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Early detection key to address mental illness, delay may prove fatal: Experts

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Kolkata: Signs of mental illness are often ignored or taken lightly which aggravate the condition of patients who can recover sufficiently with timely assistance, said experts on World Mental Health Day on Monday. Those with mental issues should be screened, counselled and provided treatment as early as possible to prevent suicidal tendencies. Family members should take the first step and offer help rather than overlooking the signs of distress, they pointed out.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

The theme of Mental Health Day this year is making mental health and well-being for all a global priority.

Signs of mental illness are ignored due to lack of awareness about it, the knowledge that it can be treated and the stigma attached to it, said consultant psychiatrist J Ram. "While a lot more now acknowledge and recognize mental illness as a disease, there's still a tendency to ignore it. This can have multiple consequences on the

'THERE IS A TENDENCY TO IGNORE IT'

Warning signs

- ▶ Previous suicide attempt
- ▶ Mental disorders
- ▶ Harmful use of alcohol and other substances
- ▶ Job or financial loss
- ▶ Chronic pain and illness
- ▶ Family history of suicide
- ▶ Genetic and biological factors



While many recognize mental illness as a disease, there's still a tendency to ignore it. This can have multiple consequences

J Ram | CONSULTANT
PSYCHIATRIST

You don't need to have a serious mental health issue to seek help. Once you have the symptoms, it's good to seek help immediately

Minu Budhia | CARING MINDS FOUNDER

individual, the family and the nation as a whole. Aggravation could not only jeopardize the life of the patient, it can derail the family as a whole. Just as any other illness has a cost impact in terms of earnings and contribution to the economy, mental illness, too, has it," said Ram.

Early signs are not difficult to recognize but measures are taken late, according to psychotherapist Minu Budhia, founder of Caring Minds. "If you are not able to contribute to your personal, social,

professional and family life, you need help. Not being able to handle the stress of daily life, feeling sad or low very frequently or having extreme mood swings are the first signs of mental illness," said Budhia.

She added that it was not easy to push oneself out of this without help. "You don't need to have a serious mental health issue to seek help. Once you have these symptoms, it's good to seek expert help immediately," she said.

Most mental illnesses are re-

cognized after the patient has developed suicidal tendencies, said president of Indian Psychiatric Society Gautam Saha. Studies show that more than half of those who choose to end their lives visit a physician within a month of their suicide, which stresses the need for recognition of the signs of extreme distress or despair among these people.

"Around 40%-60% of those committing suicide visit a general physician shortly before ending their lives. In most cases, these doctors fail to recognize that they are in extreme distress. So, we need trained people to identify these potentially suicidal section and initiate measures," said Saha.

Ram pointed out that busy urban life was leading to a disconnect and isolation that often encouraged suicidal tendencies. "A large number of youngsters, for instance, are under tremendous pressure to perform. Unfortunately, it is the parents who are often responsible for this. What they don't realize is that education has nothing to do with doing well in exams. But that is exactly what students are expected to do. And those who fail to live up to parents' expectations have to go through stress," said Ram.

On World Mental Health Day, Caring Minds' founder Minu Budhia talks about the importance of mental healthcare

Time to glamourise talks about mental health

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Mental health, in a nutshell, is our state of mind. It comprises our emotional, psychological and social well-being and affects how we think, feel, react and live life. Just because our mental health is invisible doesn't mean it doesn't exist. In today's day and age, our focus needs to be on health 360, where we

take care of our physical and mental healthcare, as we can only be truly healthy when the mind and the body are in good condition.

On World Mental Health Day, Minu Budhia, psychotherapist and founder of 'Caring Minds' (Institute of Mental Health), who herself has successfully battled depression, said, "Mental health must be a part of our everyday conversation - at our breakfast tables, in our conference and living rooms - till talking about it becomes ordinary. We not only need to destigmatise it, but rather glamourise it by making it the talk of the towns in a positive manner. Mentioning a session with your counsellor/therapist should feel no more scandalous or hush-hush than mentioning a hair

salon appointment. It's high time we opened our hearts, homes and offices to start a conversation about our minds. Because you matter. Your mental health matters."

Just like the body can hurt from physical injuries, the mind can hurt from emotional trauma. Just like the body can be exhausted from overwork, the mind can also get exhausted from overthinking. Just like our body needs rest, so does our mind. And just like people go to the doctor for physical health-related issues, they need to go to a psychiatrist when they are struggling with their emotional or mental health. But people don't.

If people are okay to share physical ailments with friends and family, why is it all "hush-hush" when it

The psychotherapist has successfully battled depression

comes to mental health? It's because of the cloud of guilt, shame and fear surrounding mental healthcare that has persisted over generations. This is what makes outreach and awareness about mental health so important. People need to break the stigma of 'Leg kya kabhenge?' (What will people say?)

Especially in 2022, in a post-pandemic world, one shouldn't feel any shame in asking for help. It's the brav-

est action one can take to improve their life.

Labelling people with mental health issues as 'pau-gal' or brushing the issue under the carpet because we don't want to admit it is no longer an option. As caring family and friends, people must get their loved ones and themselves the help they need.

Accepting ourselves as we are and being okay with it is the key to living a healthy life and sometimes, we need help and guidance to do this. Psychological counselling is when an unbiased, trained mental health professional, using psychological tests and therapies, helps us deal with personal and psychological problems. However, it isn't instant. 'Maggi'. It takes at least six to eight sessions to

start seeing the changes and the person in therapy must be committed to making that change in their life. Both patience and resilience are essential.

According to Minu, it's also a misconception that one must be suffering from severe mental health issues to get therapy. Therapy is for anyone at any stage of their life. While those with clinical issues such as depression, anxiety, OCD, dementia and Alzheimer's require counselling, one can even go to a counsellor to deal with stress, grief, menopause, loneliness, anger, low self-esteem or even vent in a safe space.

"During my travels to find Prachi (my younger daughter, a special-needs child with ADHD), low IQ and bipolar disorder) the best treatment

and education, I was running from pillar to post, city and country. It dawned upon me that there was no single centre that addressed all issues related to the mind. I realised that the need of the hour was an institute of mental health that would provide easily accessible, affordable, A-Z, mental healthcare under one roof. This dream gave birth to 'Caring Minds', said Minu Budhia.

'Caring Minds' is a super-speciality institute of mental health established in 2013 under the leadership of Minu Budhia. It's a one-stop solution for all issues related to psychological health.





মনের কথা শোনো

আসলে শরীরের মতোই আমাদের মন। শরীরে আঘাত লাগলে যেমন ব্যথা লাগে, বেশি চাপ পড়লে যেমন কষ্ট হয়, তেমনিই আমাদের মনও। বেশি চিন্তা, বেশি চাপ নেওয়া কিংবা মানসিক আঘাত সবচেয়েই মন খারাপ হয়, মনের অসুখও হয়। তাই শরীর খারাপে ডাক্তারবাবুর কাছে যাওয়ার মতোই মন খারাপও তীব্র হলে ডাক্তারের শরণাপন্ন হতে হবে। গতকাল ওয়ার্ল্ড মেটাল হেলথ ডে-তে এ শহরের অন্যতম সাইকোথেরাপিস্ট তথা

কেয়ারিং মাইন্ডসের কর্ণধার মিনু বুথিয়া জানান, এ রাজ্যে তথা এদেশে মনের যত্নে অনেকেই আগ্রহী নন। মনোকষ্ট চেপে রেখে আরও রোগ বাড়ায়। কারও সাথে মন খুলে মনের কথা বলতে না পারা কিন্তু মারাত্মক। ভাল থাকতে গেলে শরীরের পাশাপাশি মনও ভাল রাখা খুব দরকার। 'লোকের কী বলবে'-এই ভেবে মনোরোগ পুণে রাখা মারাত্মক। মনের অবস্থা বাইরে থেকে দেখা যায় না বলে অবহেলা একদম নয়। ভাল থাকতে গেলে মনের যত্ন নিম্ন। বর্তমানে উদ্বেগ, ডিপ্রেসন, অবসেসিভ কম্পালসিভ ডিজঅর্ডার, ডিমেনশিয়া, অ্যালকাইমার্স ইত্যাদি মানসিক ব্যাধিতে আক্রান্তের সংখ্যা দিনে দিনে বাড়ছে। তাই শুরুতেই সাবধান হোন।

মানসিক স্বাস্থ্যের পরিচর্যা কেয়ারিং মাইন্ডস

বিশ্ব মানসিক স্বাস্থ্য দিবসে কেয়ারিং মাইন্ডস ইনস্টিটিউট অফ মেটাল হেলথ এর প্রতিষ্ঠাতা তথা সাইকোথেরাপিস্ট মিনু বুথিয়া জানিয়েছেন, "আমি নিজে সফলভাবে ডিপ্রেসন কাটিয়ে উঠেছি। এই বিষয়টাকে অজুং বা চর্চার বিষয় নয় এমন মনে করা চলবে না। বরং খোলা মনে মানসিক রোগের বিষয়টা সবার সঙ্গে আলোচনা করা দরকার। কারণ আপনার মানসিক সুস্থতা গুরুত্বের দাবি রাখে।" এখানে উল্লেখ করা যেতে পারে, মিনু বুথিয়ার গড়ে তোলার কেয়ারিং মাইন্ডস হল এমনই এক সংস্থা, যেখানে এক ছাত্রের তলয়ার সব ধরনের মানসিক চিকিৎসার সুব্যবস্থা রয়েছে। নয় বছরের বেশি সময় ধরে এই সংস্থা প্রায় ২৫ লক্ষ মানুষের জীবনে সদর্ধক পরিবর্তন আনতে সমর্থ হয়েছে এদের বিভিন্ন কর্মকাণ্ডের মাধ্যমে। সংস্থার গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কয়েকটি বৈশিষ্ট্য হল ১৬ লক্ষেরও বেশি ক্লিনিক্যাল সেশন, ৮ হাজারের বেশি ট্রেনিং সেশন, ৬৬-র বেশি ধরনের পরিষেবার সন্ধান, ২৭টিরও বেশি ওয়ার্কশপ কোর্সের প্রকারভেদ, ৮-৭-র বেশি অংশীদার এবং ৩৫ এর বেশি মেটাল হেলথ পেশাদারের সূচনা পরিষেবা। এখানকার আকাডেমিক উইংয়ে রয়েছে বিভিন্ন ধরনের দীর্ঘ ও স্ক্রামেয়াদি কোর্স বা কর্মশালা। যেমন- যাদবপুর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় স্বীকৃত ১ বছরের পিডি ডিপ্লোমা ইন সাইকোলজিক্যাল কাউন্সেলিং এবং সাইকোথেরাপির ওপর ৬ মাসের সার্টিফিকেট কোর্স। স্ক্রামেয়াদি ওয়ার্কশপে বিভিন্ন ধরনের কোর্স রয়েছে যার মধ্যে উন্মোচন আটজম, বিশেষ চাহিদাসম্পন্ন শিশুদের পরিচর্যা, বয়স্কদের পরিচর্যা ইত্যাদি। কেয়ারিং মাইন্ডস সম্পর্কে আরও জানতে দেখতে পারেন এই ওয়েবসাইট www.caringminds.co.in অথবা কথা বলতে পারেন এই নম্বরে: ৯৮০৬৪০৩৭৬৬।