**Not Being Okay Is… Well, Okay**

Alright, picture this — I’m on the phone with you, pretending to scroll through your work or assignments, chai in hand. Ever feel like your brain is that stubborn auto-rickshaw stuck in peak-hour traffic, no matter how much you honk at it? And you’re already late. Yeah… mental health sometimes feels exactly like that — jammed, loud, and refusing to budge.

I still remember one random evening at this chai stall near Laxmi Talkies. The guy behind the counter was pouring that kadak, extra-ginger chai into those tiny glasses, the steam fogging up his specs. People rushed past — office workers, students, shopkeepers — all looking fine on the outside, but you could tell… everyone was carrying something heavy. You can’t see it, but you know it’s there. Like, maybe that’s the real thing about mental health — it’s often invisible, but man, it can weigh you down like a bag of wet clothes.

**Mental Health Isn’t “All in Your Head”**

Let’s be real — here in India, mental health still gets treated like that dusty storeroom no one wants to open. You hear “dimag kharaab” jokes thrown around like it’s nothing. But this isn’t some quirky Bollywood villain we’re talking about. It’s real. Realer than your Monday morning traffic jam.

You know how your legs ache after a day of walking? Same with the mind — except you can’t point at it and say, “See? It’s swollen.” So people just wave it off: “Chill kar yaar, sab theek ho jayega.” I mean… sometimes it will. But sometimes it won’t. And ignoring it? Yeah, learned that the hard way.

**That “Traffic Jam” in Your Head**

Anxiety, depression — whatever name you give it — can feel like you’re stuck in Delhi traffic. Inside your head. Thoughts honking, worries weaving in and out, no green signal in sight. You’re surrounded by people but still feel completely alone. Weird, right?

And some days… you can’t even explain what’s wrong. Just this vague “off” feeling. Maybe you snap at your mom for no reason. Or lie in bed scrolling reels without actually enjoying them. Sounds familiar? Don’t beat yourself up over it. Happens to more people than you think.

**Why I Stopped Pretending Everything Was Fine**

Back in college, I thought “chill, sab theek ho jayega” was a life philosophy. Spoiler alert: nope. Mental health isn’t like skipping one gym session and expecting abs to magically appear later. It takes work. And some days, that “work” is just brushing your teeth and making it to class on time.

You don’t have to be strong all the time. Honestly, real strength is saying, “Hey, I’m not okay right now.” Even if it feels awkward. Even if the other person doesn’t know what to say. Because, trust me, even the most “together” people you know have their own 3 a.m. battles.

**Talking Helps — Even If It Feels Strange**

Here’s the thing: in our culture, talking about feelings can feel like telling someone your ATM PIN. But it doesn’t have to be. Imagine if talking about mental health was as normal as complaining about Mumbai rains or asking “kya khaya?” at lunchtime.

Next time you’re feeling low, try telling someone. A friend, a sibling, maybe even your pet if no one’s around. Just saying it out loud can feel like opening a stuck window — suddenly, there’s air again.

And yeah, therapists. Not just for “pagal” people. Think of them like you would a doctor for your stomach ache — sometimes the brain needs a check-up too.

**Small Things That Actually Help**

No magic wand here, but little habits do add up:

* Take a walk. Even if the street noise is chaos, at least you’re moving.
* Sip your chai slowly. Let it cool a bit. No rush.
* Write down whatever’s swirling in your head — even if it sounds silly.
* Give social media a break. Half the time, it’s just feeding the noise.
* Sleep. Or at least try (yeah, easier said than done).

Think of your mind like a garden. Water it with good stuff, pull out the weeds when you can. If you leave it alone for too long, the weeds win — and then you’ve got that one wild plant making life miserable.

**When People Just Don’t Get It**

Ever had someone tell you, “Bas sochna band kar” or “Life tough hai, adjust kar”? Yeah… people mean well, but not everyone gets it. And that’s okay. Protect your peace anyway. Share only with people who’ve earned that trust — like you wouldn’t hand over your mom’s secret biryani recipe to a stranger.

**Stigma? Still There. But We Can Chip Away at It.**

The stigma around mental health is like that one mosquito buzzing in your room at night. Annoying. Persistent. But the more we talk about it, the quieter it gets. Imagine if schools taught stress management along with algebra. Or if bosses cared about your burnout as much as their quarterly targets. Maybe one day.

For now, every honest conversation helps.

**So… Where Do You Start?**

You might be thinking, “Easy for you to say.” And you’re right — in a world obsessed with “toughness,” opening up is hard. But here’s the truth: you’re not broken. You’re human. And humans get tired. Sad. Overwhelmed.

When the next mental storm hits, try not to fight it like it’s an enemy. Ride it. Reach out if you can. Cry if you have to. And when you’re ready, take that one tiny step forward — even if it’s just brushing your hair or opening your curtains.

No one’s asking you to have it all figured out. Life’s messy. Mental health? Messier. And that’s fine.

So… what’s your story? Ever let someone in on what’s really going on in your head? Or have you been carrying it alone? Either way — there’s always a cup of chai waiting if you want to talk.