

# When We Listen, Healing Begins

Communities Building Mental  
Well-being Together



Presented By :  
The Concerned for Working Children

# Introduction

## Why Mental Health Awareness Matters

- Discussions with **children's collectives, parents, and SHGs** revealed rising concerns about mental health and well-being.
- **Key stress factors** identified:
  - *Family conflicts and instability*
  - *Excessive mobile phone use*
  - *Pressures of the current education system*
  - *Adult alcoholism impacting children and women*
- experience **emotional stress** but **lack safe spaces for sharing** and healing.
- **Stigma and silence** continue to **block open conversations** about mental distress.
- In response to these **emerging needs—and in commemoration of World Mental Health Day 2025**, CWC facilitated **community-based initiatives**.



# Objectives

- Create safe and inclusive spaces for children to express emotions through play and dialogue.
- Build emotional literacy among children, caregivers, and frontline workers.
- Promote understanding of emotional health and coping mechanisms among children.
- Train frontline and governance actors to recognize and respond to mental distress.
- Integrate mental well-being into local governance, education, and community health systems.
- Document qualitative and quantitative field insights reflecting lived realities and systemic needs.

# Methods

- **Participatory Approach:**

- Interactive group circles,
- Storytelling,
- Art-based reflection
- Play based interaction
- Video Screening and insights reflections



# Tools

- **Emotional Spin Wheel:** Facilitated emotion identification and expression among children.
- **Makkala Anchige Pettige (Children's Post Box):** Anonymous tool for emotional disclosure.
- **Bhima Bandi (Mobile Facilitation Van):** Mobile workshops using games, songs, and films.
- **The Good Helper Model:** For recognizing support systems in trauma response.
- **Window of Tolerance:** Understanding emotional regulation zones.
- **Triune Brain (Hand Model):** Simplified understanding of stress and brain function.
- **Automatic Fear Responses (FFFF Model):** Flight, Fight, Freeze, or Fawn reactions.
- **Grounding and Breathing Exercises:** To manage anxiety and emotional overload.
- **Case Stories and Reflection Circles:** Peer-led sharing of experiences.
- **Balloon Games: Blasting and Balancing Balloons:** to explore emotions, stress, balance, and healthy coping.

# Initiatives at a Glance

Initiative	Reach (GPs)	Total participants	Focus
Game and Interaction			
Blasting Balloon using pin: For Children, Duty Bearers	<b>25</b>	<b>578</b>	understand emotions, stress, and healthy ways of coping
Balancing Balloon: For children	<b>16</b>	<b>320</b>	explore the ideas of mental health, balance, and well-being
Emotional Spin Wheel: For children	<b>47</b>	<b>499</b>	Emotional expressions, their recommendations to adults
Interactive Sessions for women	<b>6</b>	<b>190</b>	Emotional caregiving
Training for ASHA Activists	<b>45</b>	<b>90</b>	Community health & well-being
Triune Brain (Hand Model) Grounding and Breathing Exercises: For Children	<b>11</b>	<b>172</b>	Coping Mechanism
Video screening and Interactions using Bhima Bandi	<b>15</b>	<b>450</b>	village-based learning with music, games, and video screening
Duty Bearer Dialogues	<b>10</b>	<b>106</b>	Governance & inclusion

# Blasting Balloon using pin

## Children Expressed:

- Linked balloons to their feelings, realizing emotions can build up and “burst” if not expressed.
- Suggested healthy coping ways: talking, playing, or drawing to release emotions.
- Recognized trigger elements, stress and pressure from real-life situations like exams, scolding, community tensions
- Developed empathy and peer support, understanding that everyone handles stress differently.



# Balancing Balloon

## Children Expressed:

- **Emotional Awareness:** Linked balloons to emotions like joy, anxiety, or frustration.
- **Stress Recognition:** Experienced tension from multiple balloons mirrors real-life pressures.
- **Coping & Self-regulation:** experienced learning on Practicing focus, patience, and problem-solving.
- **Peer Support:** Encourages teamwork and empathy.
- **Balance & Reflection:** Understanding life balance and managing emotions.
- **Resilience:** Learning from setbacks and trying again.

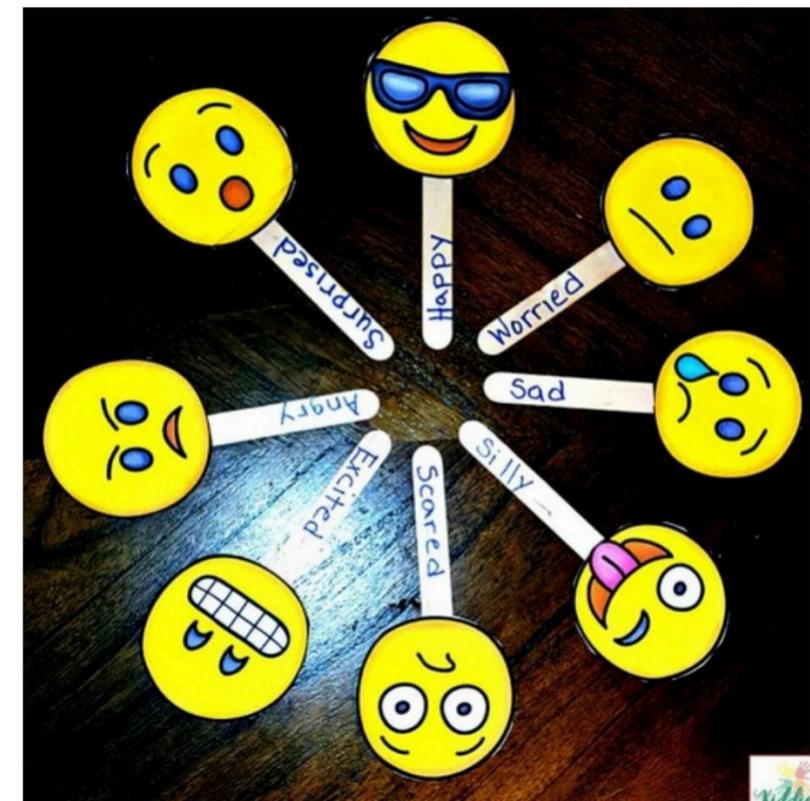


# Emotional Spin Wheel

## Children Expressed:

- **Emotional Awareness:** identified and named emotions.
- **Trigger Recognition:** Connected emotions to real-life situations.
- **Coping & Expression:** Explored healthy ways to manage feelings.

- **Empathy:** Understood that others feel differently.
- **Self-Regulation:** Discussed on practice pausing and choosing responses.
- **Recommendations to adults:** Dos & Don'ts
- **Engagement:** Shared that Interactive game made learning fun and memorable.





# Findings and Emotional Trends

Emotion	Mentions	Common Triggers	Coping Mechanisms
Happiness	105	Fun, praise, success, time with friends/family	Play, sharing joy
Worried	50	Fear of trouble, separation, conflict, exams, illness, scary news	Talking, crying
Sad	50	Feeling left out, loss, scolding, failure, conflict, missing someone	Silence, walking away
Silly/Funny	38	Funny Faces, joking, seeking attention	Staying near adults
Scared/Fear	46	Darkness, being alone, strangers, punishment, violence, imaginary fears	Peer discussion, prayer
Exited	21	Trips, birthdays, new activities, good news, games	Sharing, laughter
Angry	51	Unfairness, teasing, loss, embarrassment, refusal, hunger, comparison	Walk away, Listen to music
Surprised	45	Unexpected gifts, visits, news	Share with others, Pause and breathe

# Interactive Sessions for women

## Insights:

- Women discussed emotional caregiving.
- Identified listening as the strongest form of support
- mothers saw children's stress rise during exams.
- found it hard to manage their own emotions.
- saw calm communication improving family peace.



# ASHA Training:

## Community Care for Mental Health

- Programme Overview:
  - 90 ASHA activists from 45 Gram Panchayats (Kundapura & Byndoor Taluks).
  - Conducted with Taluk Health Department and Molahalli Dinesh Hegde Jayarathna Trust.
  - Focus: Understanding emotional health, recognizing distress, supporting early intervention and practicing self-care.

# Interaction Focus

- Basics of child mental health and trauma.
- Recognizing anxiety, depression, and behaviour changes.
- supporting for early interventions
- The “Window of Tolerance” and grounding techniques for stress management.
- How should be a “Good Helper”
- Self-care practices and emotional first aid.
- Group games, songs, and roleplays to ease learning.



# Findings

- Children stressed before exams
- Children hide emotions out of fear
- Children happier after playtime
- Role of frontline workers in early identification
- Parents struggle with own stress
- Emotional neglect due to household workload.
- Listening and spending quality “talk time” as powerful healing actions.



# Hand Brain Model – Grounding & Breathing

## Children learn that:

- Strong emotions are natural but temporary.
- They can pause before reacting when upset or anxious.
- Different parts of the brain control reactions and thinking.
- children visualized how their brain works in three parts
- Grounding exercises helped children connect with the present moment and feel safe



# Video screening and Interactions using Bhima Bandi



# Duty Bearer Dialogues

## Issues Raised by Participants

- Children fear being punished or unheard by adults.
- Parents face burnout and limited time for emotional bonding.
- Frontline workers lack structured tools and follow-up mechanisms.
- Stigma persists around mental health discussions.
- Schools prioritize academics over emotional well-being.

## Key Learnings

- Emotional health influences school attendance and performance.
- Corporal punishment and humiliation damage confidence and participation.
- Need for interdepartmental collaboration (education-health-WCD).
- Duty bearers recognized the role of Panchayats in embedding well-being in plans.

# Cross-Cutting Insights

- **Listening builds trust and reduces emotional burden.**
- **Play and creativity act as natural therapy.**
- **Women and ASHAs are central to community care.**
- **Panchayats can champion mental well-being through governance.**

# Voices from the Field – Children Speak

**"When we talk, we feel lighter"**

**Bhima Sangha Member, 16,  
Hagaribommanahalli**

**"I'm scared when elders shout. I like  
when they talk calmly." – Makkala  
Toofan member, 12, Kundapura**

**"When I am sad and crying, I don't want to talk. When  
someone sits beside me quietly, my heart feels calm  
again." – Bhima Sangha Member, 17, Hadagali**

**"When I am angry, I don't want to fight, I  
just want someone to listen." – Makkala  
Toofan Member, 13, Kundapur**

**"If teachers ask how we feel, we can  
study better." – Makkala Toofan  
Member, 14, Byndoor**

**"When I draw or play, I forget my  
worries." – Makkala Toofan Member,  
14, Kundapura**

## **Voices from the Field – Duty Bearers recognised**

**“We bring medicines and vaccines – now we bring listening too.” –  
ASHA, Byndoor**

**“We go house to house with medicines. Now we’ll also ask, ‘How are you feeling today?’” – ASHA, Byndoor**

**When children speak, our policies start making sense.” – PDO, Kundapur**

**“Earlier we focused only on attendance. Now we also notice their faces.” – Teacher, Byndoor**

**“When children speak, we understand their real problems – not just what’s on paper.” – Panchayat Member, Kundapur**

## **Voices from the Field – Women**

**"Listening is also a kind of care" - Women,  
Hadagali**

**"Children carry our stress too. When we stay  
calm, they feel safe." - Mother, Kundapur**

**"When we scold out of anger, the child becomes silent. When  
we listen, they open up." - Mother, Udupi**

**"When we listen patiently, children open up and  
trust us more." - Mother, Vijayanagar**

**Listen to us:**

**We have Right to Feel,**

**Right to Heal** 