

## MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS IN INDIA – A STIGMA AROUND MENTAL ILLNESS

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### ***Abstract***

*Our well-being is affected by all aspects of our lives and that, in turn, affects how we experience life, work, and time with our loved ones. Well, it's impossible to have a conversation about health and wellness without talking about mental health. In this article we are going to get to know about what exactly mental health is and how we can keep people aware about their mental well-being.*

*Awareness and health literacy are two sides of the same coin. INDIA is grappling with a high prevalence of mental health disorder, including depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder and substance use disorder.*

### ***Keywords***

*Well-being, mental health, awareness, health literacy, prevalence, anxiety, substance use.*

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## **Intorduction**

### **What Exactly Mental Health is?**

Mental health is a person's emotional, psychological and social – well-being, it is a fundamental part of health and it affects how people think, feel and act.

Mental health is important at every stage of life and it is crucial for personal, community and socio-economic development.

Mental health conditions can be experienced differently by each person and can range from mild to severe, and they can include mental disorders, psychological disabilities and other mental state.

It is necessary for each one of us to be aware about our mental health, for which we can analyse our self from time to time and can come on a conclusion regarding the current state of our mental health condition. However many of the people are unaware of the fact that they are dealing with any kind of mental disorder due to lack of awareness and illiteracy among people about their mental well-being. As people think that talking about their own current mental health state with someone in family, friends, spouse etc. will make them an object of laughter among others, but it is not true, one need to share their feelings at least with someone which can help them to stay healthy with their mental state.

As many of the people have fear of being judged even by their own family members, society, friends etc. Which lead them to stay quiet and deal with problems on their own which become harmful for a person after an extent and a person changes in behaviour like depression, anger issues, anxiety, panic attacks etc.

Lack of knowledge about mental illness poses a challenge to the mental health care delivery system.

### **Road Map for Mental Health Awareness**

Mental health awareness can be achieved by various ways along with their proper execution in society.

When there will be rise in mental health awareness, it can be expected that there will be a rise in early recognition and access to treatment as well. Here are some ways through which we can enlarge mental health awareness among large number of people in the society.

- 1. Conventional media:** it is also known as traditional media which include any type of content which is distributed through the well-established channels that have been there around for many years and this media is easily accessible to anyone as it include newspaper, television ,radio ,films ,magazines and bill board's .
- 2. Government programs:** it is the only public health system through large programs which can reach the rural areas. as even after so much of development some of the rural areas in our country are not able to get facilities like urban areas which make them a bit backward government focuses more on rural areas for mental health awareness.
- 3. Educational system:** we have mostly seeing that the people below the age of 25 are facing the more mental health issues nowadays. As a person goes through many changes in this period of their life cycle, school and colleges can play a big role in making aware children and adults as well regarding mental health.
- 4. Industry:** the organised sector suffers significant loss of effective work force through mental health illness .it is their responsibility of owners to keep a check on the mental health of their workers as it is their social responsibility to make those people aware regarding their health status.
- 5. Crowd sourcing:** this process will help a lot of people together as somewhere it will help them to overcome the hesitation and sharing the thoughts and feelings, and along with that it will make others aware and can encourage one as well to share their depressive thoughts or any other issue as well.

#### **Importance of Mental Health Awareness**

It is very crucial to be aware about mental health of yourself, one can be facing different types of health issues which they are unable to share it with others, but it is important for each one of us to open up and talk about ourselves. People struggling with their mental health may be in our family, live next door, teach your children, work with you etc.

However, only half of those affected receive treatment, often because of the stigma attached to mental health. Untreated mental

illness can contribute to higher medical expenses, poor performance at school and work, fewer employment opportunities and increased risk of suicide.

The 2 most common mental health conditions are:

- 1. Anxiety disorders:** it includes post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), obsession compulsive disorder (OCD), panic attacks and specific phobias.
- 2. Mood disorders:** it includes depression and bipolar depression and it is characterized by difficulties in regulating one's mood.

**What makes promoting mental health awareness in India a challenge?**

Mental health is widely stigmatised in India. Society addresses people suffering from mental health issues with derogatory terms like lunatic, mad and possessed and that they belong to mental hospital as well. The long held taboo and the stigma of appearing normal in public have prevented million from seeking mental health care.

Here are the 4 Major reasons why promoting mental health awareness in India is a big challenge:

- 1. Insufficient resources:** there is a lack of mental health facilities and professionals in our country, which lead to a vast problem in spreading information about how to deal with mental health issues.
- 2. Limited understanding :** India has a lack of awareness and a stigma surrounding mental health .many people are unaware of the signs of mental illness and how to deal with it as well .as their own family members even sometimes don't understand them. They have a fear of being judges by their own family members, friends, society etc.
- 3. Cultural preconceptions:** cultural and traditional believes around mental illness also prevent people from getting proper treatment. There is a misconception in our country that supernatural or spiritual forces are the root cause of any mental disease.
- 4. Lack of government support:** most of the existing mental health initiative are underfunded. Unfortunately the allocations of funds by the Indian government to address their critical issues has fallen short of the necessary financial support.

### **How can mental health awareness help?**

Mental health awareness is critical to promoting mental health treatment and behavioural health.

Right now we only fill our tank when they are on empty developing awareness help us start to recognise the signs and symptoms when they are feeling ‘off’ just as we do with our physical illness.

Here are 4 important benefits of mental health awareness:

1. Helps you understand your symptoms.
2. Start a conversation with your loved ones.
3. Better education.
4. Promotes mental fitness.

### **Here are 3 tips to promote mental health awareness**

- 1. Speak up for yourself:** this is the best way someone can deal with their mental illness . By sharing your thoughts and feelings with others and opening up yourself will let you feel more free and relaxed. By sharing your problems with friends family or spouse will help a particular to deal with it.
- 2. Learn more about mental health:** spend some of your time to learn about mental health and mental fitness. Everyone should be aware about the common mental health conditions, signs of burnout and how to take care of yourself when you are experiencing symptoms.
- 3. Talk to a coach:** there should always be a person in everyone’s life with whom they can share any feeling or a thought without any hesitation and feeling of being judged. That person can be your mother, father, sibling, spouse, friends or any other person with whom you have share a good comfortable bond.

### **Conclusion**

Mental health awareness is the ongoing effort to reduce the stigma around mental illness and mental health condition by sharing are personal experience. It is an important social movement to both improve understanding and increase access to healthcare. When we are quiet about mental health and fitness we allowed stigma to continue, and that silence makes it harder for people to prioritise they are own mental will being.

“From now each one of us should ~~take~~ take an oath that we will fight against Taboo and stigma around mental illness and break all barriers which

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