DIALOGUES

Azim Premji University

WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Women's mental health is a crucial aspect of overall health and well-being. In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the unique challenges that women face when it comes to mental health. These challenges can be related to hormonal changes, societal expectations, gender-based violence, and other factors.

Despite the progress made in reducing the stigma surrounding mental health, women still face barriers to accessing appropriate care and treatment. This is particularly true for women from marginalized communities, such as those who are from a lower socioeconomic status, living with a disability etc.

In this context, it is essential to prioritize women's mental health and to work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable mental healthcare system that meets the diverse needs of all women. So, in this issue, we explored the question of "What affects women's mental health and how can we support women's well-being?

Members of our community, including students, alumni and the members of the counselling team, have shared their perspectives and thoughts in the form of articles, artwork and poetry. Happy reading!

WHAT'S INSIDE

Contributions by Students and Members of Azim Premji Foundation

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM STUDENTS & MEMBERS OF AZIM PREMJI FOUNDATION

HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH IT?

by Devanjali Banerjee

How do you deal with it: As women burdened with heavy minds in a society that expects us to be perfect all the time?

The feeling of tapping the reset to factory settings in life, to escape and start over because your mental health messed up your prospects in life -is strong and real. But here's the thing, if you escape- you don't know where you came from and your mental map will have blanks and life will be an exercise of repression and tip-toeing over mental landmines, like playing minesweeper without understanding the rules.

But why shouldn't we run? Suffering hurts. The world is cruel. China has a dog eating festival. But suffering is important. It is not to be romanticised, though, and it is certainly not a tool for creativity or fuel for productivity, although that is the role that we have relegated our trauma and suffering to. We see suffering as simply serving the function of a tragedy in the origin story of a superhero- it's merely a plot device and the sacrifice or suffering of those

moments are rarely revisited, or even dealt with. The pursuit of happiness will outweigh the suffering, right? The fact that we even ask this question says a lot about the unspoken answer we never admit to being aware of.

What I have learned about life with mental illness is that hindsight is much clearer than foresight and the mistakes of the past embody the wisdom of the now. So, in that sense, suffering is wisdom. It isn't truly learning by doing but learning by suffering.

Rumi has a story about suffering. A man called Mohammad was resting under a tree when he was rudely awakened by a tall stranger beating him. He was shocked, frustrated and confused for he could not make him stop. The stranger chased Mohammad, flogged him with his whip to keep him running for many miles, until they came upon an apple tree. The stranger forced him to eat the rotten apples lying on the ground. Mohammad tried to reason, argue and threaten but nothing worked, because his mouth was filled with rotten apples. Then, the stranger beat him some more and ran him around till the sun went down. Hours later, they found a stream and the stranger pushed Mohammad's head into the water and made him drink and drown simultaneously.

Tired, broken, numb and confused, Mohammad felt a wave of nausea and vomited violently all over the grass, bits of rotten apple flying. Gasping and stung by the acid, Mohammad felt close to death so he asks the stranger, I would die in peace if you just told me why you beat me. The stranger pointed soundlessly at his vomit. A long, black snake slithered and uncurled itself within the bile covered rotten apples. The stranger spoke for the first time and explained that he had been passing by when he noticed a long black snake slither into his mouth while Mohammad was asleep. So, I decided to help, he said. Mohammad fell to his knees and thanked the stranger but asked him, why didn't you just tell me about the snake, then I would have withstood the pain better! The stranger gathered the whip and walked away, and said that if I had told you, you would have died of fright to know that a poisonous snake was inside you. That beating was the lesser suffering.

A more contemporary example now. If you've watched the anime, Bleach, there comes a point when the hero, Ichigo has to battle the embodiment of his sword, Zangestu in his inner world. Despite intense fighting, he is unable to defeat his opponent and finally, surrenders and allows himself to be run through his chest by Zangetsu. And Zangetsu tells him that this was the only way to obtain the knowledge he sought, and that it would flow into him through the blade that was inside him. This is how suffering teaches us. If it came down to it, and you desired higher knowledge of self, you would need to fall on your sword of suffering to understand what you stand for, what you protect and well, yourself.

Our struggles with our mind, our suffering is what helps us to understand life better and see it's not the linear, rosy, conditional bargain that we see it for. As women, we could do everything right by society's eyes and yet fall short because validation is a slot-machine that is rigged against us. We are much too much led by others. The arbitrary labels and fixed attitudes are laughable when you see the fluidity of life. In one lifetime, we will play many parts- we get to be a child, an adult and an older person. We get to see change in action and that has always been the way of nature. But we ignore that, and focus on the trivial to distract and escape our feelings and so, we alienate many, many essential parts of ourselves and our experiences. Even if those parts cause us pain.
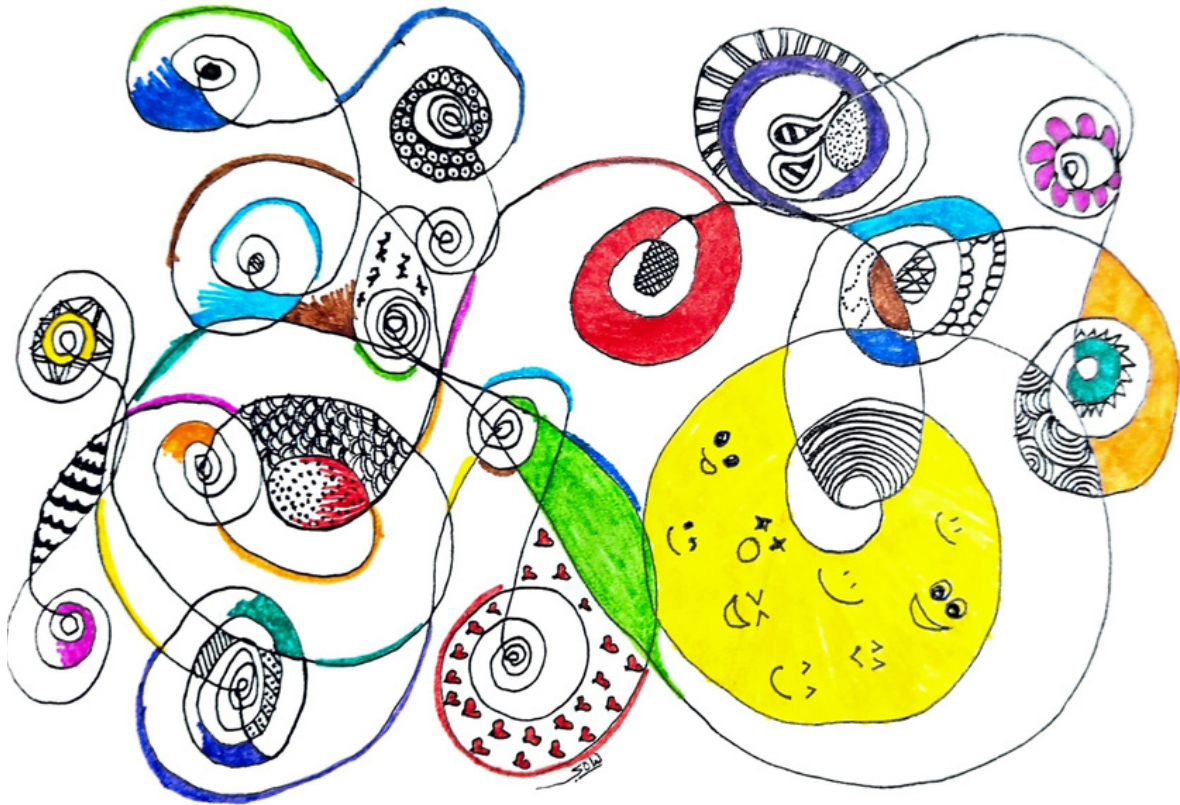
We have to be willing, to stumble and trip into an uncertain future, armed with only compassion, curiosity and humour.

And that is how you deal with it.

OUR ENTWINED LIVES

by Sowbhagya Varma

Lost in the activities of our daily life, we rarely make opportunities for ourselves to simply sit down for a moment and think of nothing. We are revolving around it like it is the only thing we know to do.

Often not realising that there are threads that entwine us. A little pull there and here is a huge push; a little smile here and a whole day of happiness, elsewhere. You may think there is nothing that affects you. You may feel that the earth is rotating on your shoulders alone, but pause right there, and take a breath. All that you thought was mundane black and white may not be so, there is always someone or something who can help colour it with you. All that colour is not chaos either, they are little moments brimming with emotions that need to be let out. There is consistency in the chaos. There are patterns and routines too.

It's all a balance. Even if you lose it, it's about how you bring it back; your will, to bring it back.

INFINITE SHE...

by Raghvendra Vanjari

In the depths of her mind,
neural health entwined,
With the struggles of her past,
And the hopes for a future that will last.

She carries the burdon of the world,
yet, her inner demons are unfurled,
Anxiety, depression, and stress,
Are her constant companions in distress.

She smiles through the pain,
tries to make herself sane,
sometimes the darkness takes over,
And she struggles to find her composure.

She battles the stigma and shame,
That society has assigned her name,
But her strength and resilience shine through,
As she fights to see her dreams come true.

She reaches out for help,
finds comfort in the words they spell,
she knows that she's not alone,
And her struggles are not hers to own.

She is precious,
deserves to feel joyous,
being a woman, strong and brave,
Who will rise above the challenges she'll face.

DON'T CRY LIKE A GIRL
by Rakhi Rathod

Saw her weeping?
Don't bother to stop and ask why?
Oh! You think it's normal for a girl to shed tears usually
But why did she cry in front of so many people?
Aren't you eager to know? Well! I can give you a sneak of her life,

She was solely tired and exhausted,
Of the checklist this society created
She was done trying to be perfect and flawless.
You want her to be tall, fair, thin, and alluring?
You are unbound to roam and enjoy but she can't even choose to live?

You care about her physical health and not mental health?
She should be able to take care of you and your family,
But not more self-reliant than you?
Forget women rights she doesn't have human rights

Blame is not just the society but the family too
Who taught her to care about others and not her own self
They made her believe that she is a property for someone else
All she wanted is a little compassion and care

Yes, she is fragile, frail, and feeble
But she is more sensitive, subtle, and savvy.
And to all those who understood her tears
You are the reason she's still hustling
She is a warrior and will come back stronger

SAGA OF HER GLOOM TO BLOOM LIFE

by Rakhi Rathod

Dear life,
I know for a motive,
For an aim, you are scuffling me
I know you are getting miserable
Day by day

I know you are ripping me apart
By being so brutal and merciless,
That there is never coming back

You are full of bugs
And bitter like a green tea,
But you are a saviour…
You revive and heal me every day

You are bringing the best out of me,
By boosting me to stay fierce
And to combat with the world in solitude

Dear life,
Thanks to stick around in my crunch
And to make me apt to,
Bloom from gloom

A WOMAN AT THE WORKPLACE

by Rima Kaur

When Purnima opened the email, her gaze skipped all the numbers and went straight to 'Location'. She knew she would have to move, and its confirmation washed her with relief. The decision to move across the country was not difficult to make. At home, Purnima had strictly one shelf to herself. Most of her books were stashed under the bed. She wanted a room of her own, and not just to store stuff. A lightness swept over her. She clutched onto her chair; it felt solid and real. Good, because she felt like she was floating away. Her torrid relationship with space had finally come to an end.

The first year was a rebirth. Purnima rose early, reached work on time, and was the last to leave. Her coworkers found her mild-mannered. A search party helped her find a small flat for rent, and a remarkable colleague paraded up and down the market to help her buy everything from a spoon to a mattress. Purnima wasn't a great cook, though her rotis did get softer (not

rounder) with each passing month. Her contemporaries inspired her, yes, even the ones who generally inspired a lot of wrath and thought of her as an apple polisher. It was the more experienced coworkers who troubled her. They sounded so jaded and disappointed! We'll never turn into them, the youngsters promised one another.

But Purnima felt quite alone at times. A few years had passed, and she didn't let people walk over her quite as easily now. But she had had one of those heated arguments at work. A meltdown, some called it. It all began to feel a little constricted. Purnima tried to piece together her downwards spiral. Her pay hadn't increased by much, though she told herself that it did not matter. Maybe it was because she was doing the same thing day in and day out. Or maybe she was actually missing her parents, as impossible as that seemed. Was it the POSH case which gave her no closure? Maybe all of this was just a quarter life crisis.

Purnima was between a rock and a hard place. She couldn't go back, so her only escape was to rise above the ranks. But like someone trapped in an avalanche, she could no longer tell apart up from down. A close confidant took maternity leave and never joined back. Contemporaries moved away – mostly for better career prospects. But for the life of her, Purnima could not decipher how to make things better. She had made a place for herself here. Even so, in her fifth year with the organization, a senior manager asked her how it felt to finally be able to implement projects independently. Purnima couldn't help but balk. She had been doing so just a few

months after joining! It was but one of many instances where she felt small and undervalued.

Some more time went by. In a meeting at the head office, Purnima counted only two women among a roomful of men. One of the two women questioned the very air that Purnima breathed. Purnima was aware that there was a lot more for her to learn, but she was fiercely proud of what she knew and had to offer. She did not appreciate being patronized. But the other woman, oh, she was something else. From her, Purnima learnt how she could be both fierce and nurturing. She learnt that she was not small, and that she had value. She learnt to lift herself without putting others down, and she wished that others could learn that too.

And then she left, to join another workplace.

DID YOU KNOW?
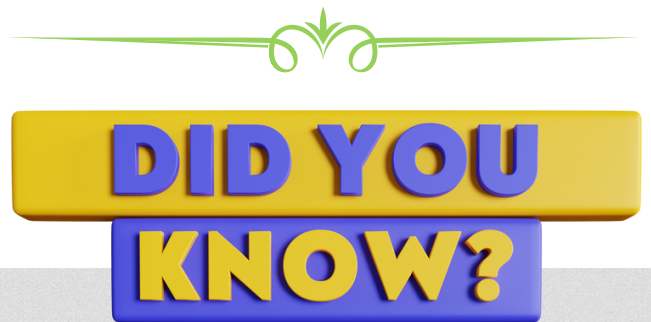
A STUDY FOUND THAT WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCED GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE WERE MORE LIKELY TO REPORT SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY, DEPRESSION AND PHYSICAL HEALTH PROBLEMS SUCH AS HEADACHES AND BACK PAIN. GENDER DISCRIMINATION WAS OFTEN IN THE FORM OF MICROAGGRESSIONS, SUCH AS BEING INTERRUPTED OR TALKED OVER IN MEETINGS, AND BEING SUBJECTED TO INAPPROPRIATE COMMENTS OR BEHAVIOR.

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IS MENTAL HEALTH A PRIORITY FOR WOMEN? CHALLENGES AND A WAY FORWARD

by Sridarshana Mukherji

From nurturing a child to creating a space for herself inside the home and in the outside world - women fight all odds that are rarely recognised. They live through all the adversities physically as well as emotionally. This article is a peep into what affects women's mental health and how their well-being can be supported.

In reports dated October 2022, the WHO estimated that mental health issues cost the global economy $1 trillion annually in lost productivity. (WHO,2022) The Deloitte study also found that 80% of India's workforce reported mental health issues during the past year. (ETHealthWorld,2022).

A research published in the Lancet in October 2021 found a 35% increase in mental health disorders in India. (The Times Of India,2021) According to the 'Global Burden of Disease Study 1990–2017' 19.73 crore Indians, or one in every seven, suffer from a variety of mental problems. (Porecha,2019) WHO approximates the load of mental health problems in India is 2443 disability-adjusted life years(DALYs)per 10,000 population. (WHO, 2020) In a worldwide survey organised in 2022, mental health problems were to be the highest in the country. (Elflein,2023)

Women face several societal pressures, for instance, lack of freedom, few opportunities, restrictions towards education, job, etc. Physically they have to go through pregnancy issues, perinatal depression, menstrual pain, menopause, unpaid workload, domestic violence, and unequal income at the workplace. Socially the barriers can be stepping out of home, being restricted to home for household chores, rearing children and their voices not being heard (Mental Health Foundation).

Women are expected to take care of children and help with the family's emotional needs. Very rarely do we see their emotional health being acknowledged and taken care of. Anguish among women in India multiplies with the fact that women in our subcontinent in general are mostly anaemic, leading to various gynaecological complications. Food with nutritious value are essential for them along with alleviating them from societal burdens.

During the pandemic, women were being relegated to the home, and increased pressure amongst working women has led to severe mental stress and agony.

Different scenarios could be witnessed amongst women in the first-world and third-world countries, in rural and urban spaces, etc. In the first-world countries, bullying even in schools is quite rampant and the perpetrator can be both men and women. A few research studies done in my Masters in Social Work in Tezpur, Assam highlighted the high number cases of witch-hunting being reported in Assam.

Rural women always had additional burdens of handling the household, taking care of children, going out for work all by themselves. In the urban setting, working mothers face constant challenges of balancing out, perception of society, and coping with feelings of guilt. The constant stress of meeting deadlines at the workplace, fulfilling expectations at home and the inability to take out of time for oneself can be too stressful amongst women especially in the fast-paced metropolitan lifestyles.

Old-aged women also have a set of problems. The patterns of living during childhood, and adulthood could impact how one thinks and lives in old age.

The District Mental Health Program was launched under the NHMP in 1996, (in IX Five-Year Plan) under which the health workers are trained to identify mentally-ill persons. (National Health Mission) Even rural women are more prone to mental illnesses due to excessive family responsibilities. In domestic abuse cases, women tend to have more mental health problems.

Well-being strategies for women should be given the utmost importance. It is high time we take mental health especially women's health seriously:

- Providing more work, hobby-related opportunities to women.
- Practicing meditation - a calm mind can help a woman to cope with every challenge in a positive way. Meditation helps in increased self-awareness, reduces stress, improves focus, and strengthens relationships amongst others.
- Following your heart, and not thinking about what the society thinks.
- Sharing spaces in office, home, and friend circle could lighten the burden manifold.
- Searching avenues and taking risks for increased confidence levels.
- Helping others, volunteering for any social cause results in bringing satisfaction and internal happiness.
- Eating nutritious food becomes vital in women's health, which entails giving support to create financial opportunities and removing social barriers.
- By not comparing with others; reduced social media usage provides better results.
- Going for health treatment whenever needed.

More awareness and execution on mental well-being are a way forward for different socio-economic backgrounds of women. Challenges and struggles are the first step towards success.

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BREAKING THE SILENCE: SPEAKING OUT ABOUT WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH IN RURAL INDIA

by Hanvantsinh Mukeshsinh Zala

In typical Indian society, women's mental health is a crucial element for herself as well as the well-being of society. There are many factors which affect the mental health of women. Some of the factors help fulfill their dreams (for instance; awareness of mental health, self-care, a good financial and educational background) and some factors such as, lack of awareness, burden of roles and responsibilities, lack of resources; become a wall to realize their full potential.

What is mental health? According to Ram D, mental health refers to a condition of well-being in which a person recognizes his or her own abilities, can cope with everyday challenges, work productively and fruitfully, and contribute to his or her community.

Let's try to talk about the factors which may affect women's mental health. I would like to talk about a few factors in detail such as societal norms and set up, financial condition of family, her role and responsibility for herself and family, accessibility of resources, awareness of mental health and physical health, and accessibility of health facilities.

In villages, people are more aware of physical health, physical health issues and

about treatment and so on, but there is little awareness about mental health and well being. There are so many superstitions prevailing in villages about mental health and mental disorders. For instance, I saw many examples where either goddess or other souls entered into a woman's body. In this kind of situation, there are instances where malpractices and cruel rituals are performed in order to rid a woman of a perceived possession by a soul or goddess. These practices may involve physically harming the woman or sacrificing animals in an attempt to heal her.

Women's mental health is also affected by their roles and responsibilities in the house. For instance, societal norms say that 'women should take care of the family.' Sometimes, it can cause anxiety for women. A woman has to play many roles at the same time such as a wife; she is expected to cater to her husband, as a mother; she has to care for her children, their homework, food, health and so on, as a housewife; she is expected to take care of household work such as food for family and so on. Women's mental health is also affected by the educational background and lack of exposure to the world.

One of the major reasons could be social isolation and loneliness since her duties are restricted to the home only and even if she does a job, she is expected to perform certain tasks and household responsibilities which may again lead to increase in stress and other mental health conditions.

Considering the Indian village context, there are some measures that could be

taken to support women's well being. I would like to share my suggestions for the rural set up of India. What could be done to improve the mental health and well being of the women community?

Women should be encouraged to engage in different kinds of activities such as crafting, stitching of clothes, Cooking and blogging, wedding planning, Painting and mindfulness, community building, attending counseling sessions, Sewing and fashion design, Jewelry making and so on. Through these activities, they would be able to come out of social isolation, they may earn some money and become less dependent on men, they would gain some world exposure as well. This kind of social gathering can provide the platform to share their experiences, issues and exchange ideas.

NGOs which are located in rural setup or working with the village's community can organize the camps or interventions to bring awareness about women's mental health among the community. Men can also be aware about women's mental health and enable support women, providing a conducive and nurturing environment inside the home. Women should be encouraged to engage in physical activity such as Yoga, athletics such as badminton, football, and so on.

Lori Deschene said that, "You don't have to be positive all the time. It's perfectly okay to feel sad, angry, annoyed, frustrated, scared, or anxious. Having feelings doesn't make you a 'negative person.' It makes you human." Last but not least, society should support women to express their feelings and emotions which may also help to make them mentally healthy and strong.

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WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

by S Das Antoni Arokianathan

Prologue

Women's mental health is a critical issue that deserves attention and understanding. Women face unique challenges that can impact their mental health, including hormonal changes, societal expectations, and gender-based violence. Depression and anxiety are common mental health disorders that affect women at higher rates than men. Additionally, women are at increased risk for postpartum depression and perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. Women who experience trauma or violence are also at risk for developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

To address these challenges, it's essential to prioritize women's mental health and provide access to quality mental health care. This includes destigmatizing mental illness and making mental health services affordable and accessible to all women. Additionally, healthcare providers should receive training on how to recognize and respond to gender-specific mental health issues.

Furthermore, community support can play a significant role in promoting women's mental health. Creating safe spaces for women to share their experiences and connect with others who understand can help reduce feelings of isolation and improve mental health outcomes. Educational campaigns can also help raise awareness about women's mental health and promote self-care practices.

Excerpts from Respondents' Opinion – Women's Mental Health

Framed as a qualitative study in an exploratory mode adopting the Delphi Technique (open- ended question through telephonic approach) for deriving the inferences and apt deductions from the members for this article.

WHAT AFFECTS OF WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND HOW TO SUPPORT WOMEN'S WELLBEING?

1.Shobana, Tourism Professional; Coimbatore:

"Women's Mental Health - In my understanding, women's mental health in India is something that has been ignored forever. Whilst we still see some recognition of women's mental health concerns in the urban sector, there is still a strong need for creating awareness in other parts of India. Women are often expected to take care of family & other chores even though they are working.

"We often witness men, relaxing and relinquishing their time at home. Thus, we cannot address mental health as a standard issue for both men & women as the mental health pattern affecting both the gender are different and the opportunity for a man to overcome or defend mental health cannot be compared with woman as she has the closed opportunity to let out the anxiety or stress she gets."

According to Shobana:

Different aspects that affect Women's Mental Health:

- Biological and hormonal changes in women affect their mental health at different stages of life, which is not the same for men.
- Women are often asked to suppress their choices and desires in our patriarchal society.
- There is a strong need for equal opportunities for women when it comes to their education, job, promotions, pay, birth choice etc.
- Women need to fight gender stereotypes together. One woman shouldn't criticize or limit another as they fight for their choices or aspirations.
- It's important for us to recognize that these gender stereotypes create an idealistic picture of how women should be. Thus, leading to increased stress for women to live up to these expectations.
- Sexual harassment, abuse, and unsafe public spaces affect women's mental health adversely.

How to support women's wellbeing:

- Understanding and addressing the needs of women
- Women must learn to recognise these stereotypes and work through them. They must learn to make independent choices and should have the courage to work towards their dreams and aspirations.
- Having a healthy and nutritious diet adds to their overall wellbeing.
- Encourage women's involvement in sports and activities involving physical exercise (yoga, pilates, weight training)
- Creating opportunities and spaces for women's community work
- Sharing responsibilities of household chores
- Having spaces to voice out their opinions and talk about shared experiences.

2. Dr. Millo Yaja, Assistant Professor; Mizoram University

As per my observation, women's mental health can be affected by multiple factors. For example, finding it difficult to deal with male chauvinism in the workplace and home environment, balancing family and career together, joining a new family altogether after marriage leading to changing family dynamics, suppressing their own dreams and aspirations, prioritising others over oneself etc...

In such cases, women should be supported in the following ways:
- Family members should support female members (there should be at least someone in the family who supports and understands them emotionally).

- In a work or office environment, co-workers should also encourage or support their female colleagues.
- Higher authority or officials, be it at the work front or educational institute, should also support female candidates and consider their cases if there is a need for special assistance.
- Friends and relatives also play an important role in offering guidance and support.
- Government or NGOs should also step in or be approached to offer assisted guidance.
- Most importantly, women need to prioritize themselves. They should not compromise (until it is deemed necessary) and she should not stop aiming high.

I feel that "Respecting our dreams and goals is like respecting ourselves." Therefore, we need to be strong, we should not give up our dreams/goals easily and should not lose our hope in the process.

3. Sindhu, Online Trainer; Chennai

Women's mental health is equally important as their physical well-being. She is the backbone of her family, and her thoughts and moods play a vital role in the decisions she makes. The most common modern-day problem is depression. In recent studies, it was revealed that women are more likely to develop dysthymia.

Epilogue

In conclusion, women's mental health is a complex issue that requires attention from healthcare providers, policymakers, and

society. By prioritizing women's mental health, we can improve outcomes for women and create a more equitable society.

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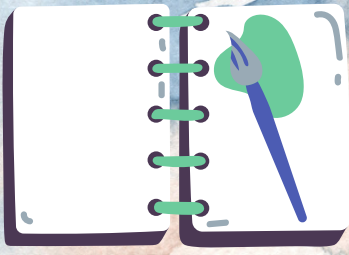
VEDA'S VISUAL VERSES

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!

THE WEIGHT OF BEING A WOMAN

CAREGIVER BURDEN AMONG WOMEN

Caregiver burden is a term used to describe the physical, emotional, and financial strain experienced by individuals who provide care for a loved one with a chronic illness or disability. Caregiving is often considered a gendered role, with women taking on the majority of caregiving responsibilities.

Women may experience higher levels of caregiver burden than men due to a variety of factors, such as gender role expectations, social norms, and cultural beliefs about caregiving.

> CAREGIVER BURDEN FEELS LIKE HOLDING UP A DOZEN ROCKS.
> NONE OF WHICH
> ARE EASY TO PUT DOWN...
> SO I CARRY
> AND CARRY
> AND CARRY
> AND CARRY
> AND CARRY
> AND CARRY
> AND CARRY
> AND CARRY
> AND CARRY
> UNTIL I CAN'T CARRY IT ANYMORE.
> THEN ITS A PROBLEM
> I HAVE TO ADDRESS,
> ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE.
> TAKING A TOLL ON
> MENTAL HEALTH,
> PHYSICAL HEALTH,
> SOCIAL LIFE,
> RELATIONSHIPS,
> TIME, RESOURCES, ENERGY
> MONEY...
> AND THEN I CARRY THAT TOO.
>
> IT'S A LUXURY TO HAVE THE MENTAL SPACE TO THINK ABOUT JUST YOURSELF.
> I IMAGINE NOT HAVING TO THINK ABOUT A WHOLE OTHER HUMAN AND HAVE THAT WEIGHT
> OFF MY SHOULDERS,
> THAT SPACE IN MY MIND.
> THAT WOULD FEEL ODDLY LIGHT.
> BUT MORE ODD THAN LIGHT.
> BECAUSE I'VE BEEN DOING THIS MY WHOLE LIFE.
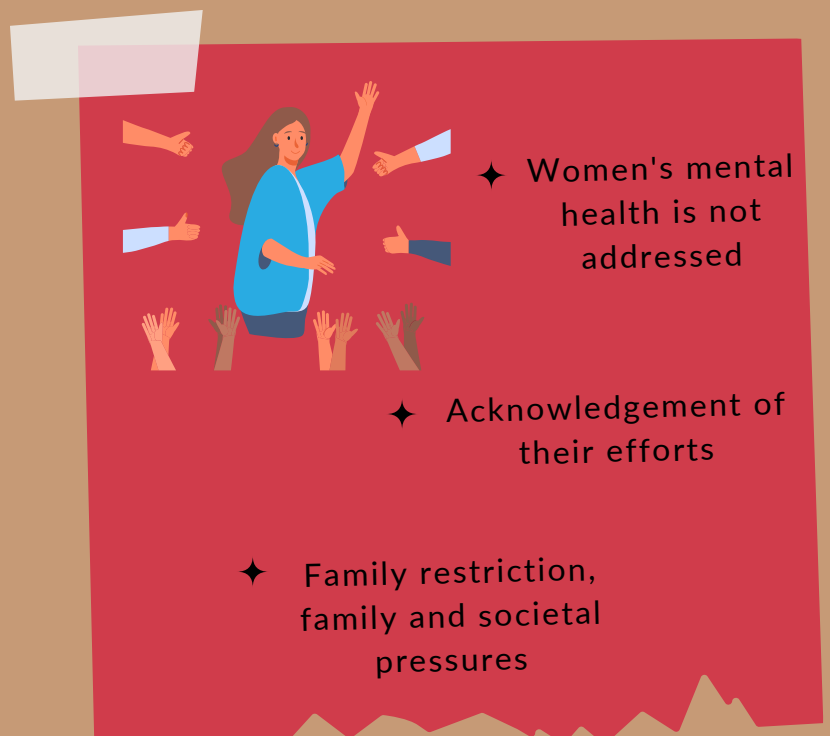> WHAT DO I DO NOW?

SWATI'S STORYBOARD

COLLATING VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

The community was invited to share responses, observations, experiences and stories about women's mental health.
Feel free to be influenced from these ways, and keep adding to your list! 😊

What are some challenges that are unique to women's mental health?

Systemic oppression and discrimination, according to me, is unique to women's mental health. In addition to this, Patriarchy plays a crucial role in furthering it. April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, but how many percentage of women are really able to speak up or fight against abuse?

✦ Women's mental health is not addressed

✦ Acknowledgement of their efforts

✦ Family restriction, family and societal pressures

Hormone imbalances related to menstruation and menopause, challenges related to gender specific societal expectations like pressure for marriage, having children, high expectations for motherhood etc.

The biggest threat to women's wellbeing and the root cause of mental health issues is the curb on emotional expression- sometimes even self imposed -to conform to the notion of 'propriety'. Most women refrain from expressing anger, frustration, or even love or desires, often bottling it up till breaking point, after which the stigma prevents them from getting the right help.

There is a lot of pressure to get up and get moving again, after any mental health episode. Women are so often seen in a caregiving role that them being the ones who need care is a concept that is alien to most Indian households. Let alone therapy and medication, there is a lack of privacy and space for a woman to cope with her mental health issues without being guilted or guilting herself because taking time is considered selfish. Also living in a patriarchal society and with rape culture, where there are such defined, narrow roles for women is enough to have mental health issues anyway!

Cultural and social pressures: Women often face higher expectations in the workplace and in their personal lives, leading to feelings of stress and inadequacy

Self-esteem issues: Women can be more likely than men to suffer from low self-esteem and body image issues, which can lead to further mental health issues.

Pregnancy and postpartum depression: Women can experience depression and other mental health issues during and after pregnancy.

Trauma: Women can be more likely to experience trauma, such as sexual violence, which can lead to anxiety and depression

Unwanted attention: Women can be more likely to face unwanted attention and comments from others, which can lead to feelings of insecurity and anxiety
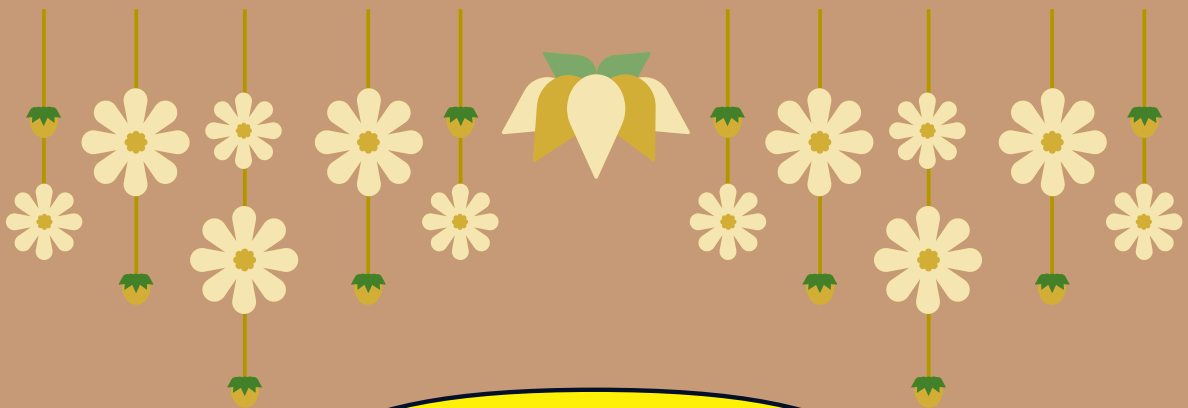
What are some ways in which you have seen women do things that improve their mental health?

✓ Do the work that makes them happy

✓ Small ways include personal grooming, taking a day off chores, going on a date. Big ways include seeking therapy or psychiatrist, cutting off ties with toxic people

✓ Women try to break barriers, gender norms, all other norms which sets them free and it is quite liberating to witness this

✓ Taking time for oneself and saying no to others is both a small and big way to improve mental health

✓ Peer group talking, went to the farm collectively for sharing their feeling

✓ Be occupied socially

The smallest way women help themselves is to have a close coterie of friends with whom they unburden their souls; the biggest being financial independence that gives them a voice as well as the confidence to fight for themselves. And by financial independence- I mean freedom to own their assets and spend at will. Unfortunately today's working women face a double whammy- where they earn but have little say in how the money is spent- or are emotionally nudged to sacrifice for family

Taking time to do something creative, like painting or crafting

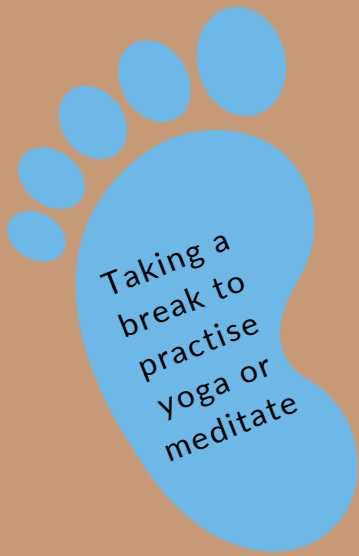Making lifestyle changes to improve physical health, such as eating better and exercising

Practising mindfulness and relaxation techniques

Taking a moment to write down what they're grateful for

Seeking professional help from a therapist or counsellor

Talking to a friend/ family member

Taking a walk in nature

Taking a break to practise yoga or meditate

Keeping a journal to record their thoughts and feelings

Going to support groups or peer-led activities

Joining an online community of like-minded people

Developing a spiritual practice

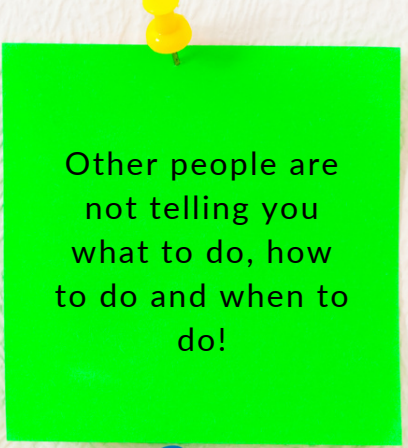Going out to public spaces late at night as reclaiming

If you had to imagine an ideal environment for women's positive mental health, what could it look like?
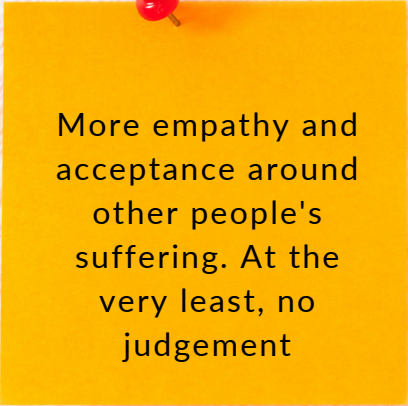
Place where women are being heard

Encouragement and unbiased approach
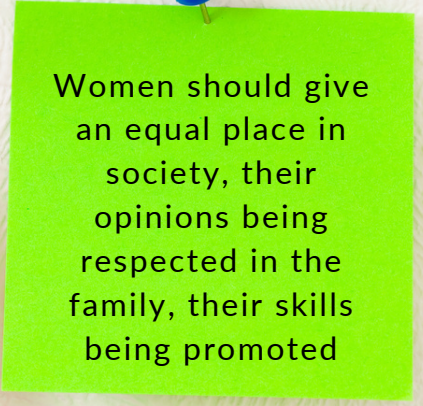
Other people are not telling you what to do, how to do and when to do!
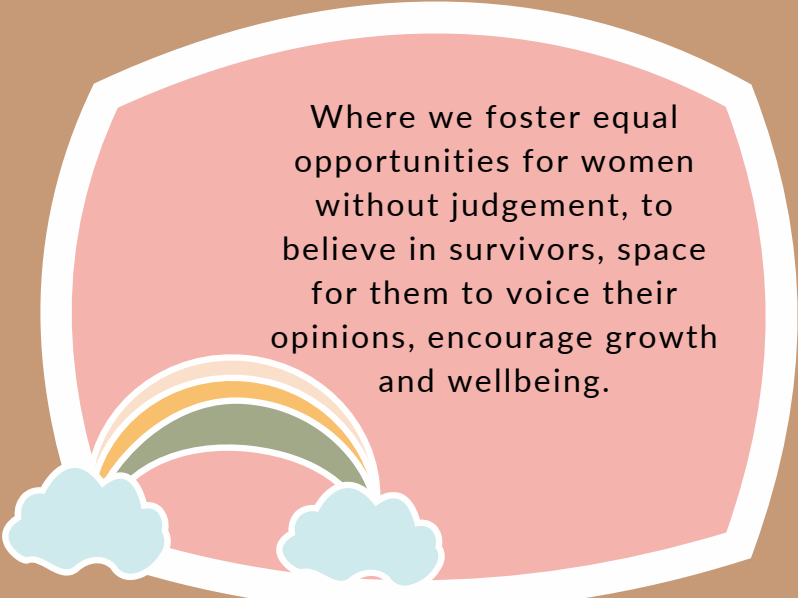
More empathy and acceptance around other people's suffering. At the very least, no judgement

An environment free of gender specific societal expectations and pressures related to "being a woman"

Women should give an equal place in society, their opinions being respected in the family, their skills being promoted

Where we foster equal opportunities for women without judgement, to believe in survivors, space for them to voice their opinions, encourage growth and wellbeing.

An environment where women are self aware, and others around them acknowledge their needs and respect their choices for self fulfilment; where self care and self indulgence is not a luxury but a right they can enjoy without guilt or shame.

One that is safe, supportive, and nurturing. It would be filled with resources and opportunities for women to develop meaningful relationships with each other, receive necessary mental health support, and engage in healthy activities that promote self-care and well-being. It would also provide access to quality health care services, positive role models, and educational 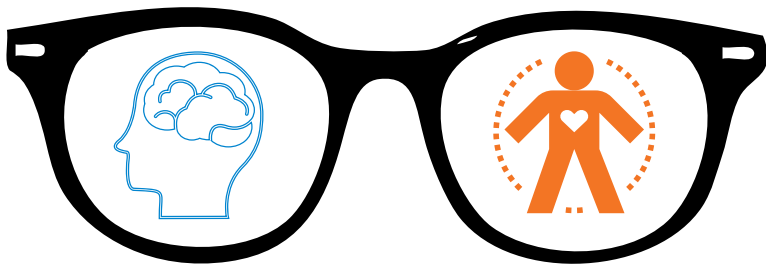materials that focus on mental health and self-care. This environment would be free from negative influences and judgement, and it would strive to empower women to reach their highest potential

THANK YOU!

to all of you who contributed to the Storyboard! It was a delight to read all your responses!

LAKSHMI'S LENS

RECLAIMING THE FEMININE

In response to the Jungian Psychotherapist Maureen Murdock's book on the psycho-spiritual journey of women, "The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness," Joseph Campbell, said that "Women don't need to make the journey. In the whole mythological journey, the woman is there. All she must do is realize that she's the place that people are trying to get to".

Modern Indian women appear fearless, independent, and outspoken and seem to have broken the shackles of societal expectations and patriarchy. Yet, according to research, today's women are known to be more anxious than the previous generations. 88% of millennials are suffering from stress and GenZ is reported to have various mental health conditions resulting from chronic anxiety. What could possibly be the reason for these strong women to fall apart so easily? Could it be their inner conflicts and contradicting thoughts and beliefs?

The external world is defined by the masculine. So, the internal world of the feminine is constantly in conflict with what comes naturally and instinctively and the rules and expectations of the external world. We know that women's lives have always been regulated by society. But, there is very little access to understanding what women from the past thought about, how they felt, and their lived experiences, for thousands of years. It is shrouded in silence. Our mothers and grandmothers also probably suffered similar psychological challenges as the millennials.

Maureen Murdock points out in her book, that, "The feminine journey is about going down deep into soul, healing, and reclaiming, while the masculine journey is up and out, to spirit."

The psycho-spiritual journey of the feminine is in healing the wounded feminine and the masculine and integrating the two parts to attain wholeness without any apology or defensiveness. Being true to who women truly are. This could be due to the burden of intergenerational trauma.

> "
> YOU ONLY ARE FREE WHEN YOU REALIZE THAT YOU BELONG TO NO PLACE – YOU BELONG EVERY PLACE – NO PLACE AT ALL. THE PRICE IS HIGH. THE REWARD IS GREAT. I BELONG TO MYSELF. I'M VERY PROUD OF THAT. I'M VERY CONCERNED OF HOW I LOOK AT MAYA. I LIKE MAYA VERY MUCH".
>
> - MAYA ANGELOU

This is easier said than done especially for women because of the expectations put on them. A woman is an affectionate mother, a devoted wife, a caring daughter, and a loyal friend. The focus is on being there for others. Each of these roles comes with high expectations.

Even a woman's strengths, like empathy, focus, determination, and resilience are put on a pedestal by saying things like, "A woman is the very existence of nature. She is Shakti and the very embodiment of supreme energy. A woman is the personification of ageless beauty, selfless love, purity, grace, and dignity. She symbolizes virtue, inner strength, and patience. The same values she inculcates in everyone around her. She is the pillar of strength not only to her family but also to society and the country" These are very exaggerated virtues that are unrealistic. Such words, though flattering, puts a lot of pressure and leave no space to figure out who a woman really is and what she wants out of her life. It takes away agency and choice.

While belongingness is a fundamental human need, for women it shows up as a need for communion (as documented by Bell Hooks, in her book by the same name). When this need is misunderstood or misinterpreted as the need to sacrifice their agency or erase themselves to be there for others, it can become a pathway to martyrdom. It would be more helpful instead to meet this need by finding and embodying their own true selves outside of the projections of partners, family, and society and stepping into their own power. When a woman steps into her own power, she inspires truth in all those around her and can find her place in the world because she's finally found her place in herself.

ANJANA'S ANGLE

HELLO. I HAVE A LOT OF OPINIONS.

I AM ANGRY.

Historically, women have been socialized to repress their anger and emotions, as displays of anger were often seen as "unladylike" and could result in negative consequences both personally and professionally. The expression of women's anger has been stigmatized and pathologized. Women who express anger may be labeled as "hysterical" or "overemotional," and our anger has often been dismissed or trivialized. With sadness, "femininity" is preserved. Anger on the other hand makes us bossy and unlikeable. There is a "correct" way to be angry, which is by suppressing and leaving it unexpressed. Those who benefit from the status quo like to gaslight us into believing that we're crazy and irrational. They like to make us believe that our rage is unfounded and uncalled for. Because if it were validated, our anger could move mountains.

I am no exception to this kind of conditioning. For the longest time, I suppressed my anger and let it turn inwards. I was angry at myself. Through a lot of therapy, reading, introspection, and hearing about other women's experiences, I have learnt that anger isn't an evil emotion. It is like any other, a neutral force that just has something to communicate. My anger is telling me that my boundaries have been crossed. That I've not been done right by. That I deserve better. That I'm grieving.

My anger is looking out for me. Our anger isn't coming from nowhere, it's trying to protect us.

I have been lucky enough to have access to resources that validate my anger. I am learning to channel my anger in ways that are healthy for everyone around me. My heart goes out to women who believe their anger is immoral and wrong, for no fault of theirs.

So many of us have long-standing grievances and injustices that have gone unacknowledged, and anger is a powerful force in driving social change. We deserve to have our anger heard. We're not crazy.

PRATIK'S PINBOARD

BODY POSITIVITY

Affirmations are a powerful tool for promoting positive body image and self-esteem. Here are some affirmations that can help you develop a more positive body image:

I AM WORTHY OF LOVE AND RESPECT

MY BODY IS UNIQUE AND BEAUTIFUL IN ITS OWN WAY.

I CHOOSE TO NOURISH MY BODY WITH HEALTHY FOODS AND ACTIVITIES THAT MAKE ME FEEL GOOD.

MY BODY IS A VESSEL FOR MY MIND AND SOUL, AND I TREAT IT WITH KINDNESS AND CARE.

No wrong way to have a body

I CHOOSE TO FOCUS ON MY POSITIVE QUALITIES RATHER THAN MY FLAWS.

I AM GRATEFUL FOR ALL THAT MY BODY DOES FOR ME EVERYDAY.

I LOVE MYSELF. I LOVE MYSELF.

I AM CONFIDENT AND COMFORTABLE IN MY OWN SKIN.

I EMBRACE AND LOVE MY BODY JUST THE WAY IT IS.

I RELEASE ANY NEGATIVE THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS ABOUT MY BODY AND REPLACE THEM WITH POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS.

I AM ENOUGH, EXACTLY AS I AM, AND I AM DESERVING OF LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE.

Remember, affirmations work best when they are personalized and repeated regularly. Find the affirmations that resonate with you, and make a habit of saying them to yourself every day. Over time, you will begin to believe these positive messages, and they will help you develop a more positive and confident body image.

KAVITHA'S KORNER

TO MY IMPERFECT FEET

Look at you! My imperfect feet,
Donning the wrong shade of brown
With toenails oblivious of files or soaks
Whimsically shaped, almost hand drawn.
Look at you! Hardened by roads of judgements you trod upon
Forgetting tried roads make for feet less forlorn….
You imperfect feet, impolite like a truce unsworn
Look at you! Swollen for reasons as random as retained fluids
Or a wronged hormone
Unmindful journeys of markets, kitchen, or a blessed salon
Always heading towards bookshelves, temples, or the marching ground
Where other imperfectly treading feet raise slogans
For cause with conclusion foregone.
Look at you……my imperfect unpedicured, maladjusted, impolite, irredeemable feet!
Oh why? Oh Why? Can't you simply let them work their glass slippers on to these?
Why can't you walk paths that would their sensibilities appease?
Why? Can't you at least feign being the fairer perfectly fair feet?
Look at you! imperfect feet….
Obstinate, dusty, roadless, solo-walking, impatient, music driven feet!
Look at you!
Imperfect feet, leading without hearing an ''after you''
Feet that can't dust, labour or weave or sew,
Look at you!
Look at me!
Trying to sell dainty stilettos to feet perfect
There is no real beauty without some slight imperfection.

SHIBANI'S SNIPPETS

SO WHAT DOES "PSYCHOLOGY" ACTUALLY SAY....?

Why Mental health is a feminist issue?
Yes. You read it right. There is that F word. I think Feminism and mental health are directly related to one another. From how society works to how women evaluate themselves in the presence of strong patriarchal views, mental health permeates much deeper than you would think. It is no exception to that. And here are our few reasons to believe that.

When you look into the research on Women's Mental Health, at the first glance, it becomes apparent that Reproductive health occupies the major chunk of the research on the Mental health of Women. While not to stray away from the fact that Reproductive health is a very significant subject to be considered when Mental health is involved and should always be a part of the discourse and also a reason that contributes to the feminist aspects of it, it cannot possibly encompass everything.

And now it's more intersectional than was considered earlier. An understanding of identity in terms like race, sexual orientation, caste, religion, gender identity, class, and age deems it more a matter of mental health considering everything has its relationship with it.

Dr. Mindy J. Erchull, professor of psychological science at the University of Mary Washington in Virginia, says how Women's experiences have been often and are continued to be pathologized. And their typical life experiences, either characterized as "disordered" or are more likely would end up by them being labeled as "Crazy".

This is however an age-old narrative. In the early times, which can be traced back to as far as 1900 BC Egypt, the use of the term "hysteria" to collate the experiences of women and their mental health is indicative of how it has been treated.

Depression is almost always reported twice as most in women than in men, across societies and cultures. Anxiety is more often found comorbid with other common mental disorders in Women. Leading mental health problems of the elderly are depression, organic brain syndrome, and dementias which affect women the most. Violence, harassment, civil wars, disasters, and displacement affects more Women and Children, both in Physical as well as Mental capacities.

Looking at the data based specifically on Gender and Mental health, it is safe to say that Women's Mental health is a matter of grave concern. But while working towards the betterment of mental health is important, understanding the role of multiple layers of society and the things we are doing that contribute to the increment in these dangerously high numbers is equally, if not more important.

The hard truth about women's mental health is much more than this. . .

Women face societal expectations differently. From subtly woven into the fabrics of their daily lives, to outright mud on their face, these expectations lead to some or other kinds of Oppression. .

In addition to this, myriads of other problems like physical and psychological abuse, everyday discrimination, barriers to mental health, addiction, availability of resources, and even a severe dearth of awareness also exist. A growing body of research suggests how gender inequality and systemic oppression contribute to the worsening of mental health in women.

How many times have you seen women around you changing their plans because of safety concerns? How many times have you heard of violence against women? Probably many. Well, one study by researchers from the University of Missouri-Kansa found a link between psychological distress and physical safety concerns. Multiple such studies have shown how gender-based violence is likely to increase depression and anxiety in Women. And not just the occurrence of this violence, but also the anticipation of it.

The author of feminist therapy, Laura Brown mentions experiences where the mind, body, thought, feeling, spirit, culture, or some combination of all these are violated, leading them to have to protect themselves and develop strategies to do the same. It can go as far as to dissociate or wanting to dissociate from the body, affect, or memory; or even self-inflicted violence.

And the Shame? Studies looking for a definition of shame have pointed to women defining shame as derived from the socially prescribed perfectionistic standards placed upon them that create a negative self-evaluation.

. The sources of shame; as Brene Brown suggested based on research can be appearance and body image, motherhood, family, parenting, money and work, mental and physical health, sex, aging, religion, being stereotyped and labeled, speaking out, and surviving trauma. Other sources can include identity, both sexual and gender, caste, etc.These sources of shame can include unwanted identities that go along with each area. Even if we skim through more research, we can get a clear idea of how shame, guilt, and negative emotions can become a part of women's daily narrative and consequently affect their Mental health.

The lack of acknowledgment of how Women's mental health is affected by individual, social, cultural, political, and economic factors is leading to a dangerous outcome that affects most Women in ways more than one.

Mental health is deeply, irrefutably Feminist.:)

ON THE BORDERLINE

It is BPD time, kids. Borderline Personality Disorder (aka BPD), to this date remains one of the most talked about and debated diagnoses among doctors, mental health professionals, and armchair Internet experts. It is characterized by long-term pattern of intense, unstable interpersonal relationships, distorted sense of self, and strong emotional reactions, and it could behaviourally manifest as poor self-control and self-harm tendencies. What really interests me, is the story behind it, and how far it has reached right now. What should interest you, is why I'm talking about BPD on this Women's Day edition of Dialogues.

We've talked about earlier ideas that have come up especially when it came to women's mental health in our earlier editions, especially 'hysteria'. Hysteria is an ancient Greek word for 'uterus', including symptoms like anxiety, spells of dizziness, shortness of breath, sexual desire, and aggression. It's worth noting that earlier physicians attributed these symptoms to women for being 'women', or by simply having a uterus. Similar to how Thomas Muller from Bayern Munich doesn't play in a fixed position, and uses space to wreak havoc to the opposition defence in football, early Greek literature attributed these symptoms to 'wandering womb', literally inferring that wombs can get detached and travel to other parts of the body, causing 'imbalance' (what were they smoking?). We have also used theories on witchcraft, where atypical behaviour in women was seen as being 'witches', which, if true, is the coolest thing ever (the only cool contender we men have against witches is the Crow Man of Bhopal, who looks up and starts cawing like a crow, and in a few minutes, the empty sky is filled by a murder of crows cawing back. So goth.).

It's important to note here, that early literature treated men and women as separate entities when it came to mental health, and for the latter, the womanhood itself was pathologized to explain the symptoms. It is also noteworthy that 'atypical behaviour' here simply refers to not following gender norms, and if you don't follow them, you're sick. It is a recurring theme in history. The present is not so different.

Since it is difficult to cover the entire history in between, let's get straight to the point; the term 'borderline' was first used by a psychoanalyst called Adolph Stern in 1938, who mostly worked with

female patients showing symptoms of hypersensitivity, paranoia, and anxiety, and called them 'on the border line of insanity'. There were other variants too; some called people suffering from these symptoms 'as-if personalities' (living their lives as if they're normal people), or having 'pseudoneurotic form of schizophrenia'. These fancy, rich European practitioners were great at naming characteristics, but they faltered in understanding the condition itself. Language bias is real, but simply naming something doesn't make it true. Point in case, Harman Baweja was never and will never be the next Hrithik Roshan.

Otto Kernberg

In 1967, another psychoanalyst named Otto Kernberg laid out a more structural approach to BPD; splitting. People with BPD start seeing things in black and white; good and evil, hero and villain, perpetrator and rescuer, and so on. The reason behind it, he claimed, was the person facing a good mother-bad mother dichotomy in their infancy, and as a result splits themselves and the world in halves (like Voldemort's horcruxes?). This version got significant acceptance in the academic circle, despite having little to no evidence to back it up. More significantly, Kernberg's patients were mostly women, and the condition was still tied to the myth of female hysteria.

To this day, women are diagnosed three times as much as men with BPD. It is a highly stigmatized disorder, where

Adolph Stern

personal relationships with BPD diagnosed persons are discouraged, and a lot of legitimate pain that person is going through is dismissed as being dramatic, not to mention the endless physical and mental violence they face. On the contrary, men are diagnosed with anti-social personality disorder three times more than women. At this point we are just going along with the 'Women Mad, Men Bad' thinking that's been the norm for centuries now.

Also, let's not forget, we completely invalidate the pain of women in medicine, literally. When treating for chronic pain, men are given painkillers much more readily than women, who are usually given tranquilizers. We believe that if a man is saying he is in pain, it must be true, and when a woman says the same, she must be being dramatic, or emotional. The biases have always been there. If we really want an egalitarian society, we must start with healthcare.

The idea of pain being invalidated actually brings to a happier end to this story. In 1970, a 17 year old suicidal girl was admitted to a mental hospital, diagnosed with schizophrenia. She, at that young age, knew that her diagnosis didn't fit the symptoms, and thought BPD fit better. She also understood that the environment she was in, instead of helping her, was worsening her suicidal ideation. This woman was Marsha Linehan. She went on to became an expert in suicidality and self-harm, and came up with the theory of a biosocial model for BPD, which talked about how when a biologically vulnerable individual

is placed in an invalidating environment, borderline personality disorder is the result. Her structural approach led to the formation of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, which is a groundbreaking therapy model for treating people with BPD, with a significantly higher success rate. It was a far more benevolent and scientifically valid model to explain the disorder. Validation, she said, will lead to recovery. It also paved way for newer discourses around trauma, which we now understand is closely linked to people with BPD. Of course, she received a lot of pushback and resistance, because she was a female outsider, coming from a small town, challenging decades old theories and models, which did not sit well with those grumpy, white, old men. Perhaps they need a validating environment themselves, hehe.

Marsha Linehan

FAIREN'S FORUM

UNDERLYING MESSAGES FOR WOMEN ~LOVE MEDIA

"Media can be an instrument of change. It can maintain the status quo and reflect the views of the society, or it can awaken people and change minds."

-Katie Couric

Media and the advent of internet is what creates accessibility to information and this accessibility comes in different formats i.e. books, newspapers, magazines, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat to advertisements, news media, television, movies, and music.

These platforms attach great emphasis on visualizations, aesthetics, idealized body images, whilst also compartmentalizing women's way of being. Images of the perfect body on social media platforms and advertisements often give the public a psychological hint that it is easy for people to become slim. This can lead to self-surveillance of the body and potentially increase the chance of body dissatisfaction, shame, and anxiety. (Pan, 2021).

"That women routine", "How I lost weight, Toned up and Changed my Mindset", "What I eat in a day?", "A Day in my Life", "Do this to be more attractive!" are all merely click baits!

It is no secret that the beauty industry thrives on women's insecurities. They are founded upon a one-dimensional, non-inclusive perception of the ideal woman, who is tall, thin, fair, with spotless skin, perfect hair, and a well-groomed body (Bose, 2020).

The industry feeds women product after product, one 16-step skincare routine at a time, to quiet the voices in their heads that tell them they're not pretty enough, not attractive enough, not young enough, not clean enough (Bose, 2020). Our Films, Advertising Industry, Social Media Platforms like Instagram, Tik Tok, and SnapChat feeds onto women's insecurities and low self-esteem to churn-out money.

The Film Industry often categorizes women as the Damsel in Distress, the Nurturing Caregiver, the Sexy Seductress, the Ambitious Career Woman, the Ditzy Airhead, or the Perfect Housewife. These narrations are specifically harmful as it portrays women as overly emotional, passive, and submissive individuals who exist solely to fulfil the needs and desires of men.

These portrayals/representations often lead to stereotypical expectations. It even affects the way in which men and women define themselves and are treated by others. These expectations and societal pressures can affect women's mental health in various ways (e.g. body image issues, low self esteem).

With the increase of accessibility and surge in the number of users, people are gradually aware of this problem. But when people are constantly exposed to numerous beautified images and the lifestyle of perfectionism, they begin to pursue this unreality. Pan (2021)

Shift in representation:

There has also been a notable change in female-led films and television shows, with more complex and fully realized female characters taking centre stage. This has been reflected in wider range of genres, from action movies like "NH10, Mary Kom", to dramas like "Bulbull, English Vinglish, Queen, Piku, Margarita with a Straw" and comedies like "Badhai Ho, and Dum Laga Ke Haisha" or be it vernacular movies like "The Great Indian Kitchen".

With more female voices behind the camera, women directors, writers, and producers working in the industry, we see more authentic and nuanced portrayals of women's experiences and perspectives, as well as greater representation for women of color, LGBTQIA+ women, and women with disabilities.

To our pleasure, it is not just the 'Film Industry' that has taken on this shift.

Advertisements have long reflected — and to a certain extent, informed — gender roles in society. These stereotypes can be harmful because they limit the roles and opportunities available to women and reinforce negative attitudes and behaviours towards them.

Some examples of portrayals that reinforced gender stereotypes are: an ad that normalizes the burden of housework on women; portrayals of gender-stereotypical characters, such as women being bad at driving, or men not knowing how to change diapers; depictions of an individual's romantic or social failure as a direct result of how they look; ads that glorify courage or bravery in boys, and gentleness or caring in girls; or depictions of men being belittled for being or doing anything stereotypically "feminine." (Desai, 2019)

The rise of social media has given 'representation' more Importance than It ever had. We're now seeing a lot more advertisements from across industries like FMCG and Consumer

Durables portraying progressive women in their narratives. Campaigns like "Share the Load" by Ariel, "#unstereotype" by Red Label, portraying diverse models for clothing/ cosmetic brands or featuring Akshay Kumar for the Toilet Cleaner ad, all defies gender stereotypes. (A, 2022).

Need for women behind the Screen-:

The lack of women in industry positions eventually translates into a lack of representation on screen. In 2021, Indian women hold almost 10% of industry positions — such as editing, directing, writing, design, and cinematography — in films and series streamed online. (Kalia, 2022). On-screen, this means women's stories are disembodied, told by people holding structural privilege, and told in a way that objectifies and stereotypes lived realities. Defining women's way of being!

There is a need for more female creative leaders to shift from a male gaze perspective. Inculcating the idea of aspiration and constructing "role models" that are accessible and familiar, makes it important for women to be seen in the first place. "Who you see is also who you would want to be!"

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BUILDING SELF COMPASSION USING EXPRESSIVE ARTS

In March and April, our team conducted a weekly expressive arts group aimed at building self-compassion, particularly through visual art and drama.

Participants were encouraged to explore their feelings and experiences through these modalities and express themselves freely in a supportive space.

The use of expressive arts as a therapeutic approach has been shown to be effective in enhancing self-awareness, promoting self-compassion, and improving overall mental wellbeing.

Our team looks forward to conducting more expressive arts based sessions in the future.