



KASHMIR CARE®
FOUNDATION
Humanity Always....Education First!



Session #7


Balancing Success & Happiness

- School and College Life

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Session White Paper

CHAIR, COMMUNICATIONS

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Introduction

Happiness and Success are very subjective terms, and their meaning and interpretation may vary from individual to individual; and it often connects with setting and achieving aspirational goals from a young age to student life and then to professional careers in private sector as entrepreneurs or working in public or private sector. Some people may not be happy, but are very successful and vice versa, some may be successful and may not be high on the happiness score.

The key is to find **mutually influencing factors** that yield happiness and success, which has better chance of a grounded reality if the influencing factors are operational from very early stage in life.

A lot of **scientific studies** have been done to assess the impact of stress, social support, quality of school life on the sense of happiness among students. It is often mentioned that human beings have been in search of happiness throughout history. Aristotle described happiness is the meaning and aim of the whole life.

Our goal in this session was to **bring the conversation of happiness and success** in school and college life through very basic and fundamental concepts and components of who students may react and respond to within the ecosystems of household, school/college environments, social media, and peer pressure.

One thing all of us have witnessed is the alarming increase in stress levels among high school, college, and university students. Studies have revealed that when students have high stress or view stress negatively, they may experience more frequent physical or psychological impairments vs those with lower levels of stress.



Similarly, when students (of any age) or professionals for that matter don't develop or have the ability to develop closeness to others or are not socially connected, they can experience physical and mental health problems.

Studies have revealed that acute stress management techniques help decrease stress. Emotional closeness to others and social connections have been shown to increase happiness.



A deeply insightful and interactive session featuring **Dr. Mushtaq Margoob**, an eminent global expert in well-being sciences and mental health, and **Ms. Sabbah Haji**, a noted educator and community leader were in conversation with **Dr. Altaf Lal**, a president of Kashmir Care Foundation. The session focused on practical strategies for managing student life workload and discovering realistic pathways toward happiness and success, particularly within the unique socio-cultural landscape of Kashmir.

The panel acknowledged the complex and diverse circumstances that students in the valley face—ranging from demographic variations, socio-economic disparities, access to education and healthcare, to perceptions about the future of the next generation. With this context in mind, the session was structured around **five inter-related life stages**, each highlighting the roles of families, educators, and communities in nurturing mental resilience and well-being.

Early Childhood (Pre-School Stage):

The session emphasized the foundational role of parents and older siblings in creating secure, nurturing environments. Establishing early bonds within the family was identified as a key determinant of emotional stability and long-term well-being.

School Age:

The discussion highlighted the critical role of teachers, peers, and parents as influencers. At this stage, children's exposure to social media begins to shape their worldview and identity. The panel stressed the importance of parents going beyond academic oversight to engage in shared learning and open dialogue.

College Years:

A period marked by growing academic and social pressures, the college stage demands enhanced parental involvement—especially if strong parent-child relationships were cultivated earlier. The session underscored the need for meaningful conversations around academics and future planning.

University/Professional Education:

Students begin to assert independence and make significant life decisions. The speakers pointed out that the cumulative effect of the earlier stages greatly influences a student's capacity for happiness and success here. Parents were encouraged to become attentive listeners and supporters of their children's aspirations.

Professional and Family Life:

The final segment focused on how workplace dynamics and personal relationships define sustained success and fulfillment. The cycle of life comes full circle here, reinforcing how early influences continue to shape professional and personal well-being.



Throughout the session, a recurring theme was the interplay of family, faith, care, and fellowship in building a fulfilling life. The speakers advocated for a holistic approach to mental well-being—grounded in consistent parental support, empathetic teaching, and socially aware parenting.

The session saw active participation from students, parents, educators, mental health professionals, and social scientists, who contributed valuable questions and reflections, making the event highly engaging and enriching.



Know the panelists



Dr Mushtaq Margoob

Dr. Mushtaq A. Margoob, Former Professor & Head, Post Graduate Department of Psychiatry, Government Medical College, Srinagar and Director Institute of Mental Health and Neuroscience, Srinagar, Kashmir is an internationally recognized expert on humanitarian emergencies and disaster mental health. Dr. Margoob's innovative research work over more than four decades encompasses a wide range of topics ranging from seasonal mood disorders to drug use problems and stress.

Over the past thirty years besides behavioural neurosciences, the focus of his work has been on coping, resilience and vulnerability following traumatic stress resulting from man-made and natural disasters in the developing world and its impact on the individuals as well as communities as a whole. Dr Margoob is on the Editorial board of a few leading international and national journals. He is a member/fellow of a number of international professional bodies. In Kashmir he is known for his professional leadership and outstanding contribution in transforming the most stigmatized and neglected sole psychiatric service setup to the present advanced territory care Mental Health treatment and research Institute (IMHANS).

As a clinician, Dr. Margoob has provided more than half a million psychiatric consultations/counselling to suffering masses in the community, Government hospital settings and in his private centre over past 40 years. His innovative self-reliant psychosocial/psychiatric intervention model for disaster survivors in impoverished regions of the world has been appreciated globally across all professional levels. He continues to spend most of his time with different stakeholders in the community for promotion of mental health and prevention/treatment of mental health problems.



Ms. Sabbah Haji

Ms. Sabbah Haji is an educator, teacher and community activist from Doda District in Jammu Kashmir. She is a Founder Trustee of Haji Education Foundation, which oversees the Haji Public School, a remote Himalayan village school run by her family. The school was established in 2009 with a simple goal: to provide education to the inaccessible. It has been a remarkable success over the years, providing quality education and opportunities to hundreds of first-generation learners from very challenging geographic, social and economic backgrounds. This unique, progressive K-10 school has

delivered remarkable academic results consistently. Sabbah Haji is proud to be a part of the creation of a well-educated, confident new generation, as well as positive changes spilling over into the community as a whole through the school's activities.

Sabbah was born and raised in Dubai, UAE, then studied and worked for a decade in Bangalore before leaving the city life and heading up to her ancestral village in the Doda mountains of Jammu Kashmir, to establish and run Haji Public School. She has lived there ever since, teaching daily, managing and building the school from a small village set-up to a renowned institute in the State. She is dedicated to bringing about reform in schooling, governance and education policy. Sabbah uses social media to garner support for running the school, crowdfunding, keeping the outside world up to date with all the happenings in her small village in the mountains, and for showcasing the beauty and talent of the kids that live and study there.



Dr. Altaf Lal

Dr. Altaf Lal is the President of Kashmir Care Foundation and a globally recognized scientist with extensive experience in public health, biomedical research, and policy. He has held key positions including Senior Advisor and US Health Attaché at the US Embassy in New Delhi, Regional Representative for South Asia, and senior roles at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Dr. Lal also served as the Founding CEO of Hilleman Laboratories, a joint venture between the Wellcome Trust and Merck, and has contributed to healthcare initiatives as part of Sun Pharma Healthcare Society.

Deeply committed to community development, Dr. Lal brings a lifelong passion for public service and giving back to society, with a focus on uplifting underserved communities.



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A summary of the session has been published in **Daily Greater Kashmir** that was authored by Kashmir Care Foundation's young mentee:



Ms. Aaizah Maryem
Foundation World School
Badgam, Srinagar



Mr. Sajan Sharma
Haji Public School
Doda, Jammu

Read the article here:



A Thought-Provoking Dialogue

Click Here

The full recording of the session is also available to watch on the Kashmir Care Foundation's **YouTube channel** via link given below



Recording of the Session

Click Here



For suggestions and feedback, contact us:

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