



# DIALOGUES



OCTOBER 2022 • ISSUE 4 • VOLUME 2



## MAKING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR ALL A GLOBAL PRIORITY

The theme for World Mental Health Day 2021 is "Making Mental Health and Wellbeing For All A Global Priority". The World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH) has chosen this theme since the pandemic has adversely affected mental health, both in the short term and long term, and wellbeing has been hindered due to growing social and economic inequalities, conflicts, violence, stigma, discrimination and barriers to accessing mental health services.

Members of our community, including students, alumni and the members of the counselling team, have shared their perspectives and thoughts on how we can prioritize mental health and wellbeing for each and everyone in the form of articles, artwork and poetry. Happy reading!

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# CONTRIBUTIONS FROM STUDENTS & MEMBERS OF AZIM PREMJI FOUNDATION

## आशा

*by Viral Jain (UG 2022)*

अभी कुछ दिनों पहले ही तो  
चांद आसमान में आया था  
रोशन की पोटली में भर के  
आशा साथ अपने लाया था  
कहां गया वो चांद ?  
कुछ दिनों पहले ही बस  
आसमान में चमकते सितारे थे  
वो सितारे अब चमकते क्यों नहीं ?  
सूरज रोशनी लाता था खूब  
बस कुछ ही दिनों पहले  
अब चुभन क्यों लाता है ?  
वह जो चिड़िया है ना  
वो बतियाती थी मुझसे  
बस कुछ ही दिनों पहले  
अब मुझ पर चीखती क्यों है ?  
हवा जो ठंडक देती थी पहले  
वो बदन जलाती क्यों है अब ?  
अब कुछ पहले जैसा नहीं होगा शायद  
हाँ, जो फूल किताबों में रखे हुए हैं  
उनसे अब भी थोड़ी महक आती है  
वह अब भी मुझे याद दिलाती है  
कि जीवन बिखर जाने पर भी  
छुपे कतरों से आशा की महक आती है...

## HOPE

*English translation*

Just some days ago,  
The moon had come in the sky  
Bringing hope from moonlight in a  
bundle  
Where did that moon go?  
Just some days ago,  
There were shining stars in the sky  
Why those stars don't shine now?  
The Sun used to bring a lot of light,  
Just some days ago..  
Why does it brings a prickling sensation  
now?  
That sparrow which is there,  
Used to talk to me,  
just some days ago  
Why does it yells at me now?  
Why the wind that used to be cool  
Burns my body now?  
Nothing will be the same as before now,  
Perhaps.....  
But yes, the flowers kept in my diary  
Still give a little fragrance..  
They still remind me that  
Even when the life gets scattered,  
The hidden pieces still smell of hope...



## WE NEED TO TALK: WHY MENTAL HEALTH?

*by Aswathy Ram (MPG 2022)*

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” This is the globally accepted definition of health, and going by this definition, mental health is more than just the absence of mental illness. Mental health, according to WHO is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. Studies have shown that chronic emotional stress may result in mental health conditions that can predispose a person to diabetes, hypertension or even stroke. Local threats to mental health illnesses heighten risk for individuals, families and communities. But global threats like economic downturns, disease outbreaks, humanitarian emergencies and the growing climate crisis heighten risk for whole populations. This makes mental health and wellbeing a global emergency requiring immediate attention.

And how do we make mental health and wellbeing a global priority? One way is by talking about it. Mental health carries with it a ton of stigma, and this is a major obstacle affecting open conversations pertaining to it.

The stereotypes and discrimination surrounding it can cause a person to be unempathetic to others as well as themselves when either of them is affected by mental health conditions.

It is important to talk about mental health because talking about it raises awareness, lowers the stigma associated with it, and encourages people to seek treatment for their own potential mental health issues. Celebrities like Deepika Padukone and Zendaya, among many others, have openly talked about their struggles with depression and anxiety, and this should give us the understanding that today, mental health issues are just as ubiquitous as the common cold.

Even as conversations around mental health are surfacing aplenty, we continue to see mental healthcare as a response to problems, rather than something for everyone as a way to improve their lives in general. If we are able to disband the former notion, it will not only remove the stigma but also encourage people to seek out help before they are in crisis.

The health sector can contribute significantly to this end through promotion and prevention efforts, and through multisectoral collaboration and coordination involving the education, labour, justice, environment and welfare sectors. We need to teach our kids to be more generous, and our friends to be more empathetic. Promoting and protecting mental health at educational institutions and the workplace is an important step forward in this regard and can be done through frequent awareness sessions and interventions for students and workers.

Mental health is a significant contributor to an individual's character and abilities, and greatly affects how interactions occur in a society.

Hence, unless we come together to normalize mental health problems and make it a priority, we are failing as humans to provide the best for ourselves and our loved ones. So, the next time someone comes up to you and says, 'Hey, I am not okay.', lend your ears, because it takes a lot of courage to just say these words.



## ಮಂಪರು

- ಕಣ್ಣೀರವ

ರಾತ್ರಿಯ ಕತ್ತಲು, ಅಮಾವಾಸ್ಯೆಯದಲ್ಲ  
ನಿದ್ದೆ ಕಮರಿನ ಸುಸ್ತು ಎಲ್ಲ ಮರೆಸುವ ಕುತ್ತು  
ಕೊರೆದ ಗೊರಕೆಯು ಮಿದುಳ ಎಡಬಲವ ನೀಳಿ  
ತೆರಕೊಂಡ ಸರಿವ ಬುಡ ಬಿಡಾರಗಳಲ್ಲಿ  
ಶಿರ ಕಳಶ ಶಿಖೆಯ ಹೊತ್ತು ಕಾಣಲು ಬಲ್ಲ  
ಪರಪರಾಪರದ ಬಿಗಿದ ಗಂಟಲ ಒರಲು  
ಸುಪ್ತ ಲಿಪ್ತ ದಂಶಕ ಕಾಲ್ಕಮ್ಮ ಸದ್ದಿರಲು  
ಶೀರ್ಷಾಸನದ ಇರುಳುಗುರುಡು ಹದ್ದಿರಲು

ಗಿರಿತುದಿ ಬೆಳಕು ಬಯಲಂತಲ್ಲ ಈ ಕಂದರಗಳು  
ರಸಾತಳ ಮಹಾತಳ ಪಾತಾಳ ಸೌಖ ಪಾಶಗಳು  
ಹತ್ತಲು ಸಮವೇ ಬೇಕು ಕಾಲ ಮೊಳೆ ಸುತ್ತಿ ಉಳಿ  
ಸೊಟ್ಟಿಗೆ ಬಿದ್ದು ಮಡುವಾದರೇನು ಗರಳ ಸುಳಿ  
ಸಂದಿಗ್ಧದಿ ಹಗಲ ಸರಹದ್ದು, ಸೊಂದಿಲಿ ಇರುಳು  
ಎದ್ದರೂ ಇದ್ದರೂ ದಿಗಿಲು ತಪ್ಪಿಸದ ಮಂಪರು

ರಾತ್ರಿಯ ಕತ್ತಲು, ಅಮಾವಾಸ್ಯೆಯದಲ್ಲ  
ನಿದ್ದೆ ಕಮರಿನ ಸುಸ್ತು ಎಲ್ಲ ಮರೆಸುವ ಕುತ್ತು  
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ಶಿರ ಕಳಶ ಶಿಖೆಯ ಹೊತ್ತು ಕಾಣಲು ಬಲ್ಲ  
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ಶೀರ್ಷಾಸನದ ಇರುಳುಗುರುಡು ಹದ್ದಿರಲು

ಗಿರಿತುದಿ ಬೆಳಕು ಬಯಲಂತಲ್ಲ ಈ ಕಂದರಗಳು  
ರಸಾತಳ ಮಹಾತಳ ಪಾತಾಳ ಸೌಖ ಪಾಶಗಳು  
ಹತ್ತಲು ಸಮವೇ ಬೇಕು ಕಾಲ ಮೊಳೆ ಸುತ್ತಿ ಉಳಿ  
ಸೊಟ್ಟಿಗೆ ಬಿದ್ದು ಮಡುವಾದರೇನು ಗರಳ ಸುಳಿ  
ಸಂದಿಗ್ಧದಿ ಹಗಲ ಸರಹದ್ದು, ಸೊಂದಿಲಿ ಇರುಳು  
ಎದ್ದರೂ ಇದ್ದರೂ ದಿಗಿಲು ತಪ್ಪಿಸದ ಮಂಪರು

### Summary:

In this poem Mamparu (Drowsiness), the poet is reflecting on an in-between state of being, where one has not only gone out of control in safety of sleep but is also semi-aware and frightened of wakefulness.





# MENTAL HEALTH: CHALLENGES AND APPROACH

*by Sudha Hariharan*

In today's world wherever we look, importance is given to our physical well-being. Eating right, exercising, regular check-ups, etc. No one talks about mental health. A person being unwell physically is acceptable but talking about one's mental health is unacceptable.

The problem lies in the society where longevity than morbidity and the quantity rather than quality of life is given more importance.

COVID- 19 brought in a lot of anxiety, stress and worries which ignited or added to the mental health problems of the individuals. The societal pressures to conform to the "traditional path", social exclusion or discrimination, economic disparity, conflicts, etc., contribute to the mental health of an individual.

Many challenges faced by individuals suffering from mental illnesses:

**1.Lack of awareness:** Though a lot of awareness is being created on the mental health, there is still a large stratum of the society who really do not understand what mental health is and how it affects an individual. This lack of awareness results in stigma, taking adequate preventive measure, ensuring early diagnosis and taking appropriate treatment.

## **2. Stigma associated with mental illness:**

Most of the people suffering from mental illness are taken everywhere except to a mental health professional. People don't realize, that most individuals having mental health issues, can manage their symptoms and lead normal lives with proper treatment and access to support.

**3.Lack of resources:** Resources for mental health include infrastructure, funds, mental health services and community resources. Not only are these resources inadequate but there is a disparity in distribution between different region, communities and individuals belonging to different socioeconomic strata.

**4.Lack of policies:** Policies on mental health is needed not only at the national level, but also at a community and organisational level. The policies should not include the strategies but also the infrastructural and service support to be provided.

At an individual level, taking care of our mental health is important in every stage of our lives. Our approach toward it can be looked at from the following levels:

- 1.Preservation
- 2.Prevention
- 3.Cure

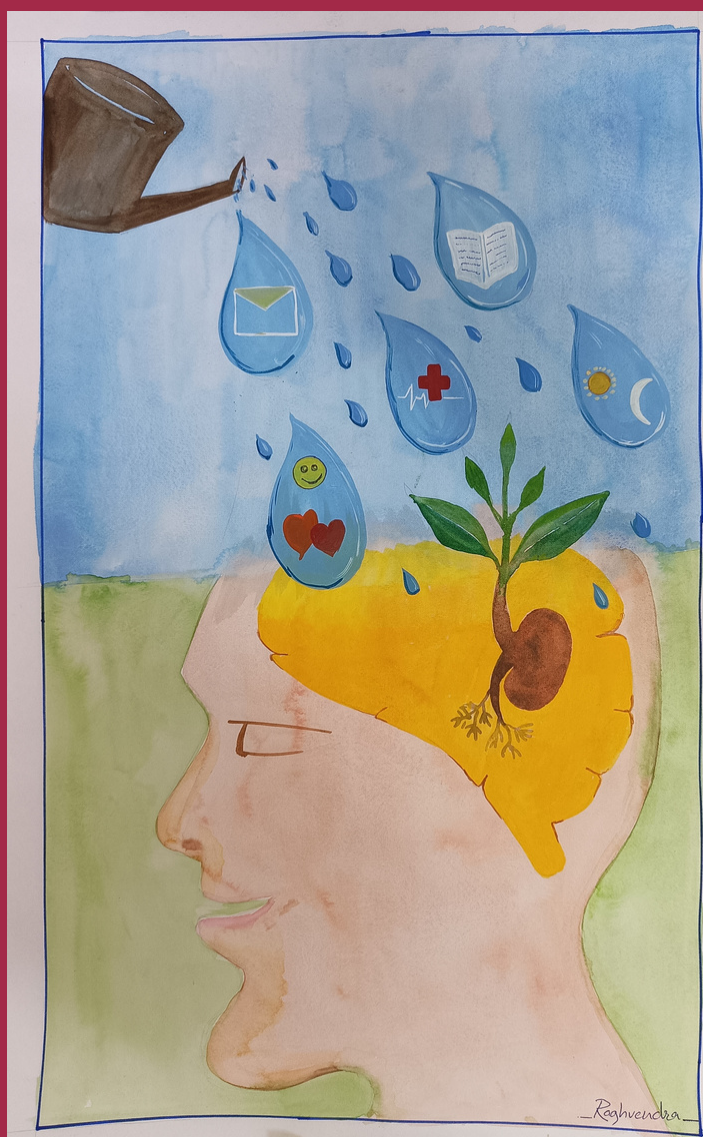
Preserving your mental health means taking all the measures which are needed to maintain your psychological well-being. These would include taking regular breaks, connecting with nature, spirituality, staying positive and valuing yourself.

Preventive measures are taken when the environment around you is not conducive to

your mental well-being. Socio-economic conditions, illnesses (yours or family), occupation, trauma and events. Just like we take vaccinations during the flu season, we need to take measures which will help us cope with these conditions. It can be turning to music, talking to friends or family, exercising, praying, etc.

Curative measures are when one seeks help for their mental illness in the form of psychotherapy, medication, etc.

Though a lot needs to be done to create awareness, acceptance and help for our struggles with mental health, we as individuals can make a small difference by creating a safe environment for our friends and families. An environment where they feel listened to, accepted and supported. Small changes can lead to big differences.



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

## LESSER WOMAN?

*by Divya Nambiar*  
(Azim Premji Foundation)

The sunrise was pretty much similar in this corner of the world too. The only difference was that she could not feel the rays of the sun warming her up. The dilapidated house with its dingy, unmade interiors clouded her vision further. The chirping of the birds was never heard in this corner of the world for this lane belonged to the koyals who had lost their voices to the cacophony of the unwavering carnal obliquity of their customers. They were none other than the ones who came day after day, sometimes leaving behind waiting wives and so-called true lovers back in a world considered higher placed than this hole of an existence.

A sparrow fell on earth. Its wings covered its face. The heat was unbearable. No one to quench its thirst or feed it food, it fell down without much noise. A truck crushed its mortal remains, sending them in different directions. The winds resumed after a pause that evening and took with them the vestiges of a life known by a very few.

I sat and wondered how similar its story was to the many tales of women (or 'lesser' women?) whose bangles clunk just a lane away from my house. There they were, around twenty of them, on both sides of a lane that would never be chosen by women usually, at least at this hour of the night. But here they were, with flowers adorning their hair, shiny bindis, bloody lips, and clothes that always tried hard to accentuate their worn-out bodies and souls. They smile, pass comments, make merry at the cost of their own now-irrelevant dignity.

The men came. They devoured them with their eyes first and then took the worn-out road. They trampled those wilted buds, ripped apart the tattered, sewn remains of a life that bore a huge brunt even without them actually realising it.

And that's where I met Malini. That it was another name for Goddess Durga was a sheer coincidence or not-I do not know. Barely 20 years of age, she was sitting there, watching her 3-year-old daughter being ogled at by the usual visitors of the approaching dark. I was observing her for the last three months. Her tummy seemed to have bulged out a bit more than when I saw her last. Last trimester- she told me.

I was the only woman who did not belong there and yet had looked into her eyes, she had said, and that my eyes held a genuineness that gave her the confidence to look back into them. That was enough for two women to share a bond that would surely remain special. She looked up to our interactions as much as I did.

She didn't know who the father of her daughter was. Sadly she would not know this time either. There would just be one difference.

Her second daughter would neither know her father nor her mother. Maybe she will only know the four walls of the brothel she would be brought up in, only to be fed to entertain the fantasies of men in whom she would always search for her father.

Unfortunately, it was like what Late

Malini had once told me, "For us, men are neither fathers nor brothers. We know them only as those shadowed figures that come to us seeking our bodies in return for notes that let us survive another day and to meet yet another man to repeat the cycle."

Malini's memories remain to remind me of Robert Frost's lines:

*And further still at an unearthly height,  
A luminary clock against the sky  
Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor  
right.  
I have been one acquainted with the night.*



## VIGNETTE

*by Diya Seby (UG 2022)*

A fan droned noisily overhead.

The girl stared out blankly at the tiny crack of light that slid through the heavy curtains.

The blanket felt warm. Her skin was chilled over from its uncomfortable heat and the gusts from the fan.

"Ari!"

She winced and buried her head in the blankets to drown out the loud call. Eventually, she slid out of the heated cocoon and slowly made her way to the door. Ari caught her reflection on the mirror propped up nearby.

It was a pretty face. Silky, golden skin and dark, liquid eyes. An expressionless face. Sharp cheekbones rose elegantly, the skin over it stretched thin. Ari noticed. She saw the dark purple shadows that dusted the skin around her eyes.

The woman looked up from her papers when Ari quietly walked up to her.

"Mamma". Her shoulders relaxed and her lips curved gently. She sat down and curled up next to the woman.

"Ari, go water the plants before it's late. I need to finish these papers soon."

The girl stirred. She glanced at her mother.

"Mamma"

The woman looked up. Ari stared at her quietly.

"Mamma?"

Her features squirmed in discomfort and she pressed her lips tightly. The evening rays of the sun glid on the wall, a cloying lemon shade.

"Mamma"

"..is something wrong?"

"I...I don't feel so good."

The woman frowned. "Are you sick, kanna?"

"No..I don't feel good here", the girl clumsily waved at her head.

Her mother looked lost for a second. Her composure quickly returned and her jaw tightened as she spoke again.

"See, this is what happens when you live 24/7 in that little cave. Only popping out when your belly demands for food or I scream myself hoarse. You start getting weird thoughts, left alone like that."

For a moment, a crushed, hopeless light flitted across the girl's face. It was gone in the next second. Her mother wondered whether she had imagined it.

"Forget it," she grunted.

Her mother looked like she had more to say, but shook her head and turned back to her papers in dismissal.

Ari lay there for minutes that felt like hours. The sickly light crept across her face tauntingly, before it was swallowed by the evening shadows.

Her mother looked up from her work to see her still lying next to her.

"What are you still doing here? It's already dark. Go water the plants, already."

"Mom". The voice was almost a whisper, pleading. Ari's eyes shone strangely. "Can I please see someone? Your friend talked about a therapist once, remember? Can you ask her if I can meet her?"

The woman looked visibly shaken.

"A therapist? Like a psychologist? What are you talking about? Tell me properly."

"Yes, someone like that."

"Tell me what is wrong." Her eyes flitted about the girl's face.

Ari flinched. "I don't want to. I really don't."

Her mother pressed her lips in frustration. "I can't help you if you don't tell me what is wrong and just mope about."

The girl recoiled from the gaze leveled at her. It was a frantic, critical gaze. Her head spun. She looked at her mother's strong, loving face that was now contorted in confusion.

*Maybe...*

She sighed loudly. "I'm just kidding, I'll get to those plants now."

She got up.

"Ari"

"I'm fine, Mamma." She walked to the door and smiled at her before leaving. "Just a bad day."

As her mother's gaze burned into her retreating back, Ari wondered if her smile had been as worn as it felt.

*"Kanna"*

Ari looked up at her mother who sat across her as they ate dinner.



“Yeah?”

Her mother picked at the food for a while.

“You remember what you asked about that day?”

Ari kept eating quietly.

“I don’t” , she said at an interval.

“You said you wanted to talk to someone or something like that, right?”

“Oh. That. Yeah, I remember.” Ari scowled. “Why are you bringing it up now? I’m fine.”

Her mother stared at her unsure, before going back to the food and they finished the dinner talking about other matters.

Later that night, Ari walked out of the kitchen drying her hands. She slipped into her room quietly and closed the door.

The unmade bed was littered with papers, clothes and a random charger. A silver laptop was balanced haphazardly on the pillows. Ari climbed into the bed and curled up inside the thick blankets.

*What am I doing?*

The dark laptop screen reflected her face. The planes of her face still looked smooth and beautiful.

Ari looked into her eyes.

*Such deep, lifeless pools.*

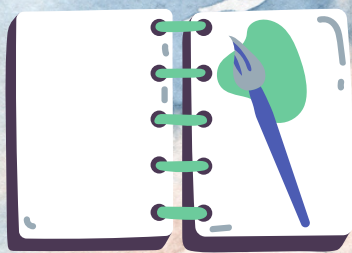
The familiar darkness intruded around the edges of her vision.

She closed her eyes and waited restlessly for sleep to take her.



Mental  
health  
matters





# 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 WRITING!

## A SKETCHNOTE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF CARE FOR THERAPISTS' MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

It would be an incomplete dialogue on mental health and wellbeing for all without talking about the wellbeing of mental health professionals themselves.

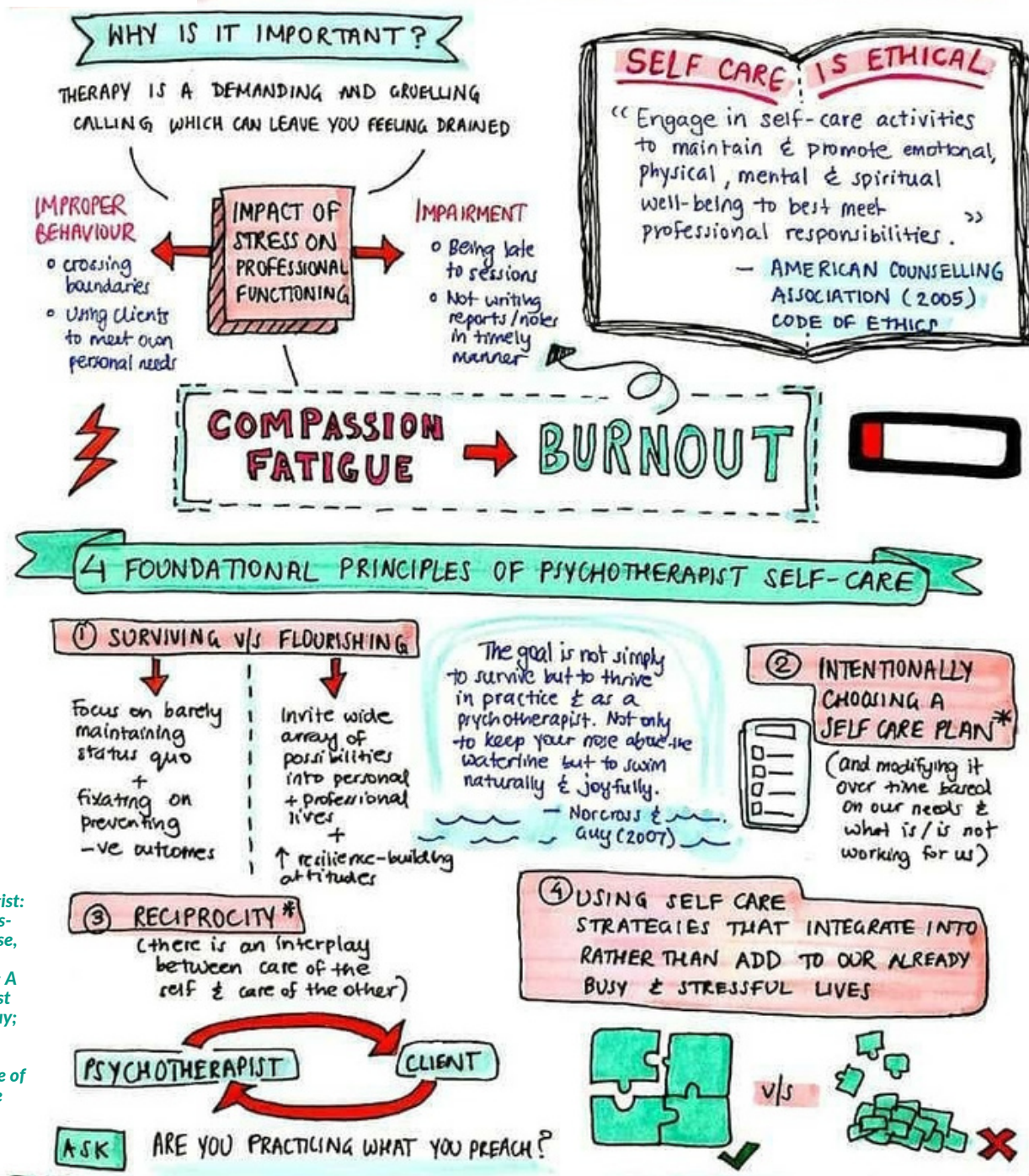
### PRINCIPLE OF RESPONSIBLE CARING

The MHP is "powerful but vulnerable tool in the caring process" that requires attention and care to prevent therapist ill-health and also negative consequences for the clients they work with.

#### Sources:

- Ethics, self care and wellbeing for psychologist: Reenvisioning the stress-distress continuum (Wise, Hersh & Gibson; 2012)
- Leaving it at the Office: A guide to psychotherapist self care (Norcross & Guy; 2007)
- Dear Mental Health Practitioners, Take Care of Yourself: a Literature Review on Self-Care (Posluns & Gall; 2019)

# SELF CARE FOR PSYCHOTHERAPISTS





# SWATI'S STORYBOARD

COLLATING VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

The community was invited to share responses, experiences and stories about recognising small and big acts towards mental health that we see around us, that may not use the language of "mental health and wellbeing" and how to take it forward.

Feel free to be influenced from these ways, and keep adding to your list! 😊

Some everyday things we hear people speak about/see people do, even without using the term "mental health", that tell us that mental health and wellbeing is important to them?

I think people asking 'How are you?' also matters a lot. It is not out of courtesy, but concern. I believe, we are in a space where many of us are aware of the power of listening. Even, sitting beside your friend or anyone patiently who wants to rant or share something, is I feel is a genuine deed. The load of academic pressure is shared by everyone here in this space, and that commonality aids in building the understanding of 'mental health' without mentioning it explicitly.

Detaching oneself from situations as they heat up, especially if one doesn't have the bandwidth to deal with it in the moment

I believe everyone has their own of expressing themselves.

1)Gossips: I have come across women who vent their problems to each other and feel relaxed about it which clearly shows that they do it for their mental peace.

2) Exercise: is another way where people engage themselves in well-being.

Taking conscientious time out for themselves.

### **Ways in which we hear about other people talking about their mental health being affected**

The high level of dissatisfaction in work space, attitude of senior colleagues or teacher or immediate boss, deprivation by others.

- not able to complete readings, assignments in time,
- not able to understand things going on in surrounding, peer group's usage of terminologies which a person is listening first time
- confessions going on social media where people are expressing their love, admire about someone, but this creating peer pressure to be in relationship, seems problematic as my fellow friends started feeling ashamed of not being in relationship and leading to tension, not able to focus in study, smoking, etc.



**What are some ways in which you have witnessed people being supportive of others'/your mental health?**

Conversation in a secure or fearless environment and friendly behaviour.

- Checking if I ate one healthy meal a day:)
- Being there to listen to you

- Just listening not advising: I found this process to be very supportive, sometimes people dealing with some mental stress don't seek solutions they just want to have listened.
- Accept crying: It's ok to cry. Cry doesn't come out as an action as being weak. Sometimes accepting crying can also be in some way supportive.

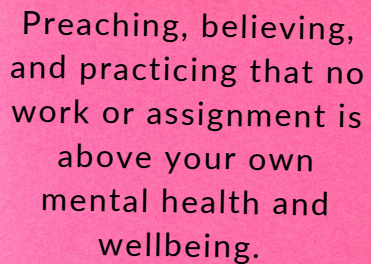
Encouraging people to talk about things that affect them (whether for better or worse) helps them experience emotions better, and also bond with others. This vulnerability creates a safe space for continued meaningful conversations that make folks feel more comfortable with themselves, their thoughts and emotions.

Giving space, understanding and respecting my boundaries. I think I have a set of people around me who understands the meaning and importance of 'boundaries.' Also, I make sure to communicate if I am not being well, they respect that space. As a part of PST, we were trained to communicate about thoughts revolving around 'suicide.' I think because of that I was able to converse about this with a friend of mine who had similar thoughts in their head. Rather than shooing these thoughts away, getting comfortable in talking this out is us in process of creating a safe space.

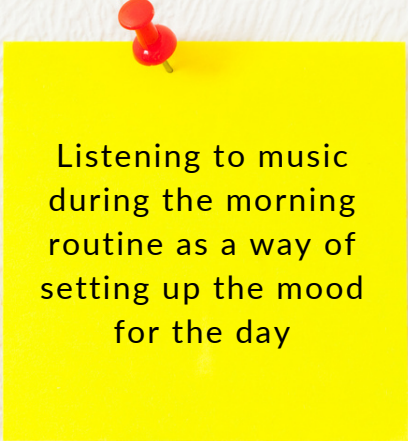
Talking to myself, basically to be with me. In this busy routine, one forgets to reflect on and analyze their health, the same is with me.

I keep on trying to make time for myself and in that time I could choose to do anything that I like, maybe write not with the pressure of any deadline, but for me or maybe exercise, relaxing my mind and body.

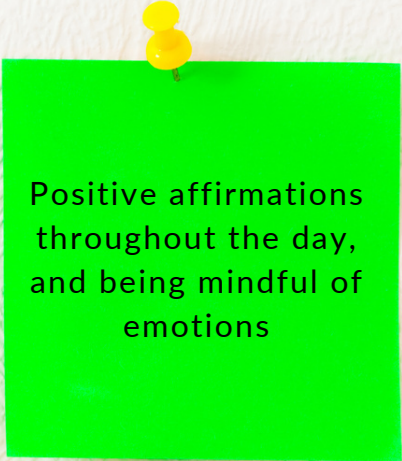
**One thing that you could add to your routine/day, as a way of making mental health a priority**



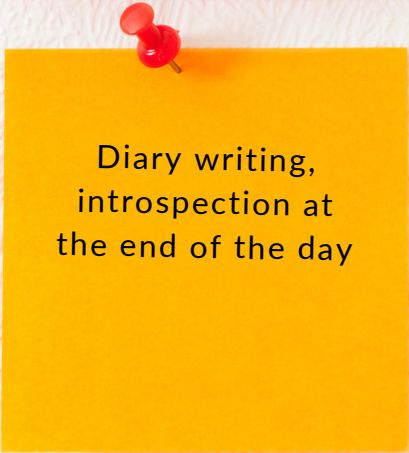
Preaching, believing,  
and practicing that no  
work or assignment is  
above your own  
mental health and  
wellbeing.




Listening to music  
during the morning  
routine as a way of  
setting up the mood  
for the day



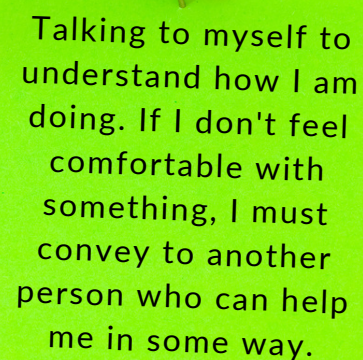
Positive affirmations  
throughout the day,  
and being mindful of  
emotions



Diary writing,  
introspection at  
the end of the day



Waking up 10  
minutes earlier to  
simply sit and enjoy  
the sunlight



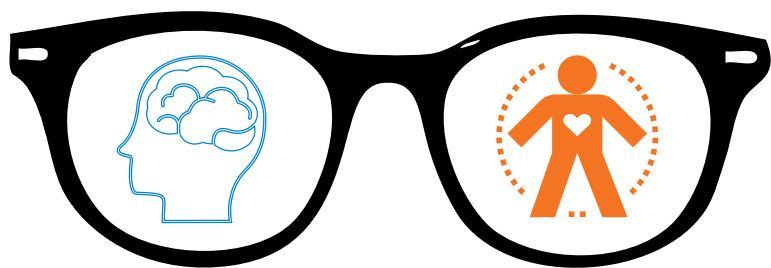
Talking to myself to  
understand how I am  
doing. If I don't feel  
comfortable with  
something, I must  
convey to another  
person who can help  
me in some way.

THANK  
YOU

to all of you who  
contributed!



# LAKSHMI'S LENS



## MENTAL HEALTH BEYOND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY



Mental wellness is not just about the absence of mental health disorders, but also about our ability to function well on a day-to-day basis. It includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being and affects how we think, feel, and act. It determines how we handle stress, how we relate to others, and make choices.

As a society we tend to assume that mental health is somehow equated to individual responsibility, but, in reality, mental health is a collective responsibility and we need systemic support to promote mental well-being, prevent mental disorders and support the treatment, and rehabilitation of people affected by mental disorders. Even though the COVID



**How systemic factors affect an individual's ability to maintain mental wellness**

pandemic resulted in growing awareness about the importance of mental health and wellbeing across the country and the world, the stigma and discrimination around it remain to date.

When we experience mental health problems, our thinking, mood, and behaviour are affected. And while physical health affects our mental health, and our mental health also affects our physical health. The World Health Organization (WHO) 1954, declared, "without mental health, there can be no true physical health". Several factors may contribute to mental health problems, including:

- Biological factors - Physical health, nutrition, metabolic health, comorbid conditions, genetic vulnerability, stress.

- Psychological factors - Self-esteem, social skills, limiting beliefs of self, others, and environment, perception, abuse, coping skills
- Social/ Environmental factors - socioeconomic status, structural inequalities, discriminations, systemic oppression, peer pressures, environmental dynamics, culture/ societal norms.
- Life experiences such as violence, trauma, and abuse.
- Pandemic-related factors - Grief, fear, uncertainty, social isolation, increased screen time, domestic violence, anxiety, and the negative impact of parental fatigue on the mental health of children.
- Events in people's lives, interpersonal connections, chronic illness, and disturbances in physical health.

The mainstream discussions on mental health have been mostly as an individual issue and therefore, the solutions have also been around destigmatizing, seeking help and therapies. These discussions have rarely focused on the larger structures—the societal norms, values, and institutions that contribute significantly to inducing and exacerbating mental health problems, like maladjustment, malnourishment, poverty, marginalization, chronic stress, and anxiety.

There is growing recognition of the importance of mental health in India. But the mental health sector remains severely under-resourced. According to the World Economic Forum, the ratio of people needing mental health support to the availability of professional help is 1,00,000 to 0.075. WHO predicts mental health conditions will cause approximately \$1.03 trillion in economic losses between 2012-

2030 globally. Every intervention, therefore, is a priority; each action can feel a little too late.

In India, lifestyle changes, combined with social and economic inequalities have resulted in an increase in individual and societal stress making us more vulnerable to mental health concerns. The World Disability Report 2010, and several other reports have mentioned the bi-directional relationship between mental health and poverty.

Basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter are not met for most people. They are also the victims of discrimination, abuse, and marginalization.

The three social determinants of mental health are:

- Freedom from discrimination and violence
- Social Inclusion
- Access to economic resources

While it is important for us to take individual responsibility for our physical and mental health, these discussions need to go beyond personal change to set up systems and policies in place to enable and support individuals to take personal responsibility. Access to resources to promote mental health and well-being needs to emerge as a social movement. And, like any social movement, we need to identify and address the broader structural factors that have been perpetuating this health epidemic.





## ADHD IN EVERYTHING, EVERYWHERE, ALL AT ONCE



Where do I begin.

Apart from the narratives on intergenerational trauma, complicated mother-daughter relationships, passive suicidality, the South East Asian immigrant experience, and the purpose of life, this film is also an absolute visual treat.

But I'm not here to talk about any of that. I'm here to talk about the protagonist's undiagnosed ADHD! In *Everything, Everywhere, All at Once*, the protagonist's superpower seems to be her ADHD. As someone with ADHD, it feels good to

be represented that's not stigmatising and for a change, it is her strength. She is a powerful verse-switcher because of her restlessness and hyperactivity Evelyn is a very quirky person. She has various interests and starts hobbies only to abandon them later. It's a very ADHD-esque thing to do. As an immigrant mother, she also frantically plans and takes care of the house. The way that ADHD presents in people who are socialised as women show up so differently than they do in people socialised as men. While Evelyn shows restlessness, it seems that she has learnt to

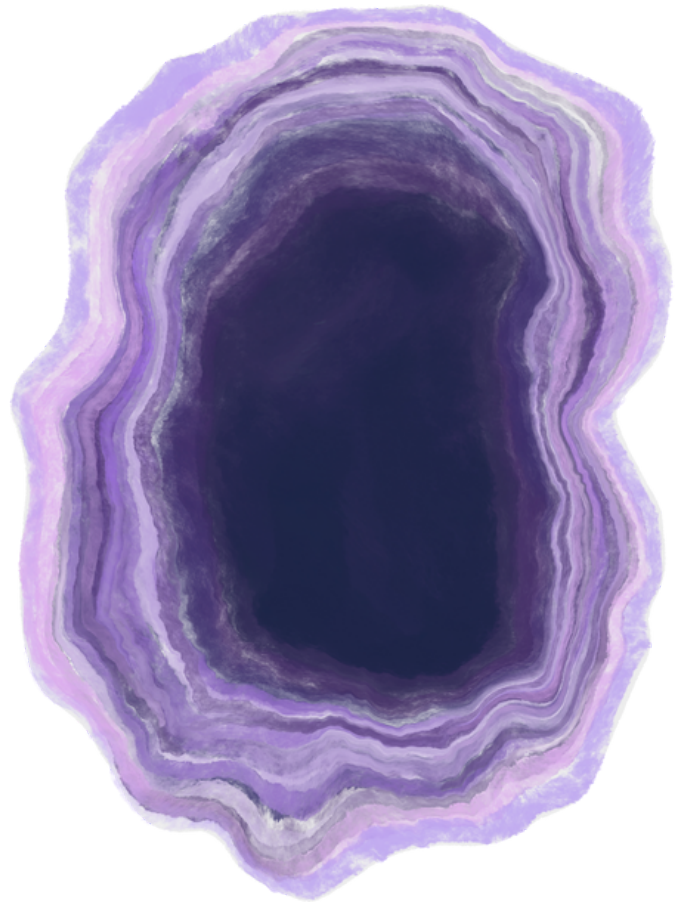


adapt because of the responsibilities that weigh on her. She is not your typical restless ADHDer. She has masked so much of her ADHD to survive in a world that does not accommodate her. I think the movie is a visual representation of what it's like to have ADHD brain. And it makes me so happy to be represented without judgment.

Daniel Kwan, one of the directors of the film, researched ADHD to write and direct Evelyn as accurately as possible and while he was doing so, he realized that he might have ADHD too. It's heartwarming to see people with similar journeys with ADHD. I know that my journey with my diagnosis of ADHD was definitely accelerated by being on ADHD tiktok.

Not to romanticise or invalidate the difficulties of his disability, but I think that it's one of the reasons the movie is as wonderful as it is. The concept is, for lack of a better word, whack. Every universe is unique and absurd and I can't imagine someone without ADHD coming up with such ideas. :P

ADHD can be a debilitating neurodevelopmental disorder, especially because the world expects something so different from what we can offer (thanks, capitalism). While I find it really hard to navigate life in general because of my neurodivergence, I'm also on a journey of trying to see the strengths that come from my neurodivergence. I am quirky, funny, creative, empathetic, and I feel a lot. And so much of it can be attributed to my ADHD. How Evelyn's ADHD is portrayed is what makes her the brilliant character she is and is empowering to so many people like me.







## PRATIK'S PINBOARD

A COLLECTION OF AESTHETIC MOMENTS  
THAT I SEE IN MY DAY TO DAY LIFE

Watching sunsets is always a good idea



Hope is always around the corner

Be wild and free in your own beautiful way



Feel pretty from within





## BIMARISTAN

Sometime this year, I came across two online posts which made me rethink my entire perspective on mental health and well-being. The first one was on Reddit, where a page sharing did-you-know facts posted how Pablo Escobar's drug empire in Colombia would routinely lose close to two billion dollars every year to either rats, decay, or theft, but it didn't really matter, because it was an insignificant portion of what they actually made. A commenter said - 'A miniscule percent of this would solve my life problems, all of them.' The second post was a series of tweets by mental health practitioners, saying that more than therapy and medicine, what people need for their well-being is money; plain and simple.

Being a practitioner myself, I was uncomfortable and skeptical about these claims, but deep down I knew there was truth in this. The system

The system is designed to drain out a human being, physically and mentally. We cannot sit and pretend that real life is all roses and cherries and ice-cold glasses of sugarcane juice on a hot Bhopal afternoon (it's better than water, fight me).

We like talking about statistics on mental health, like how x percent of the world suffers from depression and how it will take over heart issues as the number one killer of human beings. However, we rarely take socio-economic factors into account. Doing a job that you don't like, for wages that are less than what you deserve, to lead a lifestyle that you don't really need would definitely affect your mental health. That's what money does, I guess. It solves problems that we are trying too hard to alleviate. By-product of capitalism. I personally don't think money solves all the problems of a person; you still need to have meaningful relationships, a sense of belongingness, safety, and security, and doing what you like. On the other hand, if you look at correlations between substance abuse, criminal injustices, broken families, and suicide rates with the demographics that they are usually associated with, it's hard to discard that the foundational design of our system is deeply flawed.

Money is not all important here, and I am not here to talk about it. Money, of course, cannot account for biology of a person. If something has biological roots, it needs to be treated internally. However, the bigger concern here is that in today's time, there is almost TOO much stress on biology, and too little on other factors. In reality, the



‘neuroscience’ of it all is symptomatic of larger issues that we face collectively, and not the cause itself. We treat it like it’s the cause, though. I understand and appreciate the strides that medical science has achieved, but something about falling sick due to capitalism, where the cure is taking pills and treatments which in turn contribute to the aforementioned capitalist system doesn’t sit well with me. That, in words of the great Donald Trump, is ‘the worst trade deals in the history of trade deals.’ On top of that, taking a strictly biodeterministic position for mental health would isolate the individual from the society, which, ironically, would perpetuate biological degradation of their bodies, the mind being a part. The treatment is only palliative in nature, and almost never addresses the root.



Before there was an argument for the right approach, there were societies which figured a way out pretty early on. I’m talking about Bimaristans, the first hospital prototypes, who functioned at their peak between 9th to 14th century AD in the Middle East. The term itself is self-explanatory, it literally means ‘house of the sick’. This was the Golden

Age of Islam, and this was consistent with the hundreds of scientific and medical discoveries that were made in that era, a lot of which included surgery, administration, oral medication etc. They were the first hospitals in recorded history with wings for specialized care, with staff and doctors. More impressively, they also had wings for people having mental illnesses.



The Bimaristan approach to treat mental illness was one with benevolence. The general approach to mental health and psychology was one which was borrowed from the Greeks – the ‘Humor’ theory, something that I have talked about in earlier articles. It was pseudoscientific, sure, and it included practices like bloodletting, but it was a refreshing departure from the earlier general understanding, which was that mental health was caused by evil spirits or religious/supernatural reasons. We cannot judge history with the information we have now. They included other stuff, like music therapy, where musicians were routinely called to play for the patients, and aromatherapy. Diet was well taken care of, and rest was emphasized on. The staff was well equipped and available. The design of the Bimaristan itself was conducive to well-being; well ventilated

and lit, with plenty of open spaces and greenery. The biggest win, however, was the fact that there was a community approach to mental health. People were treated irrespective of their religion, colour, or caste, and interacting with other people was not only allowed, but encouraged. The result of this treatment approach is not well documented, but seeing how Bimaristans were crucial for development of medical science and hospital models, it is not hard to imagine that it was also beneficial for the mental health of their patients. To help build an environment where the individual feels accepted is the key, always.

Unfortunately, a lot of Bimaristans were razed by the series of Mongol invasions led by tyrant and everyone's probable ancestor, Genghis Khan. They still continued to function after that, but as a shadow of their past selves. Later colonization made things worse, as the European model of treatment included asylums and lacked mental hygiene. It took us more than 600 years to rethink mental health systems that the Bimaristan model propagated back then, and it is where we are at now; a mix of medical science and supportive environments. No man is an island



## 5 MENTAL STRENGTHS FOR SELF CARE

1. **ACCOUNTABILITY:** Owning your part in results and recognizing other potential contributors.
2. **HELPFUL BELIEFS:** Probing challenging and experimenting with your beliefs.
3. **SELF REFLECTION:** Accurately identifying your internal stage-managing your emotions.
4. **HAVING MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES:**
5. Appreciating and allowing for differences in opinions.
6. **CALMING YOUR SELF:** Quickly changing your physical and mental state when feeling triggered.



## ACCOUNTABILITY

Personal accountability doesn't have to do with everyday actions like showing up at all the time for get-togethers or taking your kids to swimming classes on time.

It functions on a much more radical level.

You stop blaming other people and circumstances for how you feel or what has happened.

You fully own your part in your results even while recognizing other potential contributors to what has unfolded.

\*You own exactly what's yours and you hold others to owning what's theirs."

## HELPFUL BELIEFS

Most of us think that our beliefs are truths. But they are actually a set of assumptions, which means that we can experiment with them. WE can probe them, challenge them, and try to think of new ones.

- **COLLABORATIVE LENS:** THIS is the I win when you win approach. Maybe everyone doesn't get everything they want, but they all walk away feeling heard and included.
- **POSSIBILITY LENS:** This lens allows you take a step back and temporarily set aside all perceived obstacles, challenges, or doubts to give yourself the freedom to imagine on ideal outcome.

- **OPPORTUNITY LENS:** Even in times of conflict, you can ask yourself, how can I find an opportunity in whatever situation I face?

## SELF REFLECTION

Can you accurately self-assess your internal state? The constant thoughts running in your head, the moods, and emotions you feel, and the physical sensations you have, like knot in your stomach.

Let's say you're in a bad mood. That's vague. But if you have strong self-assessment muscles, you can say that you're experiencing a combination of disappointment, anger and anxiety and a pounding headache.

The goal is to get better at managing and regulating your emotions and responses to triggers.

## HAVING MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

If you're like the most people, you're focused on proving that your position is the right one. But when you're able to see many disparate viewpoints, you have the ability to understand and consider perspectives that aren't aligned with yours.

When you appreciate and allow for differences in opinions, you can leave a conversation without needing to establish who is right or wrong.

Move beyond the simplicity of black/white, Right/Wrong, and Either/Or.

Practice suspending judgement and embrace the complexity of gray, as well as the potential of the YET TO BE KNOWN.

## CALMING YOURSELF

We underestimate the immense power that we have over our physical state when we are distressed or upset in some way, and how to alter it in general. On the one hand, unhelpfully,

we can easily intensify a catabolic state, such as getting wound up over something. But hopefully, we can also calm ourselves.

There are effective techniques, such as breathing exercises relaxation techniques, that you can use when felt triggered or threatened.



## QUARTERLY MENTAL HEALTH CALENDAR

### OCTOBER

- ADHD AWARENESS MONTH
- WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY (OCT 10)
- WORLD COMING OUT DAY (OCT 11)

### NOVEMBER

- INTERNATIONAL STRESS AWARENESS WEEK (NOV 2-5)
- WORLD KINDNESS DAY (NOV 13)

### DECEMBER

- WORLD AIDS DAY (DEC 1)
- INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (DEC 3)

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



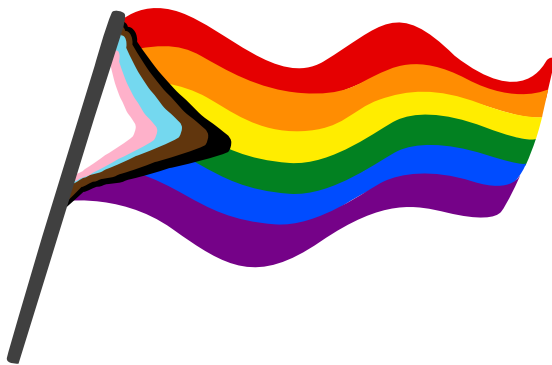
# SUPPORT GROUPS ON CAMPUS

To foster a sense of collective care on campus, we are happy to announce that our team will be conducting support groups for students in the next semester.

In a support group, members provide each other with different kinds of help for a specific characteristic or concern they all have in common. Members with the same issues can come together for sharing coping strategies, to feel more empowered and for a sense of community.

Each support group will be facilitated by different counsellors in the Conversations team.

We will send out registration emails with more details, so if you are interested in joining any of these groups please sign up!



## LGBTQIA+ SUPPORT GROUP

**Facilitators:** Veda Dandamudi and Anjana Moraes (Trained Queer Affirmative Therapists)



## MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT GROUP

**Facilitators:** Soumitra Saxena and Pratik Motikar