



DIALOGUES



A NEWSLETTER FROM CONVERSATIONS-
CENTRE FOR POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

APRIL 2022 • ISSUE 2 • VOLUME 2



EMBRACING THE COMPLEXITY OF SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS AND INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSIONS

As humans, we are complex beings, grappling between what is expected of us from society and how we choose to express ourselves as individuals within the collective. We have sat with a multitude of questions about the complexity of this interaction, wondering how to embrace it. As a socially conscious individual, can having privilege and engaging in advocacy go hand in hand? Can love, hurt and anger co-exist? Can we grow around grief?

Members of our community, including students, alumni and the members of the counselling team, have explored these questions, shared their perspectives and personal experiences in this issue through articles, poetry and artwork. Happy reading!

WHAT'S INSIDE

Contributions by Students and Members of Azim Premji Foundation

- Embracing the Complexity of Societal Expectations and Individual Expressions by Shaik Shaheera Naaz (pg. 2)
- On the Importance of Self-Worth by Aditi Chandrasekaran (pg. 3)
- Embracing the Complexity of Societal Expectations and Individual Expressions by Zala Hanvantsinh Mukeshsinh (pg. 4)
- 'Love and Hurt-Co-exist': Artwork by Raghvendra Shrikrishna Vanjari (pg. 5)

Features from the Conversations team (pg. 6)

- Veda's Visual Verses (pg.6)
- Kavitha's Korner (pg. 7)
- Swati's Storyboard (pg. 8)
- Soumitra's Sagas (pg. 10)
- Lakshmi's Lens (pg. 13)
- Prarthana's Picks (pg.15)
- Anjana's Angle (pg.17)
- Pratik's Parables (pg. 19)

Quarterly Mental Health Calendar (pg. 21)

Meet the Team at Conversations (pg. 22)

Peer Support Training (PST-6) (pg. 23)

PST-6 Poster (pg. 24)



CONTRIBUTIONS FROM STUDENTS & MEMBERS OF AZIM PREMJI FOUNDATION

EMBRACING THE COMPLEXITY OF SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS AND INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSIONS

by Shaik Shaheera Naaz (MAE 2021)

We can understand the complexity of societal expectations and its impact when we focus on its emergence i.e roots. In this article we shall discuss how embracing societal expectations has directed our society towards social stratification. This social stratification is seen more prominently among gender, class, caste and religion. The rigid chains of societal expectation questions our identity which leads to identity crisis resulting in stress, frustration and lack of mental well being among individuals in the society. I can state this very clearly by pointing towards the system of modern mass schooling, which is formed due to the elite beliefs and values and forms complex societal expectations designed primarily for the benefit of a particular class in the society undermining the challenges faced by the underprivileged groups in the society. Everyone in the society

follows these set of expectations without questioning or knowing the rationale and logic behind these beliefs which in later stages take the form of norms and effects the lives of every individual within and outside the framework of society and makes it almost impossible to come out of the chains and hinders individual expressions making their voice silent for generations to come. Individual expressions without any interventions is known as ascribed status while that of a status earned by an individual is known as achieved status. There is a huge role played by societal expectations in driving us from ascribed towards achieved characteristics or statuses. Our achieved characteristics are mainly determined by the majoritarian mindset in the society. It is very clear that shared social expectations influence individual behavior without focusing on contextualization which is very important in designing societal expectations. If these expectations are designed keeping the common shared interest of all individuals in the society then it doesn't affect individual expression.

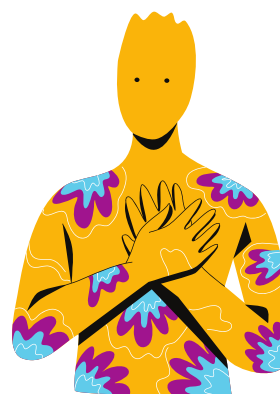
We get lost somewhere in search of agency between autonomy and accountability. And I feel that societal

expectations act as cogs in the wheel in defining our autonomy and accountability which are very important to build an equitable society. On the other hand while embracing societal expectations it is very important to keep in view vast contextual differences in India. Bureaucracy plays an important role in framing societal expectations and it is very important to think whose voice is heard while framing these expectations, whether it is the voice of particular class in the society i.e. elite or underprivileged and marginalized communities or is it a collective voice of the society. Sometimes professional expertise lags behind in proving its point when it is under rigid bureaucratic structure. So while framing, formulating, implementing and embracing the rigid societal expectations it is always key to think how it is hindering the individual expression and to what extent.

While framing the societal expectations it is very important to focus on hidden aspects of the scenario or framework as to who are being used as means in achieving the end. Why are values and beliefs often seen with a petty lens in framing these expectations though they should be held at high altitude which directly points towards restriction of individual expression.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-WORTH

*by Aditi Chandrasekar
Faculty of Chemistry,
School of Arts and Sciences
Azim Premji University*



'When you do not value yourself, the tragedy is you stop valuing the people who value you or love you. You take them for granted, disrespect and lose yourself in a defeatist, internal narrative.

"If she can love someone as worthless as me, she must not be valuable."

You drive away the person who believes in you, more than you did in your own self. The stifled conscience in its meek voice, prevails upon you. It tells you something is wrong. You silence the critical conscious, in the attempt to comfort yourself. Justify yourself, with further narratives. How worthless the one who loved you was, so you had the right to hurt. The conscience is buried deeper.

The vicious cycle begins again. The dance of self destruction...

EMBRACING THE COMPLEXITY OF SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS AND INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSIONS

by **ZALA HANVANTSINH MUKESHSINH**
(MAE 2021)

Indian society is like a bouquet where people live together despite having different religions, culture, beliefs, norms and values. Society is so complex and to survive, society has to have different needs, rules and regulations from time to time, place to place and people to people. Society is also stratified in various levels of classification, for example, class, caste and gender. Society has several exceptions from children, youth, women and men and everyone has a different role to play to survive in any society. Everyone has several expectations from society as well.

In a single line, social expectation is the general mood of a society about what people should do and should not do. The definition might seem easy. However, social expectations are so complex and they create more complexity when they clash with individual expressions. Individual expression is the expression of one's own personality, feelings, or ideas, through speech or art. Yes, India is democratic country but still in society, there are some norms and values that are taken for granted that everyone has to follow.

India has a large number of youth population so the entire society has huge expectations from the youth. For instance, in a family, boys are expected to be doctors, engineers, businessmen or government officers and in the same way, society expects a man to be a gentleman or woman to be a gentlewoman who serves society and their family. There are also family or society expectations. However, these expectations impede individual expressions of the youth. At any point of time, everyone has to go through the dilemma of societal expectations and individual expressions.

Nowadays, the large number of teenagers, adults, men and women suffer from mental disorders. Societal expectations after a certain level are like a burden on everyone. In the above given example, societal expectations make a narrow path to express oneself. Here, I would like to share my personal experience as well as my society's expectations from the children who are studying in 10th grade or 12th grade. They are expected to get more than 80% or 90% in board examinations. However, there is no space for individual interest. In a formal education, not everyone can find a suitable subject to express their talent, creativity or passion. For instance, someone might become a good artist, a good singer, a good football player or something else, such as some famous personalities, like Ms. PV Sindhu, Mr Narendra Modi, Mrs. Mary Kom and many others. However, neither formal education nor society can give a single chance to a person to express themselves.

Societal expectations for girls are to be a good mother, housewife, sister or daughter. However, society isn't concerned with their academic performance and career, growth and development. In a modern society, everyone is trying to express themselves through speech, social-media, poetry and others. In an orthodox society, people struggle to express themselves. For instance, non-binary people have to fight for their rights. This is because a man or woman has to behave a certain way, talk a certain way, wear clothes a certain way.

There is a saying, "Each coin has two sides". Societal expectations are a necessity for any society to survive and individual expression is a necessity to be a healthy, wealthy and wise

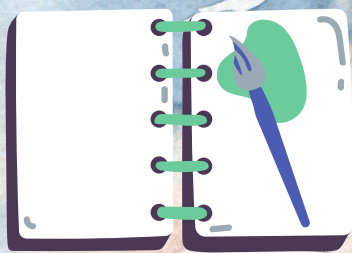
personality. Societal expectations also play a crucial role in the development of society. I am optimistic that one day this society's norms will take a paradigm shift and people will be able to express their individuality and the individual expression will play a crucial role in the betterment of society.

In my point of view, society can only survive when society can be successful to make balance between its expectations and can give freedom to individuals to express who they are.



LOVE AND HURT CO-EXIST

*Artwork by Raghvendra
Shrikrishna Vanjari
(Azim Premji Foundation)*

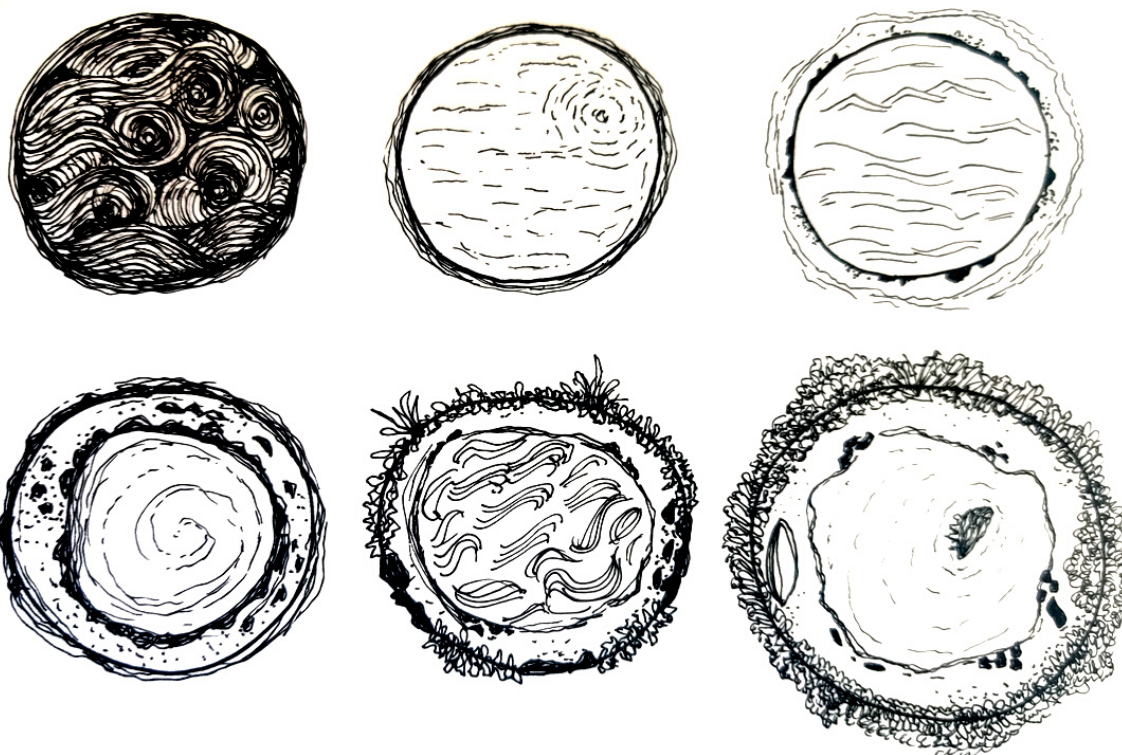


VEDA'S VISUAL VERSES

AS JULIA CAMERON ONCE SAID, "ART OPENS THE CLOSETS, AIRS OUT THE CELLARS AND ATTICS. IT BRINGS HEALING."

WELCOME TO A SPACE WHERE I EXPLORE MENTAL HEALTH THEMES AND CAPTURE EXPERIENCES THROUGH ART AND POETRY!

A JOURNEY OF GROWING AROUND GRIEF



Grief is a wave. The sea churns frothy on the day you died, the birthdays, anniversaries, and moments of celebration where you are clearly missing. On other days, the waters are lulled, calm, the kind I can dip my feet in and watch the ripples with wonder. Enjoy the cup of tea in the balcony, laugh with good friends, read a poem at ease.

Stormy waters have stilled...slowed. Softened by the silken sand, stones, trees, blades of grass, growing around it. The partner, family and friends I have leaned on, the pets I share my life with, opportunities I have had to grow, the things I have held on to and what I have yet to look forward to.

Time heals all wounds, I often heard in consolation.
Yet, over the years, my grief has not shrunk neatly into a little drop.
Instead, space has grown around to hold it. Nurture it. Embrace it. And *honour it*.

(Inspired by Lois Tonkin's article "Growing around Grief- Another Way of Looking at Grief and Recovery")

KAVITHA'S KORNER

STUDENT EXPERIENCES

With time, the pain of
saying goodbye changes.





SWATI'S STORYBOARD

WAYS OF COPING FROM THE COMMUNITY

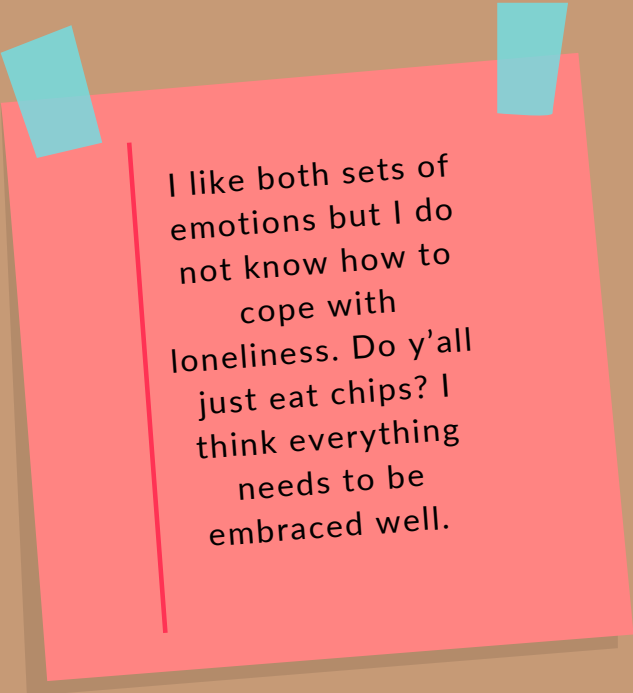
The community was invited to share the ways in which they have balanced dualities and contradictions in your life? (eg. productivity/rest; influencing/compromising; self-sufficiency/taking support etc.) Feel free to be influenced from these ways, and keep adding to your list! 😊

Come to terms with it. You change as a person with every new thing that is thrown your way. You either change completely or there is more of you. So breathe through it. Let it run its course.


I compartmentalize my activities. I also always listen to what my body and mind want. If I'm not able to do something at a particular time, I schedule it for later. It is very important to work on the guilt that comes with not being able to do things that we want to. Guilt is destructive, don't let it eat you up.

It's a struggle - bas!

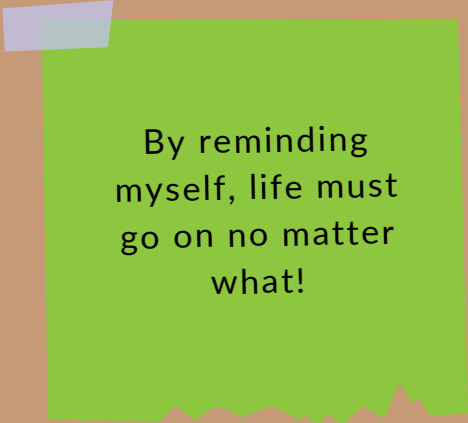
Though the awareness of the importance of mental health does guide toward tools to make my life easier, more stress-free and better overall.



I like both sets of emotions but I do not know how to cope with loneliness. Do y'all just eat chips? I think everything needs to be embraced well.



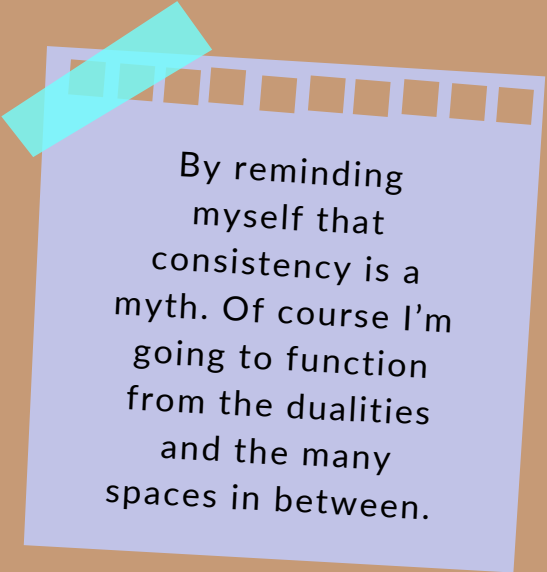
I don't make hard and fast rules for myself that I should follow so that when I do something that feels contradictory to what I usually do, I am kind to myself about it and understand where it is coming from. It always has some place that it is coming from.



By reminding myself, life must go on no matter what!



Thank you to everyone who contributed!



By reminding myself that consistency is a myth. Of course I'm going to function from the dualities and the many spaces in between.



A HISTORY OF HAPPINESS

When the news of the Russian invasion of Ukraine broke out, I started feeling a little queasy inside. So many questions popped up in my head. Is this the end of civilization as we see it? Are we in the face of imminent humanitarian and economic crisis? Will we ever be happy? Do we need to build bomb shelters in Sarjapura?

Funnily enough, these questions never popped up during the constant invasion, bombing, displacement of millions of lives, and countless other deaths that happened due to powerful forces in the Middle East, South East Asia, and Africa. Our selective bias forces us to consume media and perceive threat, well, selectively.

One question remained with me though, and it didn't revolve around whether Spasiba will replace *Dhanyawaad* (or

other variants) as our go-to magic word. Will we ever be truly happy if a war threatens to destroy everything that we have built up over the years? Are we truly happy in the present? This wanted me to understand what happiness is from a more nuanced perspective.

We see wars tearing down cities to rubble, livelihoods and all means of sustenance going away for entire populations, yet, we also see instances in social media where people are going about their daily lives like nothing happened, may it be Kiev, Kabul, or Baghdad. In fact, the 'normalcy' you see in these places is not too different from the ones you see in thriving cities where war and terror do not threaten to dismember your life. Of course, we have a privileged gaze which makes us laud people for their 'resilience' as we scroll through Twitter comfortably in our PJs and silently cry for being left on read, eating mint chocolate ice-cream. Imagine though, being everything taken away from you; your family, your friends, everything you owned, a basic sense of safety which is our right, instead being subjected to generations of trauma. How is then one able to be happy, in the face of all of this?



The answer is not simple, but it is also not complicated. Happiness is shoved down our thoughts the moment we become conscious. It is something that people keep running after, yet few people seem to attain it. There seems to be a bunch of arbitrary factors that seem to decide what brings happiness. Money can't buy happiness, an old saying goes, yet it is much more comfortable to cry in an SUV as opposed to a bicycle (new addition, citation needed). At the same time, money doesn't seem to answer the question of happiness, because rich people are not just prone to being sad, but also being depressed. The 'rich being perpetually happy' myth becomes invalid when you look at various studies from different angles, as data can be selectively presented to make an argument. Scandinavia is one region

where countries rank constantly high on The World Happiness Index (double citation needed), but paradoxically, they also constantly rank near the top for taking the most amount of antidepressants. Bhutan, a country which introduced the idea of Gross National Happiness, gives paramount importance to being happy, at the same time having alarmingly high suicide rates. This raises a valid point, that trying to measure happiness is kind of a futile activity, and is not an accurate measure of a person's well-being. Happiness is a primary emotion, and much like how emotions, feelings, and thoughts manifest in us, it is also largely influenced by our genetic makeup. Famous psychologist and rationalist Scott Lilienfeld, in his studies, found that external factors, such as possessions, and events, do not play a significant role in long-term



happiness, and personality traits and attitudes play a bigger role, which, in turn, have strong biological determinants. More importantly, the World Happiness Index has a rudimentary methodology when it comes to measuring happiness, with some of their questions being as basic as 'On a scale of one to ten, how happy do you feel?' This is as pointless as asking 'Which city makes the best biryani?' (The answer is always Hyderabad).

Do we really need that much happiness? This pressure to be happy or to strive for happiness antagonizes other emotions, such as sadness and fear, which in turn gets us out of touch with our inner self. Capitalism (of course!) plays a role in this. Wars and epidemics set up a gloomy tone for most part of the last century, thus corporations started centring their policies on cheerfulness to continue exploiting workers. Disney, post World War, came up with their new motto of 'Make People Happy'. Harvey Bell, an advertising executive, came up with the famous yellow smiley face symbol in 1963, which became a huge cultural event, minting millions even in the face of wars, civil rights movements, and even a Presidential assassination. Be happy, because it helps us sell more products and increase the socio-economic divide, why not. This also coincided with the Human Potential Movement, and self-help books advocating happiness sold by the millions. One such gem was 14,000

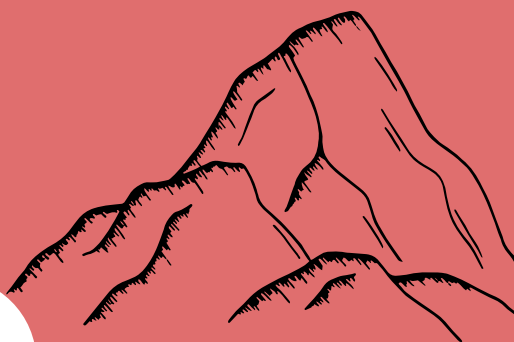
Things To Be Happy About (I mean, are there even those many things in existence?).

Happiness is important, sure, but happiness is not the same as being content. It is an emotion, and when it is felt, it feels wonderful, exhilarating. At the same time, it is a futile value to pursue, as most of it is not in our control. Being present, finding things that give meaning to life, seeking acceptance and comfort can all be values. On the other hand, asking someone to be happier in life is asking them to be taller in life.



**"EVERYONE WANTS TO LIVE ON
TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN , BUT
ALL THE HAPPINESS AND
GROWTH OCCURS WHILE YOU'RE
CLIMBING IT"**

-Andy Rooney



LAKSHMI'S LENS



INDIVIDUALITY AND THE COLLECTIVE

TAKING A LOOK AT THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION

I often hear my clients, reminiscing about their younger selves. This is especially true of students who have graduated or are about to graduate from university. This is fascinating as, theoretically, young adulthood is a particularly stressful time to navigate. But when I ask further, it becomes evident that what they wish to go back to is the ability to fully express themselves as individuals.

We think of the authentic self and social self as polar ends of our being. But the self exists only in relation to others. Our self-concept is derived from our ability to distinguish ourselves from our families, friends, and society at large. Therefore, in seeking and embracing our authentic selves, it is very important to examine our cultural context, our values, and the origin of our beliefs and where they come from.

As adults, many of us have no access to who we are and what we want in life. It's like our life's scripts are pre-written and we must just enact that. We may drift through life without knowing who we are or what we want. One of the most common beliefs that support this is the

limiting belief that we have very little control over what happens to us.

Society has an opinion and judgment about anything and everything we do. What we wear, what we eat, how we look who we date/ marry. Every aspect of our lives comes with expectations and many dos and don'ts, should and should not, musts and must nots. Anything that does not fall into the framework that is set by our respective society, attracts judgment, criticism, discrimination, or exclusion. These frameworks or social constructs do not represent objective reality or have any inherent meaning. What we seem to forget is that society is made up of all of us, thus, we all are the victims and the perpetrators of these societal constructs.

Societal or social constructs are common practices and behaviors that are generally accepted within a society. These common practices or norms need not be accepted by every single person in the society to be social constructs and these may often change over time. Some of the common constructs are norms around gender and gender roles, dressing and fashion,

etiquette, traditions, customs, greetings, expression of emotions, etc.

The thought of what will people think or say is the judgment that we all fear. The fear stops us from being spontaneous and true to ourselves. We shut our own needs and replace them with limiting beliefs about what we can and cannot do and how we should and should not be.

Living in a collectivist society like ours, this can be that much harder to individuate, as a shared belief amongst us is that individuality comes at the cost of the collective. This means that in expressing our true selves, we may risk disappointing our family, friends and even those we are connected to professionally or academically.

However, in an environment like ours, there is a small window of time where the collective value is that of individual expression. Stepping loudly and wholly into who you are is the purpose of a liberal education, and this shared value becomes what is lacking for those who leave this space.



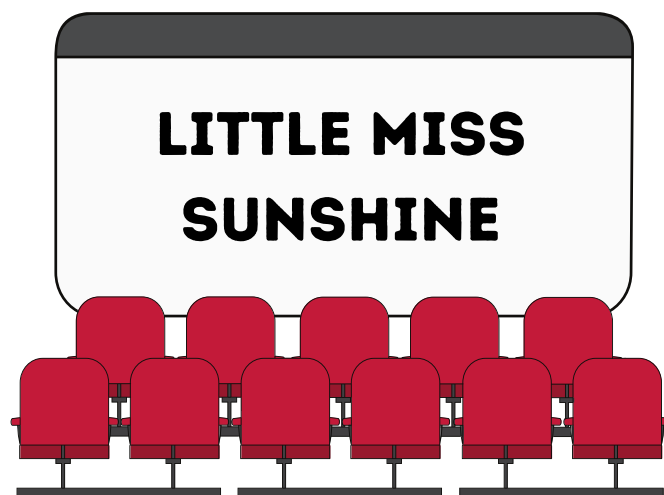
Being self-aware and permitting ourselves to show up as our authentic selves is the key to avoiding performativity and inner conflict.

As we navigate an increasingly complex social world, our mental health journey need not be viewed from the lens of trying to “find ourselves” but more from the lens of trying to heal from everything we are truly not and coming home to who we’ve always been underneath all the roles we play.

**WHAT WE SEEM TO FORGET
IS THAT SOCIETY IS MADE
UP OF ALL OF US, THUS, WE
ALL ARE THE VICTIMS AND
THE PERPETRATORS OF
THESE SOCIETAL
CONSTRUCTS.**



HELLO THERE! JOIN ME IN THIS JOURNEY OF UNRAVELING THE WONDROUS SPACE OF BOOKS/MOVIES THAT ARE LINKED TO MENTAL HEALTH ☺



Thank you Soumitra for suggesting this gem of a movie.

The film has a simple storyline. It is about how a family of 5 + 1, get to bond together over a long road trip. Richard Hoover is a businessman trying to sell his self-improvement course – “Nine” step to winning. He and his wife Sheryl Hoover have two children and Richard’s father, a fun-loving character lives with them. Sheryl brings her gay brother who is a professor, to live with them.

The two children are so different – the elder son Dwayne at 14 wants to become a fighter pilot and vowed to not speak till he achieves his dream, the younger daughter Olive at 7 is a cute little girl who dreams of becoming a beauty queen. Olive gets a chance to enter a kids beauty contest in California, for which the family decides to drive down in a yellow Microbus from New Mexico. The entire film is what happens on the road trip and whether Olive got to participate in the contest. Put together in the close quarters of a rickety vehicle, their idiosyncrasies begin to collide.

There’s a lot to be said about the details in this film. The little ways in which each character is introduced. Each of their defining characteristics that create a trope that we constantly follow, except it doesn’t feel forced. Everyone has things they are known for and this movie is no different.

The film is really about how people navigate their lives, especially when their lot is thrown in with people they didn’t choose to be with, even though they’re related to them.

Olive might be young, but she intuitively feels her own confusion and incipient despair at the choices that land in our laps, whether or not we want them there, at the vagaries of a life over which we have so little control, biologically or politically.

This isn't a conventional family going through a collective struggle, but a family of rule-breakers who find their confidence through their collective refusal to conform. Watching each member of the family begin to "get it" is one of the real pleasures of the film; to a person, they look around them, look at the performances before Olive's, look at the other parents and spectators, and understand that the event is corrupt.

The characters seem to have "nothing," limping down the highway in their broken-down Volkswagen bus. Watching them roll the car to get it in gear, then jump one by one into the open back door as it picks up speed, is at once the film's recurrent sight gag and its central metaphor.

Despite their differences from each other, despite how little they have in common, they all need each other. They can't make their lives move alone, but if they help each other jump on, they can all get where they're going.

The family's quiet victories—over the hospital administrator, the pageant official, the state trooper—mark their humanity and their humility. Their simple hope and faith win out, and although they might be bankrupt financially and professionally, they are rich in their relations with each other and in their ironic but generous and finally hopeful understanding of the limitations of their lives.

MY RATING:



INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA AND RUSSIAN DOLL



Trigger warning: Eating disorders, intergenerational trauma, mention of genocide.

Spoilers for Russian Doll ahead.

Russian Doll season 2 just came out a few days ago. I was a bit skeptical about the new season because the first season was intriguing and ended with the perfect resolution. Much to my surprise, the new season was striking and heartwarming as well (but nothing close to the first season, in my opinion).

The new season revolves around Nadia Vulvokov, a software engineer living in New York, trying to undo her family's intergenerational trauma from her grandparents surviving the Holocaust. Nadia struggles with addiction, and an eating disorder. Her mother Nora struggled with the same along with schizophrenia.

Intergenerational trauma, also called transgenerational trauma is trauma that is passed from a family member to subsequent generations after having directly experienced traumatic incidents. They begin with traumatic events which are experienced individually or events that have affected communities altogether. In the Indian context, intergenerational trauma can be seen in Dalit-Bahujan-Adivasi communities, people from minority religions (like Islam and Christianity), survivors of the partition of India and Pakistan, etc.

In Russian Doll, we watch the ways that Nadia, her mother, and her grandmother cope with the psychological and sociological repercussions post Holocaust. Nadia and her mother cope

with substance abuse, controlling their intake of food, and making impulsive and potentially endangering choices. Their methods of coping are the most natural response to abnormal circumstances and the writers have portrayed it with its complexities, painting them as neither good nor bad. As Ruth, Nadia's maternal figure after her mother died, put it, "Trauma is a topographical map written on the child and it takes a lifetime to read."

There were several points in the show where I teared up. My favourite episode of them all has to be the last one. Nadia quite literally tries to reparent herself by stealing her baby self from the year she was born to raise her in present day New York. She grieves a life she could have had if only her mother didn't hurt and neglect her. If only her mother wasn't reckless with her spending. If only her mother didn't put her in positions where she had to be the adult in the situation, when she was only a child.

Another point in the same episode, Nadia, in the body of her grandmother Vera, sees her mother Nora as a child. Nora is wearing a black tutu and dancing to some classical music. Nora asks Vera, her mother, to dance with her. And Nadia-as-Vera does dance with her. Nadia performs an act of reparenting for her own mother by telling her that she loves her and will love her even through the mistakes she will make in the future. In that moment, Nadia is able to see her

mother as a human being— with flaws, traumas, and struggles of her own, while she tries to raise her baby. Nadia is sad, angry, and resentful of her mother while she is also empathetic and full of warmth and grief for her.

Resentment may seem like the opposite of love and empathy but people don't feel in black or white, and there are greys in between. While Nadia's attempt to undo some of the trauma for her family was futile, she learns to reach a point of acceptance for her grief and family's pain.

Although I enjoyed this season, there were some things I was disappointed in as well. There was barely any story for Alan, Nadia's companion, whose story was very crucial in the first season. His depression and his intergenerational trauma was explored only on the surface in season 2. I loved the first season because it was about two people exploring and understanding their traumas, finding comfort in each other, and forming a sense of community.

But overall, I'm just happy that my comfort TV show has another season to rewatch.



PRATIK'S PARABLES



THIS SECTION INCLUDES SOME FASCINATING STORIES OF FOLKLORE WHICH WILL INTRIGUE AND INTEREST READERS AT THE SAME TIME!

GURU AND MIA'S ABODE

There was a large banyan tree deep inside a dense forest. Its branches spread in all directions, throwing a large shade on the ground. The branches were full of leaves, which rustled when the wind blew. One day, Guru the crow, landed on one of the branches. It was a hot summer's day, and Guru enjoyed the cool breeze on the banyan tree.

He looked around, but was surprised to see no nests on such a majestic, friendly tree. He couldn't hear the squeaking of the squirrels, the shrill cry of the mynahs or the twittering of sparrows. It was strange, but Guru found the tree silent and peaceful.

The next day he brought his wife Mia to the tree. The two crows lovingly built a

nest on one of the thick branches of the tree. The two loved their new home.

A few months later, Mia laid four eggs. After some time, four crow chicks hatched from the eggs. Guru and Mia were extremely happy. They flew the next day to find some juicy worms for the hungry chicks. But when they returned in the evening, they found the babies missing.

Guru and Mia cawed at the top of their voice in despair. They flew all around the banyan tree wondering if the chicks had fallen off the nest. But there was no sign of the chicks.

As Guru was searching near the ground, he noticed a hole at the base of the tree. It was dark inside. Suddenly, he saw a pair of thin eyes. Guru's heart leapt in panic. But the moment he blinked, the eyes were gone. Guru thought he must have imagined it. He said nothing to Mia.

A few months later Mia again laid eggs. Once again, the parents felt happy looking at the new-born chicks. The babies were healthy. But they were extremely hungry. Though they didn't want to leave the chicks alone, Guru and Mia had to leave the nest to find food.

When they returned in the evening, once again they found the nest empty. Guru immediately remembered the hole at the base of the tree. He flew there to see if he could see those eyes he had seen. The hole was dark. But at



its mouth Guru saw a feather. It was a crow feather.

He cawed loudly at the hole. The sound boomed inside the hole. Guru continued his cawing in anger. Suddenly, there was a loud hiss. Guru jumped back in fear. A big black cobra emerged from the hole. It looked coldly at Guru, and went back in.

Guru hurried to Mia, and told her everything he had seen. Mia was scared. "Now I know why there aren't any nests on this tree. This snake eats bird babies. Let's leave Guru. I'm very scared."

"We can't leave our home Mia," said Guru.

"Guru, I know you like this tree. But don't you think we can be happy wherever we go? Think of how happy we will be with our babies?" said Mia.

"Yes, we will be happy. But I don't like being forced to leave. Think of all the birds who thought like that and left this beautiful tree. Don't worry Mia. I will think of a plan."

Some time passed, and Mia once again laid eggs.

She kept asking Guru what he planned to do. She feared for her chicks.

Meanwhile, Guru had no idea how to deal with the snake. He decided to ask his friend jackal for help. The jackal heard the whole story. Without saying a word, he went for a long walk. When he returned he had a smile on his face. He whispered the plan into Guru's ears.

The next day Guru flew towards the river. He sat on a large rock and waited. Soon he saw the thing he was waiting for. A large group of people approached the river. It was the queen of the land coming to the river for a picnic. The queen stepped out on the grass. Her helpers spread a soft mattress, and the queen sat down. She took off her jewellery to relax under the sun.

This was the moment Guru was waiting for. He hopped on the mattress, picked up the necklace and flew away. The queen's guards ran behind Guru, who made sure he flew slowly, allowing the soldiers to spot him.

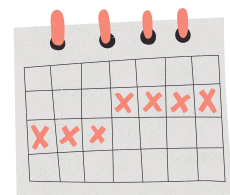
Soon, he reached the banyan tree, and dropped the necklace inside the snake's hole. The soldiers rushed forward. They began digging at the hole to retrieve the necklace. Suddenly, they heard a hiss. It was the cobra. It spread its hood, ready to strike at anyone who attacked. But the soldiers were clever. They thrashed the snake with sticks, and threw it away. They found the necklace and returned it to the queen.

High on the banyan branches Guru and Mia saw everything that happened. Guru caved his thanks to the soldiers. As soon as the soldiers left, Guru and Mia heard a crack. The first chick put its head outside the egg. Guru and Mia smiled. One by one, all the chicks hatched. This time all of them lived happily together.

Adversities bring opportunity for introspection.



QUARTERLY MENTAL HEALTH CALENDAR



Across the year, there are numerous events to spread awareness on mental health and well-being. For this quarter of the year, here is a list of days, weeks and months we would like to highlight to keep de-stigmatizing mental health. Take a look!

APRIL

- **STRESS AWARENESS MONTH**
- **DALIT HISTORY MONTH**
- **SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH**

MAY

- **MENTAL HEALTH MONTH**
- **CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK (MAY 1-7)**
- **SCREEN FREE WEEK (MAY 2-8)**

JUNE

- **LGBTQIA+ PRIDE MONTH**
- **INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA (JUN 21)**
- **ALZHEIMER'S AND BRAIN AWARENESS DAY (JUN 20)**

**TOGETHER LET'S
SPREAD
AWARENESS
AND FIGHT
STIGMA!**

MEET THE TEAM!

CONVERSATIONS



Lakshmi Acharya
Function Head
English, Hindi, Kannada



Soumitra Saxena
Counsellor
English, Hindi



Kavitha Gladys
Counsellor
English, Kannada, Tamil, Hindi



Veda Dandamudi
**Counsellor and
Queer Affirmative
Therapist** 🌈
English, Telugu



Anjana Moraes
**Counsellor and
Queer Affirmative
Therapist** 🌈
English, Hindi, Malayalam



Swati Sambrani
Counsellor
English, Tamil, Kannada



Pratik Motikar
Counsellor
English, Hindi, Marathi, Kannada



PEER SUPPORT TRAINING (PST-6)



From December 2021 to April 2022, our team has been conducting the training for the sixth batch of peer supporters. This was the first time we have included both undergraduate and postgraduate students together in a single batch.

Over the course of the training, the students engaged in various mental health related modules including:

- Self-awareness
- Ethics and Confidentiality
- Interpersonal Relationships
- Basic Counselling Skills
- Suicide Prevention in Azim Premji University
- Grief, Loss and Bereavement
- Mental Health Conditions
- Gender and Sexuality
- Self Care

As part of their training, the students also attended Suicide Gatekeeper Training conducted by Suicide Prevention India Foundation (SPIF).

The training is complete and we are happy to announce the members of PST-6 are ready to support their fellow peers on campus! Students can reach out to them for an additional layer of emotional support within the university. Undergraduate students can reach out to undergraduate peer supporters, similarly postgraduate students can reach out to the postgraduate peer supporters.



PEER SUPPORTERS PRACTICING BASIC COUNSELLING SKILLS IN PAIRS

“

"NOT EVERYONE THINKS AND FEELS THE SAME WAY, AND THERE ARE COUNTLESS WAYS OF LOOKING AT THE WORLD. PST TRAINING HAS HELPED ME TO UNDERSTAND THE DIVERSITY OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND ALLOWED ME TO KNOW MYSELF BETTER. I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO APPLY THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS THAT I HAVE LEARNED TO HELP CREATE A SAFE SPACE FOR CONVERSATIONS."

”

-Madhavi Patel (PST-6)

The Conversations Team will continue to supervise and mentor the peer supporters.

Take a look at the PST-6 poster in the next few pages for more details!

PEER SUPPORT TEAM

(PST- 6)

Sunayana Thawait



BA Humanities

sunayana.thawait20ug@apu.edu.in

Phone- 6261505474

Languages- Hindi, English

Shivananda Dadas



MA Development

shivanand.dadas21_dev@apu.edu.in

Phone- 9370456866

Languages- English, Hindi, Marathi

Shaireen Shaikh



BA Humanities

shaireen.shaikh20ug@apu.edu.in

Phone- 7400298035

Languages- Hindi, English

Sakshi Chomwal



M.A. Public policy and
governance
sakshi.chomwal21_mpg@
apu.edu.in
Phone- 9769958403
Languages- English, Hindi,
Marathi and Marwari

Vaaruni Suresh



BSc Biology
vaaruni.suresh20ug@apu.
edu.in
Phone- 9886411027
Languages- English,
Kannada

Sadaf Fatima



MA Education
sadaf.fatima21_mae@apu
.edu.in
Phone- 8407982233
Languages- Urdu, Hindi,
English

Rudresh Sanjay Patil



M.A. Development
rudresh.patil21_dev@apu.
edu.in
Phone- 7249332894
Languages- English, Hindi,
Marathi

Rheya Shivakumar



BA Humanities
rheya.shivakumar20ug@a
pu.edu.in
Phone- 7995474698
Languages- English, Hindi,
Telugu

Priyanka Minj



M.A.Development
priyanka.minj21_dev@apu
.edu.in
Phone- 9007633382
Languages- Sadri, English,
Bengali, Hindi

Prem Kumar Gupta



M.A. Development
prem.kumar21_dev@apu.
edu.in
Phone- 9968800164
Languages- Hindi, English

Pratik Hole



MPG
pratik.dattatray21_mpg@
apu.edu.in
Phone- 9766663771
Languages- English, Hindi
and Marathi

Ketaki Nagaraju



M.A. Public Policy and
Governance
ketaki.nagaraju21_mpg@ap
u.edu.in
Phone- 9899371875
Languages- Telugu, Hindi,
English

Madhavi Patel



MPG
madhavi.patel21_mpg@apu.
edu.in
Phone- 8777635301
Languages-
English, Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali

Kruthika Ravikumar



MA Development
kruthika.ravikumar21_dev
@apu.edu.in
Phone- 9986638428
Languages- English,
Kannada, Tamil, Hindi

Jyoti Gangadhar



MA Development
jyoti.gangadhar21_dev@a
pu.edu.in
Phone- 7045293758
Languages- English, Hindi,
Marathi, Marwadi

Juhi Shah



MA Education

juhi.shah21_mae@apu.edu.in

Phone- 7620648785

Languages- Hindi, English,
Gujarati, Marathi, Marwadi

Ipsita Shit



M.A.Development

ipsita.shit21_dev@apu.edu.in

Phone- 7908278802

Languages- Bengali, Hindi,
English

Hima Kakal



BA Humanities

hima.kakal20ug@apu.edu.in

Phone- 8073846939

Languages- English,
Kannada

Haniya



BA Humanities

haniya.km20ug@apu.edu.in

Phone- 7558066101

Languages- English,
Malayalam

Bushra Asif Abbas



BA Humanities

bushra.asifabbas20ug@apu.edu.in

Phone- 8925619319

Languages- Hindi, English

Aishwarya Jain



MPG

aishwarya.jain21_mpg@apu.edu.in

Phone- 9650747407

Languages- Hindi, English

Abhishek Shrivastava



M.A. Public Policy &
Governance
abhishek.shrivastava21_m
pg@apu.edu.in
Phone- 7089419264
Languages- Hindi

Adrija Chakroborty



MA Development
adrija.chakroborty21_dev
@apu.edu.in
Phone- 7980104029
Languages- Hindi, English,
Bengali

Maya Karthikeyan



MA Development
maya.karthikeyan21_dev
@apu.edu.in
Phone- 9789886155
Languages- Tamil, English

Manish Pandey



MA Education
manish.pandey21_mae@apu.
edu.in
Phone- 9717269477
Languages- Hindi, English