



# WEEKLY Newsletter



## Editorial Note

This week at the Initiative for Cognitive Therapies and Mental Health (ICTMH) was marked by learning, sharing, and growing together. We explored important subjects such as peer pressure and the anxiety that can sometimes come from social media. With the guidance of Dr. Grace Otu Effiong, participants gained fresh insights on how these challenges can be managed with the support of family, teachers, and friends.

Our Mental Health Wellness Week on WhatsApp created a safe space for people to share personal stories, ask meaningful questions, and encourage one another. The kindness, openness, and honesty expressed throughout the conversations reminded us of the power of community in strengthening resilience. Similarly, our **Campus Hub** (a safe space where campus students share mental health problems and interventions) was agog with activities such as, learning practical ways to remain calm, build confidence, and care for their mental well-being.

At the same time, our outreach at **Arukah Clinic, Kaduna**, provided health workers with strategies for managing stress and supporting patients more effectively.

What made this week truly special was the unity and openness shown by everyone who participated, re-affirming that mental health is not something to hide or feel ashamed of, it deserves the same attention and care as our physical health.

We sincerely value everyone who played a part in these milestone achievements and trust that the lessons gained will be applied personally and shared with others.

Warm regards

Ese Ogheneovo  
for ICTMH



# Weekly Webinar Training

**Topic:** Connected but Conflicted  
– Navigating Peer Pressure and  
Social Media Anxiety.

**Date:** September 27, 2025  
**Host:** Dr. Grace Otu Effiong

## Introduction

Digital culture and social media significantly influence mental health, shaping how young people see themselves, form their identity, and build relationships. Many adolescents face peer pressure and anxiety, often blurring the line between image and identity. With therapeutic tools like CBT and trauma-informed practices, combined with research-backed support from caregivers, Dr. Effiong shows us how adolescents can strengthen resilience, embrace authenticity, and nurture their overall well-being..

## key areas on the topic

Dr. Grace Otu Effiong explained that peer pressure can be positive, encouraging study, volunteering, or healthy activities, but also negative, pushing teens toward bullying, risky challenges, or substance use. Stressing the difference between identity and image, she defined identity as one's true self and image as the polished online persona. Sharing her daughter's bullying struggles in school, she recounted how patient communication and CBT strategies helped her reframe negative thoughts, rebuild self-confidence, and manage peer pressure. She urged caregivers to adopt empathy and guidance, not judgment, in supporting young people.



## Digital Culture and Algorithm Bias

The session examined digital culture as a developmental environment rather than a distraction. While it fosters creativity and global connection, it also fuels comparison and exclusion. UNESCO (2021) and APA (2022) emphasize the need to guide youths in navigating this space safely. Dr. Effiong also addressed algorithm bias, where platforms amplify narrow standards of beauty and success, reinforcing unhealthy comparisons, citing a tragic case of a 14-year-old girl who lost her life after undergoing unsafe cosmetic enhancement due to social media pressures.

## Statistics and Global Perspectives

- UNICEF (2021): 1 in 7 adolescents (10–19 years) lives with a diagnosed mental disorder.
- WHO (2020): 1 in 8 people worldwide suffers from mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, or schizophrenia.
- Ofcom (2022): 8 in 10 teens feel pressure to keep up with digital trends.



# Weekly Webinar Training



## Breakout Discussions

**Group 1 discussed real-life struggles with social media.**

One participant admitted feeling pressured by displays of wealth online, but later realized that “social media does not define self-worth.” The group concluded that social media is a double-edged sword—it can harm or empower depending on support systems like family and mentors.



**Group 2 focused on caregivers and teachers.**

Members emphasized the need for open dialogue with teens, guiding them to filter online content critically. They highlighted mentorship as a shield against peer pressure and digital anxiety.

**Group 3 explored practical solutions.**

They recommended structured routines to limit screen time, family-based discussions on trends, and equipping teens with resilience skills

From an intervention perspective, discussants generally emphasized that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and trauma-informed approaches play a pivotal role in supporting adolescents to reframe harmful beliefs, such as the notion that “my worth is determined by likes.”

## Takeaways for Caregivers and Educators

- Engage in calm, supportive dialogue when addressing teens’ struggles.
- Use CBT techniques to challenge distorted thoughts.
- Recognize that digital spaces are as formative as physical ones for today’s youth.
- Provide positive peer environments and model healthy online behaviors.

## Special Quotes by Dr. Grace Otu Effiong

*“Peer pressure can push a child towards excellence or into risky behaviors. Caregivers must learn to spot the difference.”*

*“social media anxiety is a cycle of fear, restlessness, and mood swings caused by the pursuit of online validation”.*

*“Many young people tie their self-worth to likes, comments, and trends. When the approval does not come, their mood and sense of identity collapse.”*

*“Identity is who I am when no one is watching. Image is who I perform to others, hoping for acceptance.”*



# Weekly WhatsApp Interactive Session

## ICTMH Mental Health Week Report

**Theme:** : Peer Pressure and Social Media Anxiety

**Date:** September 22nd – 28th, 2025

### Overview

The Initiative for Cognitive Therapies and Mental Health (ICTMH) successfully hosted its Mental Health Wellness Week from September 22nd – 28th, 2025, under the theme Peer Pressure and Social Media Anxiety. Conducted virtually via WhatsApp, the program created a safe, interactive space for participants to explore the subtle yet powerful effects of peer pressure and social media on mental well-being. Through storytelling, polls, open dialogue, and wellness challenges, the sessions highlighted the need for resilience, parental guidance, gratitude practices, and self-care as protective buffers against anxiety and unhealthy comparison. The week underscored ICTMH’s mission to normalize conversations on mental health and strengthen community support systems.

## Daily Highlights & Community Engagement

**Motivational Monday –** Choosing Confidence Over Comparison  
Focus: Building resilience in children facing peer pressure.

Key Insights:

- Create safe, judgment-free spaces for conversations.
- Teach children to pause before following the crowd.
- Celebrate uniqueness beyond material possessions.
- Remind them that worth is rooted in identity, not gadgets or likes.

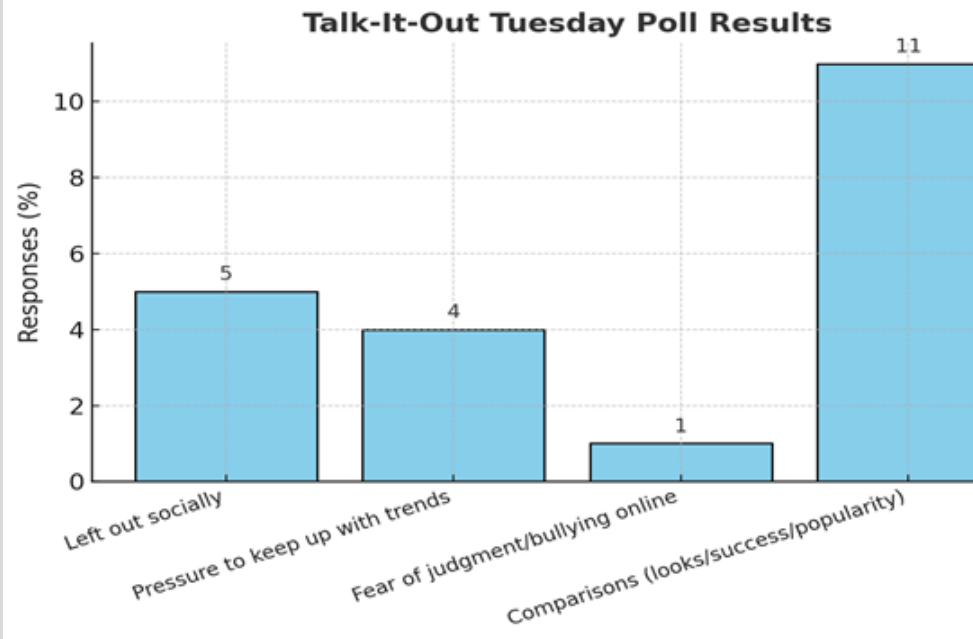
### Community Responses:

- Hafsat: Emphasized that safe spaces and love can help young ones rise above peer pressure.
- Uzo: Highlighted that children also have the power of choice; parents must keep guiding.
- Amina: Stressed living authentically without being bothered by trends.
- Micheal: Affirmed the importance of supporting youth to celebrate uniqueness.

### Talk-it-out Tuesday

#### Community Responses:

- Vicky: Shared a personal story about her nephew succumbing to peer influence in appearance.
- Uzo: Observed that both adults and children face peer pressure; self-discipline is key.
- Amina: Advocated for teaching children to handle social media wisely while affirming their uniqueness.
- Hafsat: Suggested listening first, then guiding, and emphasized judgment-free communication at home.



Data: ICTMH Sept. 2025 Event Log and compiled by Elizabeth I.

Key Insight:

*Silent Struggles of Social Media*  
The poll reveals that the most pressing challenge is comparison of looks, success, and popularity (11%), showing how social media amplifies unhealthy benchmarks of self-worth. Smaller but notable struggles include feeling left out socially (5%) and pressure to keep up with trends (4%), while fear of judgment or bullying (1%) remains the least reported yet still serious. Overall, the findings highlight that the subtle pressures of comparison outweigh overt bullying, silently shaping how individuals see themselves online.

**Wellness Wednesday**

Wellness Wednesday – Small Steps, Big Impact

Focus: Practical wellness strategies.

Tips Shared:

- 1.Digital detox moments.
- 2.Positive affirmation check-ins.
- 3.Quality family connection time.

**Community Responses:**

- Uzo: Practices silence and time away from distractions as a coping tool.
- Khalid: Appreciated wellness as intentional small acts.
- Hafsat: Plans to take mindful walks without a phone.
- Mary & Amina: Self-care through laughter and relaxation.
- Vicky: Shared Hausa proverb on the value of silence.

Micheal: Chose a quiet walk to refresh his mind

**Thankful Thursday – Gratitude as a Shield**

Focus: Shifting perspective from comparison to appreciation.

Community Responses:

- Amina: Thankful for both good and bad experiences that shape growth.
- Uzo: Grateful for life, love, and countless blessings.
- Effiong: Thankful for restored health and life lessons.
- Hafsat: Thankful for good health and presence.
- Mfon: Thankful for safe travels and the gift of breath.
- Micheal: Grateful for peace of mind and strength to show up for family.

**Fun Friday – Permission to Recharge**

Focus: Encouraging relaxation and joy.

Activities suggested: dancing, singing, walking, reading, laughing, and treating oneself without guilt.

**Self-Care Saturday – Choosing Yourself**

Focus: Rest, refreshment, and intentional pauses.

**Community Responses:**

- Hafsat: Plans a slow, mindful outdoor walk.
- Khalid: Journaling and reflection.
- Bassey: Music, light exercises, and solitude.
- Uzo: Balancing multiple activities but prioritizing self-care.
- Effiong: Tea and journaling for recharge.
- Dave: Humorously shared his plan to “protest” as self-care.

Blessing: Prioritized rest and household balance

**Reflections & Q&A Sunday – Lessons Learned**

Focus: Consolidating insights on peer pressure and social media anxiety.

**Community Responses:**

- Bassey: Called for collaborative responsibility from parents, teachers, and society in guiding children.
- Amina: Shared personal resolve to avoid pressure “Do me, not in race with anyone.”
- Khalid: Emphasized focusing on gratitude and awareness that true worth isn’t in social media validation.
- Uzo: Advocated balance, self-discipline, and silence as coping tools. Shared personal growth story of moving from peer pressure to authentic living.

# Star Event of the Week

## Mental Health Outreach Program for Arukah Clinic, Sabo Tasha Kaduna Nigeria.

**Organization:** Initiative for Cognitive Therapies and Mental Health (ICTMH)  
**Date of Event:** September, 18th, 2025  
**Venue:** Arukah Clinic hall.  
**Report Prepared By:** Sarah Bulus Daniel, Volunteer, ICTMH  
**Date of Report:** September 20th, 2025  
**Numbers of Participants:**

A total number of 14 people from Arukah clinic, and a total number of 4 people from ICTMH, making it a total number of 18 people were present at the event.  
Closing & Fellowship:

### Introduction

This report details the mental health outreach program conducted by the Initiative for Cognitive Therapies and Mental Health (ICTMH) for health workers at Arukah Clinic, Sabon Tasha, on June 20, 2025. The program aimed to foster mental health awareness and equip young participants with practical coping strategies.

### Objectives

- The primary objectives include:
- Increasing awareness and understanding of mental traffic jam.
  - Understanding the different between proactive interference and retroactive interference.
  - Educating participants on proactive interference can affect a health worker.
  - Understanding the factors contributing to proactive interference.
  - Knowing the strategies and interventions to proactive interference.

### Keynote Address (Sarah Bulus Daniel):

The keynote focused on proactive interference which occurs when previously learn information or established behaviors hinder the learning or adoption of new habits or skills. Key topics included:

- Proactive interference vs. Retroactive interference.
- Understanding the effect of proactive interference among health workers.
- Understanding the factors contributing to proactive interference.

### Strategies and Interventions

- 1.Cognitive Restructuring
- 2.Spaced practice
- 3.Task-specific Training
- 4.Mindfulness and Relaxation
- 5.Errorless Learning
- 6.Chunking Information
- 7.Retrieval Practice
- 8.Seek Feedback and Support
- 9.Visualization and Mental Practice
10. Repetition with Contextual Variability

### Outcome of the Event

- The outreach program at Arukah Clinic achieved its intended goals with notable impact:
- Increased Awareness: Participants gained a deeper understanding of proactive and retroactive interference, especially how proactive interference can affect health workers’ performance and decision-making.
  - Practical Skill Development: Health workers were introduced to evidence-based strategies such as cognitive restructuring, mindfulness, chunking, and retrieval practice, which they can apply in daily routines.
  - Active Participation: The interactive sessions, including Q&A, icebreakers, and discussions, encouraged openness and fostered peer-to-peer learning among participants.
  - Positive Feedback: Participants expressed appreciation for the clarity of presentations and relevance of the topics to their work environment.
  - Strengthened Collaboration: The program enhanced ICTMH’s partnership with Arukah Clinic, creating an avenue for future training and joint initiatives in mental health awareness.
  - Sustainability: With the introduction of ICTMH’s social media platforms, participants now have ongoing access to mental health resources and continuous learning.

### Conclusion

The mental health outreach program at Arukah clinic, Sabo Tasha, was a resounding success. Participants departed significantly more informed about mental health, and empowered to prioritize their own well-being and support others.



# Campus Wellness Hub!



## Initiative for Cognitive Therapies and Mental Health (ICTMH)

### Campus Wellness Hub Weekly Report

**Date:** September 22nd – 28th, 2025

**Platform:** WhatsApp (Virtual)

**Facilitator:** Khalid Musa

**Compiled by:** Khalid Musa

### Introduction

This week at the ICTMH Campus Hub, our daily reflections centered on peer pressure, social media anxiety, and the importance of building inner strength. Through short, engaging posts, students were encouraged to develop healthier thought patterns, embrace their uniqueness, and take intentional steps toward balance and well-being.

The Wellness Week, held from September 22nd to 28th, was designed to combine reflection, dialogue, wellness practices, gratitude, and lighthearted fun, ensuring a balanced approach to mental health awareness.

### Daily Highlights

#### Monday – Motivational Monday

Students were encouraged to resist peer pressure and social-media comparison, and focus on their own growth and confidence. Key reminder: Pause before following the crowd; celebrate uniqueness.

#### Tuesday – Take-Charge Tuesday

Emphasis on controlling responses to events; students were asked to identify one area they could take charge of during the day. Key reminder: Small intentional choices build progress.

#### Wednesday – Work-Smart Wednesday

Students explored the difference between being busy and being productive. Emphasis was placed on prioritizing important tasks, managing distractions, and reviewing accomplishments at the end of the day. Midweek quote: “Don’t just count the hours—make the hours count.”

#### Thursday – Think Big Thursday

This day encouraged participants to expand their thinking and dream beyond their comfort zones. Through stories of everyday people who achieved great things by daring to think big, students were inspired to reflect on areas where they can challenge themselves to grow. Inspirational reminder: Big achievements begin with big thoughts.

#### Friday – Feel-Good Friday

The focus shifted to joy and lightheartedness as a form of self-care. Students were encouraged to embrace small moments of happiness, laughter, music, friendship that refresh the spirit after a long week.

Core message: Happiness doesn’t wait for perfection; it’s found in small, simple joys.

#### Saturday – Self-Care Saturday

The importance of intentional rest and self-care was highlighted. Students were encouraged to slow down, recharge, and set boundaries as necessary steps toward balance and resilience.

Key lesson: You cannot pour from an empty cup; refilling yourself allows you to give more to others.

#### Sunday – Reflection Sunday

Sundays are a time to pause, look back, and prepare our hearts and minds for the new week. This past week, we learned, shared, and reminded ourselves that little steps toward wellness make a big difference.

#### Reflection prompt:

What lesson stood out to you this week? What are you grateful for, even in small things?

What is one step you’ll take in the new week to nurture your mental health? Reflection helps us grow. Gratitude gives us strength. And hope carries us forward.

#### Conclusion

The ICTMH Campus Hub Wellness Week (Sept 22–28, 2025) promoted awareness around peer pressure, intentional living, and the importance of self-care.



# RESOURCE & ANNOUNCEMENTS



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## Call for Journal Articles - ICTMH

ICTMH invites submissions of journal articles focused on mental health and cognitive behavioral therapies, especially those offering African-based solutions. A list of suggested topics is available, but you're welcome to propose your own. Writing guidelines, including word counts and tips, are also provided. Interested? Contact Ese (07068487474) or Michael( 08143296589) on WhatsApp. We're happy to support you through the process. Thank you!



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