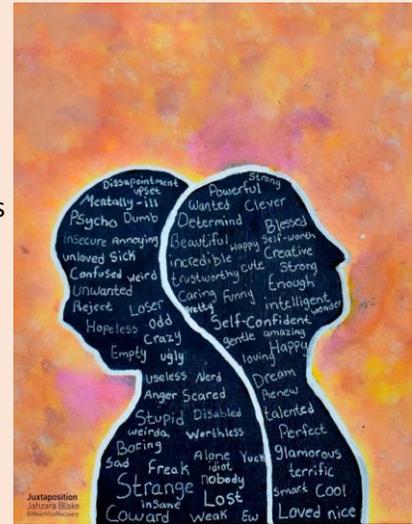




# Reach Out Recovery High School Mental Health Art/Media Contest Winners

The Rotary Club of Sarasota Bay Club sponsored a high school mental health Art/Media contest in partnership with Reach Out Recovery (reachoutrecovery.com). The Subject: What Makes Me Healthy challenged high school students in District 6960 to learn and get creative. Entries were based on mental health subjects from RAGMI member Leslie Glass's book *Teen Guide to Health*. More than 1 million social media and 350,000 Reach Out Recovery website visitors saw the ad and articles about the contest. Students from 10 high schools in the District entered the contest. A total of \$7750 in cash prizes will be awarded to the winners, including \$500 to the Desoto High School Interact Club where the first prize winners championed the project. The mental health project has garnered the interest of the local school system that recognizes the need for a simple tool to teach teens what makes them mentally and emotionally healthy.



## Poster Winner

Jahzara Blake was 14 when she created this winning poster. She is a student at the North Port High School.

"Juxtaposition" was inspired from Chapter 3, page 30 from the Teen Guide for Health about emotional health, "How can you balance your emotions when you're not even sure what's happening inside?"

## First Prize Winners TikTok videos (Spread Positivity and You Are Not Alone)



Mariela Vargas and Erica Jaurez-Gonzalez 18 Desoto Interact Group "A topic that stood out to me and my partner was emotional health. We realized that health has many components, that although a smile may be present that does not signify someone's wellbeing. Emotional health has five components according to "Teen Guide To Health", which are expressing yourself in an appropriate way, managing your emotions and feelings, coping well with stress, making good decisions, and solving problems (page 29). People can express their emotions in different ways such as keeping quiet out of fear or by being a loudmouth causing other people to become hurt by their form of expression (page 32). This topic has brought us the want to express the importance of emotional health to people all over the world through positivity." Mariela and Erica's videos will be released soon.

A new resource to help us better help people who are having challenges in their life. Public Health Agency Canada charged McMaster University with developing a program to help us recognize and effectively help people who are at risk of violence, And the course is free!

<https://vegaproject.mcmaster.ca/>



The Henniker Area Rotary Club (aka HARC), Henniker New Hampshire, USA, has organized a "Mental Illness Stigma Prevention Committee" under the auspices of the club's Service Projects Committee. The goal of this new effort is to provide Rotary clubs in District 7870, then beyond to clubs in other Districts, with an awareness of the stigma attached to seeking assistance with everyday mental health concerns. The committee is working on a PowerPoint presentation and a video that, when combined, will promote a sense of well-being by normalizing mental health challenges throughout one's life and the impact presented by stigma in seeking assistance for such challenges.

Committee Chair Rotarian Ed Carignan stated recently that the HARC, working with the National Alliance on Mental Illness, plan to offer the presentation free to all Rotary Clubs and other organizations within a few months.

# EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH ROTARY INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT -SHEKHAR MEHTA FOR MIND MATTERS NEWSLETTER OF DISTRICT ACTION GROUP RID 3030, INDIA.

BY EDITOR Rtn. Rita Aggarwal.

## **“Create a Buzz on Mental Health to remove Taboo”**

It was an honour and privilege to engage in an exclusive conversation with Rotary International President Shekhar Mehta. He came across as an extremely sensitive, kind, humble, realistic, approachable, passionate and compassionate person. A thorough Gentleman besides being a mover and shaker! I was impressed with his understanding and approach to mental health issues and his empathy for children, youth and especially the girl child. I introduced him briefly about the **Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives (RAGMHI), and its District 3030 Chapter (DAGMHI)**. He smiled, congratulated me and the team for the good work.

Responding to a question on **his expectation from Action Groups on Mental Health**, he stated that, “mental health has become very relevant in current times when Covid has created a havoc not only with just bodily health but mental health. It affects not just the people who have had COVID but people who are around Covid affected. People are under lockdown for months, when they have not gone out of their homes. That itself becomes a problem. It hurts the mental framework of young people. When they live with their parents it’s great, but you know living in small houses with the parents always around them, creates a pressure on them. Everybody needs their space and that space is compromised- there are issues of mental health. Even otherwise the fear of Covid is affecting us all. You keep hearing news of XYZ who is known to you, passed away- young people passing away and it becomes such a mental pressure that mental health has become a major issue. Awareness needs to be created, people need to come out and be free to talk about mental illness.

**The taboo will go only when awareness is created and we’re ready to talk about it, when a buzz is created.** If there’s anything I can do just let me know I’ll do it. Your RAG would become extremely vibrant and robust”.

Shekhar says, “these last few days I’ve been discussing on various zoom calls about mental health only.

**We had a meeting with the spiritual Guru, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar; with the Director and Dean of NIMHANS, which happens to be the premier institute in India as far as mental health is concerned. We talked of a partnership with them. Again, we had a meeting with the UNICEF officers on mental health and with the Indian Association of Paediatrics, for child mental health and now I’m having this discussion with you. I guess it just shows how important it is.** I would like you to be getting associated with the Rotary Humanity Foundation and the group of people who are functioning there”, he said encouragingly.

## **Focus on Girl child and a Toll-free Helpline for the Youth**

He says “you could have a toll-free-number, people can call on- you know at times young people don't want to discuss this with anybody they know. As you said, there is at times a stigma to mental health in some parts of the world.

**My focus is on empowering girls and one of the things I’m promoting is how about having a helpline for mental counselling for empowering the girls.** Suppose a girl is physically or mentally abused or sexually abused, at times they cannot go and tell this to anybody.

**I’m propagating various countries can have helplines for empowering girls”,** he said with emotional conviction.

Elaborating, he said “We should try to disseminate the information about the toll-free-number in partnership with Rotaractors and Interactors. Short films could be shown on the network of the various school based online curriculum, on TV, -short films.’

## **On his expectations for RAGs in general-**

**“RAGs bring passionate people from across the world.** People join Rotary for different purposes, but over a period of time I always realized it is service that keeps them ticking. Somebody likes to work for disease prevention, for disaster management, literacy etc. Rotary has formed niche groups, niche opportunities for them. **RAGs should also try and increase their membership, geographically, as well as in numbers, so that people who are interested come together to do meaningful work. I expect RAGS to be very vibrant.** First, increase membership, then, start thinking of implementing projects. Projects increase interaction amongst people- idea sharing, sharing of best practices, sharing success stories, what are the challenges, so that more people become knowledgeable and can contribute.



**'Environment' is going to be a new area of focus. I was an active member of RAG but now have taken a back-seat"** he said reminiscing his long engagement with Rotary.

**On his happiness mantra:**

**"Let me put it the other way- my mantra in life is to be happy- moreover I'm happy in any situation. It would take me at times just a few minutes and never more than half an hour to adjust to any situation. So, once you've adjusted to the situation, you know this too shall pass and that makes you strong and resilient to be able to cope up and tackle that adverse situation".**

**"Rotary's legacy: Bigger, Better, Bolder"**

**"One message I would like to leave with all the RAGs is, it is a time where we need to do 'programs of scale'. An organization which is so old, which has a legacy for doing some great work, whatever the scale of work that we do now needs national media. In each of the countries we do projects and programs where we can make a difference. We have a role to play in the nations education system, water sanitation system, environment issues, in the country's Economic Community development, and let me tell you Rotary is quite capable of it. It has played a world role when it came to eradicating a disease, so it's not that we don't have a legacy. **We have a legacy- let's learn from it and do some bigger better bolder projects"****

**The YouTube link to the interview:**

[https://youtu.be/DF\\_C-oCV888](https://youtu.be/DF_C-oCV888)



**In our society** today we see many teenagers and youth pinned down in their own wreckage, completely devoid of hope. Yet given the chance and support to recover, we can begin to see how addiction kept our adolescents and youth from achieving their potential and living productive lives.

Adolescence is a time in life for forging new territory and forming new relationships. It is a time when pre-teens transition from being dependent on caregivers to becoming independent young adults, which includes a shift from more family-oriented to more peer-oriented actions. It's well known that this developmental period is characterized by increases

in the appeal of novelty and excitement and in the desire to explore and take risks. This behaviour is not typically regarded in a positive light; the positive implications of these behaviours are well known. For example, increased time spent with peers can lead to new social skills and increased social support. Similarly, increased desire for novelty, excitement, and risk taking can lead to opportunities to explore adult behaviour and privileges and to becoming more adept at negotiating life challenges.

The development from childhood into young adulthood brings new cultural and societal opportunities and expectations. The most significant adolescent stressors are romantic relations, peers or friends, school, parents, one's future, critical life events and idiosyncratic events.

Unfortunately, many of these changes also come with considerable costs. Adolescence is also a time associated with increased drug use and unprotected sex, and the three highest causes of mortality in adolescents are accidents, homicides, and suicides. Research on brain maturation has shown that networks involved in the experience of emotion mature earlier than those involved in the higher order "executive" functions of planning and control. There is general consensus in the field that the imbalance created by this difference in maturation rates can lead to the urge of risk-taking behaviour early in adolescence when self-regulation has not fully matured.

Adolescent have the reputation for being surly, uncommunicative, moody, argumentative and flippant - sometimes all at the same time! These behaviours, when exhibited from time to time, may be normal for teens because being a teen is tough. So we may want to understand the typical underlying causes that might be leading to these less attractive teen traits.

First, teens try to gain some independence, which can lead to challenges to parental or school authority. Second, teens have an identity crisis as they also try to figure out who they want to be. Even more importantly, we should realize that our teens are terribly worried that they might not measure up.

Keep these points in mind as we seek to understand some of these other typical teen behaviours:

- Backtalk, especially as they begin to understand that adults aren't perfect
- Exploring and trying new things as they explore new identities
- Some physical awkwardness as they start growing into their new body
- Frustration stemming from what they can't yet do
- Increasing skills in some areas as they begin doing new things
- Increasing curiosity with sex and their own sexual development
- Selfishness and some self-absorption
- Searching out new role models (as opposed to a parent or teacher)
- Behavioural changes and substance use

To get through all the problems during this stage and handle stress, it is important for adolescents to develop a coping strategy. Coping is an important construct in response of adolescents to the extensive stressors and adjustments they experience. It is very helpful for adolescents not only to have the understanding and support from peers and adults, but also to be able to manage the stressor of everyday life by themselves. How adolescents cope, or respond, to these stressors influences their well-being.

When we try to assess what should be typical for teens, keep in mind their particular personality. Also look at their peer group to get a sense of what constitutes "typical" in terms of dress, music, values and attitudes. This isn't to say we need to just see a teen's peer group's typical behaviour as acceptable - perhaps the teen is hanging with the wrong peer group. The critical issue is whether a teen's typical behaviours are interfering with their ability to get through school, be a part of our family, develop friendships and engage in healthy activities.

The overall message we can take from this should not excessively surprise anyone who has worked with children and youth, or indeed raised them in a family context. We have always known that growing up to adult maturity is a long process. However, we now see that this is not just a function of the time needed to have experiences and learn about how the world works. It is also that experiences during growth affect the healthy development of youth.

There is evidence of many threats to healthy growth, but there are also ways to accentuate positive factors. One such important factor is captured by the notion of "engagement." There are great benefits in being passionately absorbed in constructive activities. Adolescents who are positively engaged demonstrate higher academic performance, happiness, and general psychological well-being. Such engaged living is associated with fewer psychological maladies, such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse and violent behaviours.

As adults, our responsibility for healthy growth among our youth is to foster contexts in which such positive processes are enabled and threats are minimized. Parents should make every effort to minimize psychosocial stress over this period.

**Shamita Omote, Counseling psychologist/Therapist**

## ROTARACT DISTRICT 9110 AWARENESS TREK 2021 TO PROMOTE GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

The Rotaract members of Rotary International District 9110 converged on Saturday 17th September, 2021 at Ijanikin, Oto Awori for the 2021 Awareness Trek; promoting good mental health and campaign against Depression. The trek activities also involved a novelty match between team awareness Trek and team Polio.

The District Rotaract Representative Ayodeji Sobowale led a hundred of Rotaractors in the awareness Trek; advising the residents of Oto awori and ijanikin about DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE with stickers, playcard and banners. The campaign was taken to palace of the two monarchs of the community King Momodu Afolabi Ashafa and King Josiah Olanrewaju Ilemobade Aina amidst funfair to attract the attention of commuters.

The trek activities ended with erection of bill board beside the highway high in Oto Awori community for the awareness of the commuters and entire community.



# SILENCE COULD MEAN CRISIS!

This was recently shared in our WhatsApp group but with many members of our action group still not members of this WhatsApp group, it felt appropriate to share this...

I'm in this group of about 135 members. We were all school mates at the University. Daily we throw banter – we “tease” each other, share jokes and we avoid religious, political or any topic that might cause frictions. We had the Regulars in class, the Once In A While Attendees, The Readers Association and the ones on Mute.

Occasionally, announcements are made that classmates check on each other, and report back. However, when the Regulars stop appearing on the platform, we sometimes assume they are busy, we also tend to neglect the Once In A While Members, and don't even bother with those on Mute.

There is something we all gloss over, the fact that we are in the group because of a common denominator (classmates of over 20years) therefore, we have come a long way. We all have our different way of life; some are loud, others playful. We also have quiet ones and prayerful ones. Therefore, if you are a regular in the group, you shouldn't expect everyone to be like you, and if you are the quiet one, don't assume others are too loud, it is this mix that makes the group a perfect blend. The essence of this write up is to reiterate the need to blend as one, the need to create bonds of friendship, and be our brother's keeper.

In this group, there was this active member, no matter how late in the day, he would sign in and add to the day's discussion, by posting or forwarding a message. He never missed a birthday. Sometimes, his birthday wishes come 3 days after the birthday celebration. We used him as a measurement for drawing the curtain on birthday celebrations. Then suddenly, he exited the group, and he was contacted. He informed the admin that his phone was bad and he would get back once it was fixed. True to his word, he came back after a while, but he never contributed again in the group. Some of us noticed it, but nobody did anything or reached out to him.

We never knew why he went mute, until one of the admins reached out to him, and discovered he had been ill for a long time. He could not afford his treatment, he had to discharge himself from the hospital and started self-treatment at home. One of the Admins informed the group and asked that we reach out to him. Some did after the announcement was made, but others procrastinated. We all woke up less than a week later to the heart-breaking news, that our dear classmate had passed on to glory.

Some of us began to blame ourselves for not reaching out when the announcement was made, classmates in the group began to type RIP, those on mute, had to unmute themselves to type RIP Guess what? If we all had been Each Others' Keeper, or, if we do regular check up on members in the group, perhaps, one of us would have discovered his condition on time, and we could have been able to assist him financially and otherwise.

Today we mourn a colleague, yet, while alive, we failed to do the simple task of checking up on him or others in the group. What does it take to check up on a group member? A simple text (SMS or WhatsApp) or a call. All you need to do is introduce your self, and simply type “ just checking up on you, hope you are fine and doing well? If there is any problem or issue you would like to discuss, I am here for you. ”The Admins can set aside a day – weekly or monthly, for members to check up on each other. Pick random numbers in the group, and reach out. THAT MESSAGE OR CALL MIGHT JUST SAVE A SOUL. Silence could mean crisis. Reach out today, and be your brother's keeper.

## DON'T BOTTLE IT UP CAMPAIGN EXPANDS IT'S REACH

The mental health awareness campaign “Don't Bottle It Up” continues to grow with not just more public figures joining the campaign but an ever increasing number of Rotarians and members of the Rotary family.

As well as District 5360 in Canada adopting it as a district campaign this year but all four districts in Nigeria have adopted it along with looking to form chapters of our action group.

Following talks to their clubs, in the past few months we are pleased to report that a number of Rotaract members have joined the campaign – including the majority of the Rotaract Club of St John's in Canada. Showing the increasing concern younger members of our communities have, several Interact members have also joined the campaign, encouraging their peers to not bottle things up.

