

HORIZON

STRIVE TO BE LIMITLESS

FEBRUARY EDITION

MENTAL HEALTH

**EMBRACING
WELLNESS:**

**NURTURING YOUR
MIND, BODY, AND
SOUL**





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Editor's Message



In the fast-paced whirlwind of modern life, it's easy to forget that our mental well-being is just as important as our physical health. That's why, in this month's edition, we've dedicated our pages to the vital topic of mental health.

From the silent struggles to the triumphs of recovery, we delve into the complexities of the human mind. Our hope is to spark conversations, foster understanding, and offer support to those who may be facing their own mental health challenges.

In these pages, you'll find insightful articles exploring various aspects of mental health—from coping mechanisms and self-care practices to the stigma that still surrounds mental illness. We believe that knowledge is power, and by sharing information and experiences, we can break down barriers and create a more compassionate society.

Remember, you are not alone. Whether you're battling anxiety, depression, or simply feeling overwhelmed, there are resources and communities ready to offer guidance and solidarity. Together, let's prioritize mental health, not just this month, but every day.

Thank you for joining us on this important journey.

Siddhi Shastri

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH AND HOW IMPORTANT IS IT?

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well, work effectively, and contribute to their community. It encompasses our emotional, psychological, and social dimensions, significantly impacting how we think, feel, and act.

In a few words, Mental health means feeling good about yourself, handling life's challenges well, and being able to do what you need to do each day.

Importance of addressing mental health

Understanding the importance of addressing mental health is crucial for several reasons. It allows us to recognize the prevalence and impact of mental health issues on individuals and society. By prioritizing mental health, we can improve overall well-being, enhance quality of life, and foster resilient communities.

Additionally, addressing mental health reduces stigma, promotes early intervention, and ensures that individuals receive the support and resources they need to thrive. Ultimately, prioritizing mental health contributes to a healthier, more compassionate society where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The increasing awareness about mental health

Every year more and more people become aware and begin to prioritize their mental health. The current generation is increasingly prioritizing mental health, recognizing its integral role in overall well-being. With a shift towards open conversations, destigmatization efforts, and readily accessible resources, there's a growing acknowledgment of the importance of mental wellness. This generation is embracing self-care practices, seeking therapy, and advocating for mental health awareness in various spheres of life.

Technology's role in mental health awareness

Technology plays a pivotal role in mental health awareness by increasing access to information, support, and resources. Mobile apps offer tools for meditation, mood tracking, and connecting with support networks. Teletherapy and online counseling platforms provide convenient avenues for seeking professional help. Social media campaigns and online communities facilitate open discussions, reducing stigma and fostering a supportive environment. Through innovation and connectivity, technology empowers individuals to prioritize and manage their mental well-being effectively.

EMBRACING MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is a crucial aspect of our overall well-being. It significantly impacts how we function psychologically, emotionally, and socially. Let's delve into its importance:

Risk Factors for Poor Mental Health:

Childhood Abuse: When children experience physical assault, sexual violence, emotional abuse, or neglect, it can lead to severe mental and emotional distress. This increases the risk of developing mental disorders like depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or personality disorders. Additionally, it may contribute to medical complications like diabetes and heart disease.



Environment: Adverse environmental conditions can negatively affect mental well-being. For instance, weather conditions may influence suicide rates, and experiencing natural disasters can increase the chances of developing PTSD. Conversely, a positive social environment provides protection against mental challenges.

Practices: Unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, unhealthy eating, excessive alcohol consumption, substance abuse, and engaging in risky sexual activities can have negative effects on mental well-being.

Genetics: Genetic factors contribute to mental health disorders, as these conditions often have a familial pattern and can be hereditary.

BENEFITS OF GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

Addressing mental health is crucial for several reasons:

Individual Well-Being: Prioritizing mental health ensures that individuals experience a higher quality of life. It allows them to manage stress, emotions, and relationships effectively.

Physical Health: Mental health and physical health are interconnected. Chronic stress and untreated mental health conditions can lead to physical health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, and immune system disorders.

Productivity and Functioning: Good mental health enhances productivity at work, school, and daily life. It enables individuals to focus, learn, and contribute effectively.

Reducing Stigma: Addressing mental health helps reduce stigma associated with mental illnesses. Open conversations promote understanding and empathy.

Social Impact: Communities benefit when mental health is prioritized. It leads to stronger social bonds, reduced crime rates, and better overall well-being.

Economic Impact: Untreated mental health conditions result in economic losses due to absenteeism, decreased productivity, and healthcare costs.

Human Rights: Recognizing mental health as a basic human right ensures that everyone has access to care and support.



THE THERAPEUTIC JOURNEY: DEMYSTIFYING PSYCHOTHERAPY FROM BASICS TO BREAKTHROUGHS

"We shouldn't teach great books; we should teach a love of reading. Knowing the contents of a few works of literature is a trivial achievement. Being inclined to go on reading is a great achievement." –B.F. Skinner

What comes to your mind when you hear the word Psychotherapy?

Psychotherapy is often referred to as talk therapy for common understanding though it is more than that! It is a collaborative treatment based on the relationship between an individual and a psychologist, therapist, or psychiatrist. It aims to provide a supportive environment where individuals can openly discuss their thoughts, feelings, and experiences without the feeling of being judged while working towards comprehending and resolving psychological issues.

It is grounded in the belief that through self-exploration, insight, and understanding one-self, individuals can make positive and healthy changes in their lives. Psychotherapy sessions typically occur on a regular basis and may vary in duration, frequency, and structure depending on the specific approach and the needs of the individual, decided by the professionals.

Approaches to Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy involves a range of therapeutic approaches each with its own theoretical underpinnings and techniques designed to aid individuals address and acknowledge their emotional, behavioral, and mental health concerns.

1. Psychodynamic Therapy focuses on exploring the unconscious processes and unresolved childhood conflicts that may contribute to current emotional distress, anxieties and dysfunctional patterns of behavior. The concepts rooting from the theories of Sigmund Freud.

2. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a structured, goal-oriented approach that aims to identify and modify negative thought patterns and behaviors contributing to psychological distress. It emphasizes the importance of cognitive restructuring and behavior change implementing tailored techniques in accordance to the client's needs.



3. Humanistic Therapy, including person-centered therapy developed by Carl Rogers, emphasizes notions like empathy, authenticity, and unconditional positive regard. It focuses on helping individuals develop self-awareness, self-acceptance, and personal growth to sustain their well-being.

4. Existential Therapy explores the philosophical questions related to existence, freedom, responsibility, and meaning. It encourages individuals to confront the realities of human existence and implies to take responsibility for their choices and actions.

Techniques in Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy employs a variety of techniques to facilitate healing and personal growth.

- **Active Listening:** Therapists listen attentively to their clients to understand the client's perspective, providing empathy, validation throughout the process.
- **Reflection:** Therapists reflect back clients' thoughts, feelings, and experiences to promote self-awareness and insight.
- **Questioning:** Therapists ask open or close ended questions to help clients explore their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors more deeply.
- **Homework Assignments:** Therapists may assign tasks or exercises for clients to complete between sessions to reinforce learning and facilitate behavior change in the real world setting.
- **Role-playing:** Therapists and clients may engage in role-playing exercises to practice new skills or explore interpersonal dynamics.

Benefits of Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy offers numerous benefits for individuals struggling with various psychological issues, including:

- **Improved Emotional Well-being:** Psychotherapy can help individuals develop coping skills, enhance self-esteem, and manage symptoms of anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions.
- **Enhanced Relationships:** By improving communication skills and interpersonal awareness, psychotherapy can facilitate healthier, more satisfying relationships with others.
- **Increased Self-awareness:** Psychotherapy encourages self-reflection and introspection, leading to greater self-understanding and personal growth.
- **Effective Problem-solving:** Psychotherapy equips individuals with tools and strategies to identify and address challenges more effectively.
- **Support During Life Transitions:** Psychotherapy can provide support and guidance during significant life changes, such as divorce, loss, or career transitions.

Considerations in Psychotherapy

While psychotherapy can be highly beneficial, there are several factors to consider when embarking on the therapeutic journey:

- **Therapist Competence:** Finding the right therapist is essential for a positive therapeutic experience. It's important to consider factors such as the therapeutic approach employed by the therapist, personality fit, and their expertise in addressing specific concerns.
- **Commitment and Consistency:** Psychotherapy requires a commitment to attending sessions regularly and actively engaging in the therapeutic process. Consistency and openness to change are key to achieving meaningful results.
- **Confidentiality and Trust:** Establishing a trusting relationship with the therapist is crucial for open and honest communication. Confidentiality is typically maintained within legal and ethical boundaries to ensure client privacy and safety with appropriate informed consent provided by the client.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Therapists should demonstrate cultural competence and sensitivity to clients' diverse backgrounds, values, and beliefs to provide effective and respectful care.
- **Cost and Accessibility:** Considerations such as cost, insurance coverage, and accessibility of therapy services may impact treatment options and availability.

Psychotherapy offers a valuable opportunity for individuals to explore and address psychological challenges, improve emotional well-being, and enhance overall quality of life. By fostering a supportive and collaborative therapeutic relationship, individuals can gain insight, develop coping skills, and make positive changes that promote personal growth and resilience. Whether seeking support for specific mental health concerns or simply striving for greater self-awareness and fulfillment, psychotherapy can be a transformative journey towards healing and self-discovery.

Ending the note with a beautiful quote by a renowned psychologist.

"If you want to be creative, stay in part a child, with the creativity and invention that characterizes children, before they are deformed by adult society." ~Jean Piaget.

By- Richik Sil
MSc Psychology

EXERCISE AND MENTAL HEALTH



Exploring the profound connection between physical activity and mental health, let's dive into the significant role exercise plays in promoting overall well-being.

Benefits of Physical Activity:

Physical activity positively impacts mental health by improving mood, reducing anxiety levels, and alleviating symptoms of depression. Engaging in activities like aerobic exercises and muscle-strengthening activities promotes cognitive function and overall well-being, fostering optimal mental health.

Interconnectedness: Mental health and physical health are interconnected. Chronic stress and untreated mental health conditions can lead to physical health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, and immune system disorders.

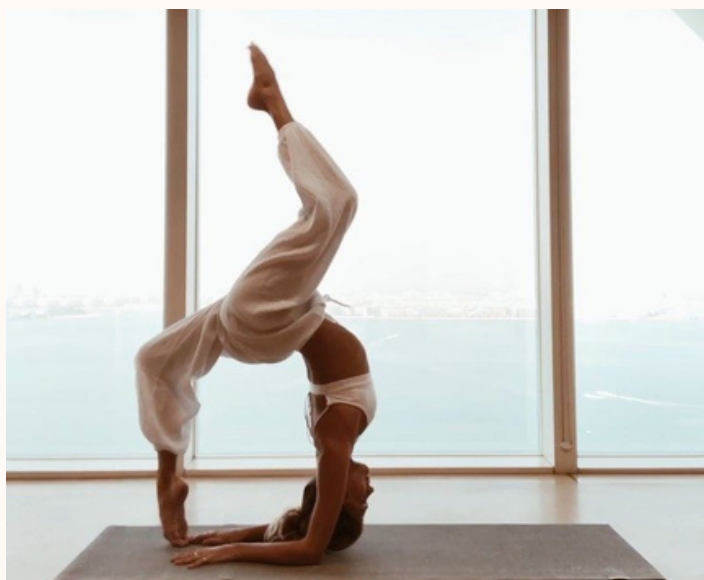
Productivity and Functioning: Good mental health enhances productivity at work, school, and daily life. It enables individuals to focus, learn, and contribute effectively.

Exercise for Mental Well-being:

Illustrating the concept of "exercise snacks," even brief bursts of physical activity, like a brisk 10-minute walk or dedicating just 30 minutes per week to exercise, can significantly enhance mood, boost energy levels, and contribute to overall well-being, demonstrating the accessible and impactful nature of incorporating exercise into daily life.

Economic Impact: Untreated mental health conditions result in economic losses due to absenteeism, decreased productivity, and healthcare costs.

Human Rights: Recognizing mental health as a basic human right ensures that everyone has access to care and support.



Why Is a Healthy Lifestyle Important to Mental Health?

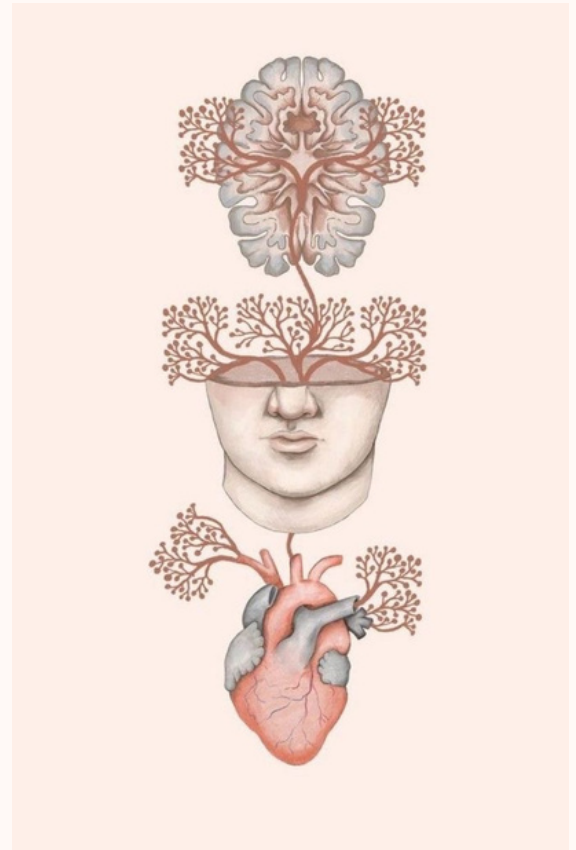
The significance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle for mental well-being cannot be overstated. Just as lifestyle choices profoundly affect physical health, factors like smoking, stress, and a lack of physical activity elevate the risk of heart disease and other physical ailments. Similarly, your daily choices, including dietary habits, workload, social interactions, and various other factors, are intertwined with your mental health. Regardless of the challenges you face in terms of mental health, adopting a healthy lifestyle can greatly facilitate the management of these issues.

What Does a Positive Lifestyle Entail?

A well-rounded lifestyle encompasses more than simply maintaining a nutritious diet and engaging in regular exercise. It involves effective stress management, cultivating physical well-being through healthy habits and proper healthcare practices, fostering positive relationships, actively contributing to one's community, and achieving a satisfying balance between work and personal life for optimal mental health.

The Role of Nutrition in Mental Health

The link between nutrition and mental well-being is increasingly clear, highlighting the importance of acknowledging the role nutrition plays in supporting mental health. Consuming a diet abundant in nutritious foods has been proven to have a positive impact on mood, reduce stress, and improve cognitive function. Maintaining a balanced diet that includes plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables is especially beneficial as they provide essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that can lower the risk of developing mental health conditions like depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder. On the other hand, consuming processed foods can lead to an unhealthy lifestyle and potentially harm mental health due to their high sugar content, which may cause mood swings and worsen various mental health symptoms. Therefore, recognizing the importance of nutrition in mental well-being is vital for making informed dietary choices that support overall wellness.



Sleep And Mental Health

The relationship between sleep and mental health is a critical one, with each significantly impacting the other. Sleep deprivation not only impairs cognitive functions but also disrupts emotional regulation, leading to heightened stress and anxiety levels. Conversely, mental health conditions such as anxiety disorders, depression, and PTSD often manifest with sleep disturbances, perpetuating a cycle of sleep disruption and psychological distress. Recognizing the interconnectedness between sleep and mental health underscores the importance of prioritizing healthy sleep habits and seeking professional support to address both aspects effectively.

Establishing a consistent sleep schedule, creating a conducive sleep environment, and practicing relaxation techniques before bedtime are essential strategies to promote restful sleep and support mental well-being. Additionally, interventions such as cognitive-behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I) can effectively address sleep disturbances while simultaneously addressing underlying mental health issues. By acknowledging and addressing the bond between sleep and mental health, individuals can take proactive steps towards achieving holistic wellness and resilience in the face of life's challenges.

Peer Pressure and Mental Health

Peer pressure, an inherent aspect of social interactions, can wield a profound influence on mental health, particularly among adolescents and young adults. The desire to conform to peer expectations or societal norms often compels individuals to engage in behaviors that may compromise their well-being. Whether it involves experimenting with substances, engaging in risky activities, or conforming to certain appearance standards, succumbing to peer pressure can evoke feelings of stress, anxiety, and self-doubt. The fear of social exclusion or ridicule can create a pervasive sense of inadequacy, leading individuals to prioritize fitting in over their own values and needs. Over time, this internal conflict can erode self-esteem and exacerbate underlying mental health issues, ultimately contributing to a sense of disconnection and alienation.

Moreover, the impact of peer pressure on mental health extends beyond immediate social interactions to long-term psychological well-being. Adolescents, in particular, are susceptible to the influence of peer pressure as they navigate the complexities of identity formation and social acceptance. The pressure to conform can instill a sense of insecurity and self-doubt, fueling anxiety and depression. Additionally, the constant comparison to peers and the perceived need to meet unrealistic standards can perpetuate feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction with oneself. Therefore, fostering resilience and promoting assertiveness skills are crucial in empowering individuals to resist negative peer influences and prioritize their mental health amidst social pressures.

TECHNOLOGY AND MENTAL HEALTH

The previous generations have lived all their lives without technology. Imagine our grandparents in their youth spending countless hours of their week watching reels and liking posts of some celebrity he/ she has never encountered. It's hard to imagine right? Our lives now revolve around this technology whether we like it or not. And this technology has both positive and negative impacts on our mental health.

The Negative Side:

Technology is a boom to society with all the automation and ease of life machines and gadgets. Though it may seem that technology is here to make our lives easy, it has its own share in making our lifestyle unhealthy.

Technology use has been connected to a number of mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, and sleep disturbances.

This figure shows how over the years, teenagers in USA have experienced mental health issues. One of the major factors for this depression is the use of technology, specifically, social media. The use of social media has been linked to a lower level of self-esteem and problems with body image, as well as an increased chance of developing anxiety and depression. Feelings of isolation can have a negative effect on mental health when people spend more time on social media and less time interacting with others in person.

Posting anything online, such on Facebook, feeds our want for rapid, affirming input. Since the real world isn't like this, we grow increasingly impatient, irritated, and nervous.

A large number of young adults and teenagers often spend time scrolling through memes and reels on Instagram before going to bed. While this may seem enjoyable, it's actually a very unhealthy habit. Using technology before sleep has been associated with difficulties in falling asleep and heightened alertness. Sleep is a time for the body to relax and rest, but using technology can stimulate the body to stay active, making it harder to achieve a good night's sleep. Research indicates that approximately 97% of teenagers in the United States use technology before going to bed.



The Positive Side:

It's hard to believe that there are positive impacts of technology on mental health, but surprisingly, it has many advantages to it.

Though established earlier that use of social media can make a person go in a state of isolation, technology has been playing a crucial role in keeping people connected. With the technology, we can connect to our loved ones anytime, anywhere. Imagine a person suffering from depression and is feeling lonely. He/she can video call or phone call or text his/her loved one instantly and share his/her feelings.

Social media helps people build communities among themselves. People suffering from mental health related issues can build their own communities and focus groups on social media or other online platforms to help one another get out of their misery.

Our physical health is greatly related to our mental health. Apps related to tracking diets and exercise routines are readily available on all smartphones. Apple has its own app named Health in its devices that help the users in actively monitoring their physical fitness. A body that is physically fit has a high chance of having good mental health.



SELF CARE AND MINDFULNESS

Self-Care

Good mental health can be attributed to a variety of things, but self-care is among the most important. Self-care is giving ourselves the time and attention we need to take care of our physical and mental needs. It entails setting our needs first and making decisions that promote our mental well-being. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) states that taking care of yourself can help you manage stress, reduce your risk of illness, and have more energy.

Everybody's definition of self-care is different, so it's critical to discover what you love and find necessary. Finding the solution that works best for you may need some trial and error. Furthermore, even though self-care does not treat mental diseases, managing your mental health can be aided by knowing what triggers or causes your moderate symptoms as well as effective coping mechanisms.

Here are some tips in the path of self-care:

Get regular exercise: Yoga is one of the most prominent techniques in developing one's physical health. Coupled with meditation, the two can work wonders in improving a person's physical as well as mental health. Just 30 minutes of walking or any other form of exercise can help in elevating your mood significantly.

Eat Healthy: In today's era, junk food among young adults and teenagers is very common. Hence, it is a challenge to come out of that routine and start eating healthy. The key is to have a balanced diet rather than anything fancy.

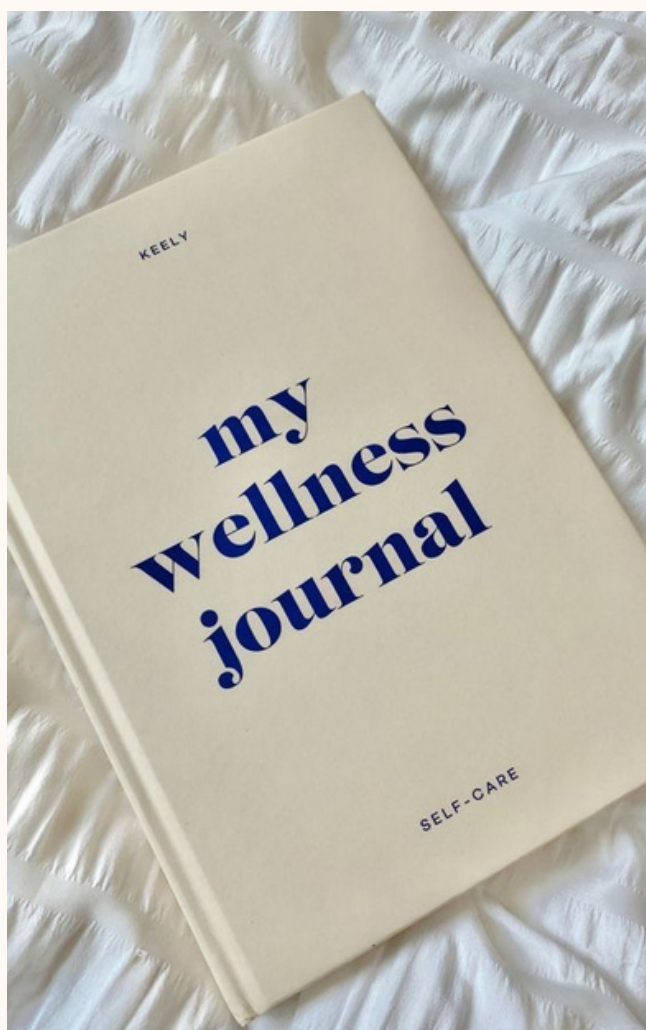
Get enough sleep: Ample sound sleep is the most effective way to improve your mental health. As discussed earlier, use of digital devices must be limited before sleep because these devices emit blue light which deprive your eyes of that sleepy sensation. Get off your phones and just relax your body and mind before sleeping.

Play a sport: Sports are an excellent way to engage both your mind and body. People can engage in any kind of sport and it will help you develop yourself in terms of physical health, mental health and personality.

Practice Gratitude: Show appreciation for what you have. Every day, remind yourself of your blessings. Give details. At night, jot them down or go over them again in your head.

Journal Writing: Keeping a journal allows you to express your thoughts and feelings, helping you understand yourself better. It can serve as a safe space to unload your emotions, reflect on your experiences, and track your personal growth over time. Writing regularly can also improve your mood, reduce stress, and enhance your overall well-being.

Affirmations: Affirmations are positive statements that can help challenge and overcome self-sabotaging and negative thoughts. By repeating affirmations, you can reprogram your subconscious mind to believe in the positive messages you're sending yourself. This can boost your confidence, improve your self-esteem, and cultivate a more optimistic outlook on life.

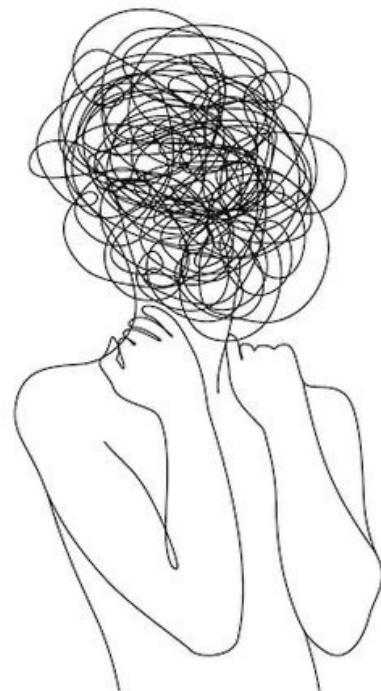


Mindfulness

Mindfulness is being fully present, moment by moment, and judgment-free with what is happening both inside and outside of you. It implies that you are aware of your feelings, ideas, and sensory experiences—taste, touch, smell, sight, and sound. Also, you have complete awareness of your surroundings. You may teach yourself to focus your attention in a particular way by practicing mindfulness. It can benefit your daily existence, career, interpersonal connections, and general well-being. The field of mindfulness research is still developing, but preliminary findings point to the benefits of mindfulness for overall health and well-being, with positive effects on the mind, body, behavior, and relationships with others, among other aspects of whole-person health. Numerous disorders, including as stress, anxiety, depression, compulsive behaviors like substance abuse and alcoholism, as well as medical issues like chronic pain, heart disease, and hypertension, have also been linked to mindfulness.

EXAM STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

Teenagers and young adults have to face the pressure of exams on a daily basis. With the world getting competitive in each and every field, students have to rigorously try and excel in their academics to get ahead. Exams and grades have become so important to people that they are stressing themselves out to study. Especially in India, people are completely obsessed with marks and grades, though through no fault of their own because since childhood, everyone has been pressed on to score high marks in their examination. Vital indicators of stress in students include intense anxiety, butterflies in the stomach, sweaty, clammy hands, frequent urination, weak knees, sudden panic episodes, and blank outs. These situations need to be tackled carefully by both the students and the people around them. Students need to plan their study in order to have a smooth flow in completing the syllabus. If a student feels stressed, he/she can always reach out to their parents and teachers to clarify their doubts. Friends and classmates are the best stress busters in such cases because they are also going through the same journey and can help out in a much better way. Taking breaks on regular intervals will help relieve piled up tension and relax the body and mind. Exercise can help in keeping the mind fresh, helping students in concentrating on studies. Parents also need to understand the situation of their child and try and help them rather than pressurizing them. It is important to understand that examinations and marks are just a means to test your knowledge, it doesn't define you as a person at all.



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