3. Being a ‘friendly parent’ vs. being a ‘friend’ to your teenager or young adult.
4. Working as a team with other significant adults while raising teenagers or young adults.

The entire flow of the workshop was thoroughly enjoyed by parents, and as shared by the feedback received, the parents found the themes deeply eye-opening and insightful, as well as helped them find some helpful strategies to connect with their role as a parent endowed with a team spirit within.

- **A national-level workshop for teachers across India has been conducted at R.A. Podar College: ‘Compassion for Self, Passion for Work’. – A workshop on Basic Counseling Skills for Teachers:**

On December 5, 2023, an all-India-level workshop was organized by the R. A. Podar College of Commerce and Economics under the guidance of Prof. Kavita Jajoo and Ms. Sudarshana Saikia; an in-person program was conducted by the Self-Development Centre under the aegis of RUSA 2.0 in collaboration with the Disha Counseling Center.

The unique workshop is aimed at helping teachers nurture and foster their unique selves, develop inner vision, and harness self-care. Similarly, creating the beauty inside will empower them to find their sources of synergy, enhance their inner journey toward what authentically motivates them, and be empowered leaders in their workspaces. The target group was teachers across the country of India from junior and degree colleges, and the event was organized as a day-long engagement program. The core concept of teachers being the pillars of self-journey who shoulder the dual responsibility towards themselves, as well as the countless number of students with whom they connect, is The multiple themes explored and introduced during the workshop were as follows:

1. To begin and enhance the inner journey of self-awareness, self-care, and connecting to our inner space
2. To help build synchronicity between inner motivators and develop an effective, empowered, and fulfilling presence in the workspace
3. Enhancing positive and effective team relationships and enabling happier work environments

The workshop was well received, and the group shared that the diverse aspects helped them build an understanding of both the verticals of self-care and group engagement in their personal and professional spaces.

- **Individual Career Sessions:**

The Self-Development Center conducted a total of 74–75 career counseling sessions between the academic year June 2023 and December 2023. Individual career counseling sessions were held for 22 students from all streams in junior and degree colleges. Due to the post-pandemic scenario, the career and vocational spheres have undergone significant shifts and changes, and hence the nature of the concerns reported is also unique. The trend suggested more orientation and re-thinking of earlier career plans, and hence guidance and counseling were conducted accordingly. Due to the ongoing industry and student motivational changes, significant hands-on support was given, and students were consistently encouraged to develop a thorough market research and observational approach while planning prospects.

Various queries from students were answered about campus-corporate diversity vision, work-role specifications, courses, eligibility, entrance exams, and top-ranking institutes. Information was also given about general options after HSC, B.Com., and graduation. Information was also given regarding the requirements for postgraduate options after completing the commerce stream and other related careers,

professional courses (BAF, BFM, BBI, and so on), Chartered Accountancy, Liberal Arts, Psychology and Mental Health Professions, Teaching, Social Work, and Welfare, Finance-related fields, Computer-related fields, Mass Media, Banking, Life Coaching, Civil Services, Hotel Management, Hospitality & Tourism, Designing-related programs, Business, Law, Economics, Foreign Languages, Defense Services, and so on.

- **Individual Therapy Sessions:**

A total of approximately 485–500 counseling sessions were conducted within individual personal counseling via online as well as offline modes for students from all streams in junior and degree colleges.

Various issues were handled by the counselor this year as well. The concerns addressed ranged from mental-emotional to psychological. To name a few, the addressed concerns ranged from handling personal emotional concerns, career planning, peer relationship conflicts and influences, relationship difficulties and premarital exploration, family conflicts and difficulties of responsibilities faced in young adulthood, health-related behavioral counseling, exam anxiety and handling panic attacks during exams, and rehabilitation counseling for student defaulters of copying and cheating concerns during exams. Many other issues were reported for help in sessions, like handling bullying via social media, suicidal ideations, anxiety and stress-related concerns, psychosomatic issues, personality development, study planning difficulties, exam stress, time management difficulties, study-related issues, the need for exploration of sexual identities, fears and phobias, peer pressure, and so on. Some salient points are as follows:

**A summary of Counseling & Guidance sessions conducted:**

- **Duration of session:** minimum 30 minutes up to a maximum of 1.15 minutes per student
- **Counselling Themes:** Counseling & Psychotherapy as well as Career Guidance was conducted depending on the presenting concerns.
- **No. of sessions:** 480 - 500 - Total no. of sessions were conducted from June 2023 to January 2024 by Ms. Sukhada
- The students connected with the psychologist via multiple mediums viz. walk-in inquiries, via the college information portal, references by faculty and parents, and so on. A dedicated email ID has also been generated for students to contact the Self—Development Center regarding information and appointments. Accordingly, the students were allocated a session slot on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 10.30 am to 2.30 pm.
- Individual Counseling and one-on-one psychotherapy were provided within sessions.
- Parental Reach sessions, Family Therapy & Joint Therapy sessions were engaged between students and their family members depending on the nature of the concerns identified.
- One-on-one parent engagement and counseling sessions were conducted with 8-9 families as they were motivated to address the underlying concerns impacting their parenting styles after the series of workshops conducted.

- Some group sessions were also conducted to address certain reported incidents of Social Media bullying among students.
- 3-4 brief intervention sessions were also conducted for some members of the non-teaching staff for stress management and managing work-life balance.

- The psychotherapy and guidance sessions were directed at handling various issues detailed below:
  - Handling students' mental-emotional concerns & lifestyle rehabilitation on the ever-evolving academic and vocational front.
  - Handling health-related anxiety, panic attacks, and depressive symptoms presentations due to the stressors of the pandemic times.
  - Identifying and dealing with self-harm episodes and creating a support network for the same. Raising family support systems to ensure student safety and long-term support.
  - Teachers and sometimes parents report suicidal intervention & crisis management sessions for students.
  - Grief Counseling for students & family members affected by the loss of academic grades, academic failures, entrance exam post-stress, relationship break-ups, terminal illness impact, and related losses.
  - Difficulties in concentration, improving attention span, and effective study management.
  - Exam anxiety, study skills, and career decision-making.
  - Realistic goal setting, and motivational difficulties.
  - Relationship management, social media pressure & handling peer pressure.
  - Study skills, memory enhancement strategies, developing long-term and short-term goals,
  - Self-confidence, Self-Worth issues, Communication Skills Training, Goal-Setting, and Time Management.
  - Handling Social Media pressure and bullying during the pandemic times.
  - Handling difficulties faced by students related to adapting to future career planning, handling current responsibilities, and managing family/ peer expectations.
  - Supportive therapy for students with obsessive-compulsive disorders, body dysmorphic disorder, eating disorders, gadget addiction, gender-identity confusion, and post-traumatic stress-induced anxiety and behavioral concerns.
  - Career uncertainty causes emotional and familial distress.
  - Handling parental, peer, and personal belief systems and expectations to help manage self in the context of social media.
  - Handling family conflicts and dealing with parental pressure/ responsibilities.
  - Effective Self-regulation skills and balanced lifestyle management.
  - Career Awareness, Career Exploration & Career Information exploration were conducted during some of the students' counseling sessions. Parents were also involved in some cases for a deeper intervention and long-term impact.
  - Crisis Management sessions were conducted and appropriate referrals were given for suicidal prevention as well as deeper psychiatric concerns observed in student cases.

**Some of the intervention strategies used within counseling sessions were as follows:**

- The students were taught effective study skills techniques, an emotions-focused approach, venting exercises, concentration techniques, time management skills, motivation, goal setting, acceptance of self-relaxation techniques, and techniques to handle emotional stress.

- Behavioural Modification therapy, Reference-Point therapy exercises, REBT, CBT, cognitive therapy, motivational counseling, vocational guidance and coaching, Family therapy, Grief Counseling, Crisis intervention, Palliative Therapy Approach of counseling, Narrative-based therapeutic approaches, Music-based relaxation and NLP exercises in combination and Art-Based Modality were some of the approaches used to help clients to address the issues.

- **Future Plans & Programmes:** A community-based awareness program for parents of the neighborhood and nearby areas will be conducted to help raise awareness of mental health in parents and youth of today.