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## MENTAL HEALTH

Is Mental health a real issue?

- One person suicides in every 40 seconds and it is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in US.
- Stress and depression cases increased 18% in a decade.
- Between 10-20 million of people in India have severe mental health issues such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorders.
- Between 6.5-7% of the Indian population have several mental health issues.
- Depression has become the 2<sup>nd</sup> deadliest disease since 2020 and it is been predicted to be the biggest killer by 2030.
- schizophrenia had affected 20 million people.
- Anxiety disorder affects 40 million adults in the US.

These are just small portions of the fact that screams out loud that the issue isn't just real but also big. Mental health has been neglected far from too long. It is crucial to the overall well-being of individuals, societies and countries and must be universally regarded in a new light. After looking at the fact anyone who is concerned for thyself, family or for the whole society ends up in a loop of many questions such as,

- Why is it happening?
- What's the early sign?
- How do we recover from it?
- What is the solution? Etc.

Well before we answer any questions, for our understanding it's smarter to figure out what's mental health first? Is it simply absence of mental disorder? Does it have any connection with physical health? Let's figure it out.

## 1. WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

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The term doesn't have a global definition and varies according to the cultural differences. There are many definitions available on the internet today but in a survey done for the most preferred definition for the term is by Public Health Agency of Canada that states "*Mental health is the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity*".

### KEY FACTS

- Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders.
- It is determined by a range of socioeconomic, biological and environmental factors.
- it is one of the three pillars of health.
- Diet, Exercise, Stress, Drug, Abuse, Social connections and Interactions are the lifestyle factors that also affects mental health.

## 2. MENTAL ILLNESS VS MENTAL DISORDER?

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- What is a mental Disorder?

*Disorder* - An illness that disrupts normal physical and mental functions.

It derives from earlier mental health understandings of the mind and the brain when it was thought that as mental disorder was all to do with the mind. But we know now that it affects the brain not just the mind.

- What is mental illness?

The term *illness* and *sickness* are both generally used as symptoms for *diseases*. However, the term *illness* is occasionally used to refer specifically to the patient's personal experience of his or her disease. It is possible for a person to have a disease without being ill and vice versa. [wiki]

The medical definition of a *disease* is an abnormal condition of a part, organ, or system of an organism. These abnormal conditions can be caused by the infections, inflammations, environmental factors, or a genetic defect.

Before the better understanding of the term mental health, experts thought the term '*disorder*' was a better fit than '*illness*'. Once psychologists and scientists found that mental illnesses are a disease of the body, they began to use the term more widely.

- Main difference  
The main difference is the origin of the condition. However, it is interchangeably used nowadays by professionals.

### 3. AWARENESS AROUND THE GLOBE.

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In most part of the world, mental health and mental disorders are not given the same importance as Physical health. Instead, they have been largely ignored or neglected. So the world now is suffering from an increasing burden of mental health problems. Here are some of the unwanted facts:-

- More than 40% of the country have no mental health policy.
- Over 30% of the country don't have any mental health programme.
- Over 90% of the country don't have any mental health policy that includes children and adolescents.
- 450 million people suffer from a mental or behavioural disorders, yet only a small minority of them receive even the most basic treatment.
- Mental disorders represent 4 out of 10 leading causes of disability worldwide.
- it is estimated to account for 12% of the global burden of disease, yet the budgets of the majority of the countries constitute less than 1% of their total health expenditures.

In developing countries, most individuals with severe mental disorders are left to cope as best they can with their private burdens such as depression, dementia, schizophrenia, and substance dependence. The COVID-19 Pandemic causes a spike in Anxiety and depression all around the globe and young people are the one which were hardest hit. So, the ignorance of not taking mental health into country's policy has widened the need for treatment.

### 4. MYTHS VS FACTS

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1. **MYTH** – Poor mental health is not an issue for teenagers. They simply have mood swings caused by hormonal fluctuations and act out because of a desire for attention.

**FACT** – Teenagers do have mood swings but, but that does not mean that adolescents experience mental-health problems.

- Among age 10-15, *suicide is the fifth most prevalent cause of death*.
- For adolescents age 15-19 it is the *fourth biggest cause* of death.
- Half of all mental health conditions starts by the age 14.

1. **MYTH**—It is impossible to protect people from developing mental health conditions.

**FACT** – There are various factors that can protect from developing mental health conditions.

- Strengthen social and emotional skills.
- Seeking help and support early on.
- Developing supportive.
- Loving.
- Warm family relationships.
- Having a positive environment.
- Maintain Physical & Social health.

2. **MYTH** – A mental health condition is a sign of weakness.

**FACT** – It has nothing to do with being weak. In fact recognizing the necessity to simply accept help for a mental state condition needs nice strength and courageousness. Anyone can develop a mental health condition.

3. **MYTH** – People with mental health conditions are tend to be violent and dangerous.

**FACT** -- Only 3%-5% of violent acts can be attributes to individuals living with a serious mental illness.

4. **MYTH** – we can't help people with mental health conditions.

**FACT** – Only 44% of the adults and 20% of the children and adolescents receives needed treatment. So we can encourage people to take the needed treatment by:

- Providing them information about mental health services.
- Busting out the myths and sharing the facts regarding mental health.
- Treating them with respect just like you want to be respected.
- Don't labelling them as 'crazy' , 'mad' etc

5. **MYTH** – Mental health problems can't affect me.

**FACT** – Actually it is pretty common across the globe.

5. DISCUSSING VARIOUS FACTORS OF MENTAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DISORDER.

Is mental and behavioural disorder are caused by genetic reasons only? Or is it caused by environmental factor only? The question has been around for years and the scientists have now come to conclusion that it's not genetic vs environment but actually genetic plus environment factor. in other words, *the interplay of biology with mental and social elements*.

science-based information of the Interaction between different factors will have a profound effect on eliminating ignorance and to stop the abuse of people with these problems.

- BIOLOGICAL FACTORS

Mental and behavioural disorders have been shown to be associated with disruptions of neural communication within specific circuits.

- In Schizophrenia, Abnormalities in the maturation of neural circuits may produce detectable changes in pathology at the cellular and gross tissue level that result in inappropriate or maladaptive information processing.
- In Depression, however, it is possible that distinct anatomical abnormalities may not occur; rather, risk of illness may be due to variations in the responsiveness of neural circuits (Berke & Hyman 2000)
- Psychoactive substance dependence the result of maladaptive synaptic plasticity. In other words, drug-driven or experience-driven alterations in synaptic connections can produce long-term alterations in thinking, emotion and behaviour.

In parallel with progress in neuroscience has come progress in genetics. Almost all of the common severe mental and behavioural disorders are associated with a significant genetic component of risk. a genetic predisposition to develop a particular mental or behavioural disorder may manifest only in people who also experience specific environmental stressors that elicit the pathology. Examples of environmental factors could range from exposure to

- psychoactive substances as a fetus
- Malnutrition
- Infections
- Disrupted family environments
- Isolation and trauma. Etc.

- PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

One main finding throughout the 20th century that has shaped current understanding is the crucial importance of relationships with parents or other caregivers during childhood. Regardless of the specific cause, when children are deprived of nurture from their caregivers they are more likely to develop mental and behavioural disorders, either during childhood or later in life. Evidence for this finding comes from infants living in institutions that did not provide sufficient social stimulation. psychological science has shown that certain types of mental and behavioural disorders, such as anxiety and depression, can occur as the result of failing to cope adaptively to a stressful life event.

Generally the people who try to neglect their problems instead to talking about it and solving it are more likely to develop anxiety and depression.

- SOCIAL FACTORS

We will here discuss some of the factors like urbanization, poverty, technological change which account for mental and behavioural disorders.

- Urbanization

The nature of modern urbanization may have deleterious consequences for mental health through the influence of increased stressors and adverse life events, such as

- overcrowded and polluted environments
- poverty
- dependence on a cash economy
- high levels of violence
- reduced social support (Desjarlais et al. 1995).

In some areas, economic development is forcing increasing numbers of indigenous peoples to migrate to urban areas in search of a viable livelihood. Usually, migration does not bring improved social well-being; rather, it often results in high rates of unemployment and squalid living conditions, exposing migrants to social stress and increased risk of mental disorders because of the absence of supportive social networks. Conflicts, wars and civil strife are thus associated with higher rates of mental health problems.

- So Rural is safe?

Well you might get that impression but is that really the case? The common difficulties that account for mental and behavioural disorder in rural areas are :

- Isolations
- Lack of transport and communications

- Limited educational opportunities
- Limited economic opportunities
- Limited access to mental health care services

In fact, A recent study of suicide in the elderly in some urban and rural areas of Hunan province, China, showed a higher suicide rate in rural areas (88.3 per 100 000) than in urban areas (24.4 per 100 000) (Xu et al. 2000).

- Poverty

The relationship between mental health and poverty is multidimensional and complexed poverty can be understood as the state of having insufficient means, which may include the lack of social or educational resources. The poor and the deprived have a higher prevalence of mental and behavioural disorders, including substance use disorders. The associations

There is also evidence that the course of mental and behavioural disorders is determined by the socioeconomic status of the individual. Even in rich countries, poverty along with associated factors such as

- lack of insurance coverage,
- lower educational level
- unemployment
- minority status in terms of race
- ethnicity and language can create insurmountable barriers to care.

The treatment gap for most mental disorders is high, but in the poor population it is indeed massive.

- Racism

The available evidence indicates that people long targeted by racism are at heightened risk for developing mental problems or experiencing a worsening of existing ones. You know what's funny? people who practise and perpetuate racism themselves are found to have or to develop certain kinds of mental disorders.

- Technological Change

another factor that has been associated with mental and behavioural development chaos is Unusual rate and rapid technological change in the late 20th century. These technological changes, and especially the communication revolution, provides excellent opportunities for improved information and empowerment of users.

*Telemedicine now makes it possible to provide treatment at a distance.*

But do these advantages come with a downside? There is evidence that the media

exposure contributes to levels of violence, sexual behaviour and interest in pornography, and that exposure to violent video games promotes aggressive behaviour and so on aggressive tendencies (Dill & Dill 1998).

- Social factor affects women more?  
Rates of depression among rural women have been reported to be more than twice those of general population estimates for women (Hauenstein & Boyd 1994).

Across socioeconomic levels, the multiple roles that women fulfil in society put them at greater risk of experiencing mental and behavioural disorders than others in the community. Violence against women constitutes a major social and public health problem, affecting women of all ages, cultural backgrounds, and income levels.

In addition to the pressures placed on women because of their expanding and often conflicting roles, they face

- Significant sex discrimination
- Poverty,
- Hunger,
- Malnutrition,
- Overwork and
- Domestic and sexual violence. Etc.

## 6. MENTAL HEALTH – IMPORTANCE & TAKING CARE OF IT & MAINTING

### ➤ Why should you care about your mental health?

Taking care of your mental health helps you being the best version of yourself. Here are few of the reasons why you should do it:

- It helps you to handle and cope with stress and adversities.
- It also allows you to build healthy relationships with other people and your community.
- It promotes productivity, whether for work, sports, creative pursuits, or caregiving.
- It affects your
  - ✓ Attentiveness
  - ✓ Communication
  - ✓ Concentration
  - ✓ Ability to organize and manage yourself
- It keeps you physically healthy— mental health can affect your physical health.
- It lets you realise your full potential.
- It keeps your brain in a tip-top shape.



➤ How to maintain your mental health?

Mental fitness is important to maintaining your brain and your body healthy, especially as you age. These are very simple yet necessary and they include active ones, such as learning a new song or playing a game, as well as restful ones, such as relaxation and visualization exercises.

✚ Active exercises :

- Memory exercises.
- Try something different:
  - ✓ Try new foods.
  - ✓ Try new ways to accomplish routine tasks.
  - ✓ Travel to new places.
  - ✓ Take a new way to work or the grocery store.
- Writing Journal
- Reading
- Play games
  - ✓ Crossword Puzzles
  - ✓ Board games
  - ✓ Sudoku

In addition to video games try switching games with logic, trivia, reasoning.

✚ Restful :

- Visualisation
- Affirmation
- Meditation
- Taking a break.
- Proper sleep.

Start with any 2 from active ones and 2 from restful ones and see how it uplifts your mental health.

Other than these you should also :

- Connect with others to nurture your relationships.
- Set realistic goals and stop multitasking wherever possible
- Reach out for help and support wherever you need it
- Take time to do activities or hobbies you enjoy.

## 7. EARLY SIGNS



Not sure if you or someone you know is living with mental health problems? Experiencing one or more of the following feelings or behaviours can be an early warning sign of a problem:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Isolating oneself from others
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Experiencing severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Inability to perform daily actions

