



## **Digital Well-Being for Better Mental Health**

### **Cyber Wellness Seminar Series**

Session by:

**Dr. Sujatha D. Sharma**

**Clinical Psychologist and Trainer**

**Founder: Mind Specialists and Better Minds**

The digital platforms, services and content include websites, applications that have text, audio, video and music and can be used for information, entertainment and communication. Invasion of Cyber world/Digital technology into our lives with convergence of various Internet platforms has led to digital transformation, which has had an impact on our economy, lifestyle, health, resource efficiency, environment, employment, & politics.

Children and adolescents need guidance and strategies for digital well-being for safety, privacy, balance and detox. Children are impressionable and impulsive, hence being a more vulnerable group than others. Increased screen time has negative impacts on health, mind, academics and their relationships.

Overuse of digital technologies can lead to mental health issues among children and adolescents, including stress, anxiety, depression, insomnia, body image, eating issues, traumatic reactions due to bullying or abuse, behavioral addictions, attentional deficits and digital amnesia.

Children and adolescents are recommended to have a digital detox, i.e., involve themselves in activities that do not include using any form of digital screens such as outdoor activity, family time, etc. They can also have a digital diet plan which can lead to a balance between their online and offline activities. On the other hand, parents also have a pivotal role to play in dealing with increased digital use by their children. Communication, monitoring and regulating child's digital usage pattern, being good role models, digital literacy, observing behavioral changes in children and seeking help are some recommendations to parents who have children who with increased digital usage.

Clinicians and counsellors can help in addressing the mental health issues that arise from increased digital usage by children and adolescents. Clinicians and pediatricians should screen the children for digital media exposure in terms of amount and content when the child may be suffering from insomnia, depression or anxiety. They can also counsel parents and help them guide their children through the digital world by developing household plans and rules. Counselors can help in providing mental health services - both onsite in schools as well as through the Internet if possible, thereby using technology for reaching out to larger populations.