

*An Interview with
Retd. Senior Professor, Department of Psychiatry and
Deputy Medical Superintendent, NIMHANS*

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Interviewed by Shekhar Ganagaluru, HR Professional and Author

Dr. C.R. Chandrashekar (CRC), a respected name in Karnataka's medical health circuit - fondly called "People's Psychiatrist" - retired in 2013 as senior professor of psychiatry at NIMHANS, where he worked for three decades. CRC has about 5 decades of experience in this field. Now, CRC practices at Samadhana Centre in Arekere, Bengaluru. CRC treated freely more than 50,000 patients, gave more than 30,000 lectures, trained more than 20,000 lay counsellors, and donated Rs.1.09 Crore to Dementia Care Centre, NIMHANS. CRC authored more than 280 books in Kannada and more than 30 books in English on Health and Ill Health. CRC has received many recognitions,

and appreciations, and awards for his outstanding work in the field of mental health, patients care, teaching, training, and education. A few awards to quote are Honorary Fellowship of Karnataka Science & Technology Academy 2020, Life Time Achievement in Science (STEAM) Communication in Kannada 2020, Dr. B. C. Roy Award by I.M.A Bangalore – 1993, U.G.C. Award-2001, National Award by Government of India-2002, Eminent Psychiatrist Award by Indian Psychiatric Society - Karnataka Branch 2006 and Dr. Anupama Niranjana Award for Kannada Medical Science Literature given by Government of Karnataka – 2012.

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1 How to measure employees' mental health in the workplace?

One should focus on one's speech, behavior, relationship with others, speed of work, quality of work, and emotional control. Remember, observing these things are highly essential as good mental health at the workplace makes employees more efficient and effective.

2 What workplace factors are influencing employees' mental health?

- Lack of focus on employees' health and safety.
- Lack of health and safety policies.
- Lack of support from superiors/colleagues.
- Lack of training and communications.
- Lack of knowledge.
- High pressure for output/high targets.
- More working hours.
- Workplace comparisons.

3 Do mental health issues disturb the relationship?

Yes. Mental health problems often have a bad effect on many aspects of life, including family relationships. For example, people with depression may have a lack of sexual interest. Mental health issues are a major cause of the breakup/divorce.

4 What are the symptoms of Mental Health Problems?

Anxiety, depression, unhappiness, irritability, high and low moods, anxiety, social withdrawal, emotional outbursts, changes in eating or sleeping habits, and changes in behavior or feelings.

5 How do parents' mental health problems affect children?

Generally, parental mental illness influences significantly the lives of children. Like many illnesses and diseases, mental health problems can be passed down from parents to children. These children will be having a high risk of developing mental health issues in childhood, adolescence, or later. They may develop the problems like insecurity, high dependability, ego conflicts, rivalry approach, lack of curiosity, lack of self-esteem, inferiority feelings, and so on.

6 Which are unusual behaviors of children?

Thumb sucking, nail-biting, playing with genitals, food faddism, sleep problems, sleep talking and sleepwalking, grinding of teeth, temper tantrums, emotional outbreak, self-talking, giggling, and laughing, magical thinking and ritualistic behavior, and stealing and lying.

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7 Is there any relationship between mental health issues and eating & personal habits?

There is a strong relationship. Discipline in eating and personal habits improves health and efficiency. Overeating, undereating, eating junk foods is not good for health. Regular healthy recreation and hobbies are good for mental health. Eat more fruits, vegetables, liquid food, and drink sufficient water. Practice walking or other kinds of exercise. Avoid unhealthy habits like smoking, chewing tobacco, and alcohol.

8 Any impact of social media on employees' mental health issues?

Social media has increasingly become a major part of employees' lives. The addiction to social media, status setting, chasing for likes & followers, and so on becoming major mental health concerns. Spending more time on social media, social media comparisons, lack of concentration on work due to disturbance of social media, lack of sleep, frequent checking of social media accounts, social media refreshing, sharing of personal info/photos, and so on creating long-term serious mental health problems.

9 Office Romance/living together/ extramarital affairs are causing more mental health problems in the workplace..

They have negative effects on employees' social life, family, and workplace. In turn, they create negative pressure on individuals and lead to serious mental health issues. Workplace romances can lead to long-term problems and result in creating uncomfortable situations for co-workers. Extramarital relationship harms family harmony, leading to fights, legal separation, which will have an indirect effect on work efficiency.

10 What are the best ways to improve mental health in the workplace?

- Maintain good relationships in the workplace.
- Be clear with work expectations and targets.
- Avoid overpromising.
- Be physically active.
- Upgrade knowledge and skills.
- Adhere to workplace policy and procedures.
- Avoid late-night parties during working days.
- Avoid sharing personal info with colleagues.