



**“I DON’T SUFFER FROM MENTAL ILLNESS,
I LIVE WITH IT”**

DAVID FEHERTY



UNDERSTANDING MENTAL ILLNESS & THE CAREGIVING BURDEN

Note: This content might be triggering for some people. This is not a diagnostic tool. In case of any concern, please reach out for help (find the info on the last page) or if any concerns arise, please reach out to a clinical psychologist/psychiatrist.

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH ?

IS IT THE SAME AS MENTAL ILLNESS ?



10TH OCTOBER OF EVERY YEAR IS DEDICATED TO CELEBRATING WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY. THIS YEAR THE THEME, 'MENTAL HEALTH IS A UNIVERSAL RIGHT' REAFFIRMS THAT MENTAL HEALTH CARE IS NOT A PRIVILEGE BUT A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT AND DOES NOT DISCRIMATE ON THE BASIS OF CASTE, CLASS, GENDER, RELIGION ETC.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental Health refers to an individual's social, psychological and emotional well-being. It is more than just an absence of mental illness.

According to the World Health Organization, someone with 'good' mental health are capable of:

- Effectively coping with stress
- Learning & Working well
- Contributing to the community

Mental Health is essentially the foundation for our emotions, thoughts, learning, communication & self esteem.



It is important to note that *everyone has mental health but not everyone is diagnosed with a mental illness.*

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH ? IS IT THE SAME AS MENTAL ILLNESS ?

MENTAL ILLNESS

Mental Illnesses are **diagnosable** mental health conditions. They can have an impact on how you carry out various daily activities and frequently include a profoundly distressing alteration in your thoughts, emotions, or behaviors.

In order to diagnose any mental health disorder, a mental health professional will assess four main dimensions:

- 1) What **symptoms** you have,
- 2) **How long** have they been there
- 3) **Severity** of the symptoms and
- 4) Possible **causes** of your symptoms.
- 5) Impact on **daily functioning**.




While you may be acquainted with anxiety and depression disorders, other mental health conditions include schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, substance use disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders, post-traumatic stress disorders, neurodevelopmental disorders like ADHD, Autism, and lastly, personality disorders.


IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS/MENTAL ILLNESSES CAN STILL HAVE GOOD MENTAL HEALTH. MANY OF THEM MIGHT BE IN REMISSION OR WORKING ON THEMSELVES IN THERAPY.

LANGUAGE AROUND THIS ALSO MATTERS. LABELLING PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESSES AS 'CRAZY' OR 'MENTAL', CREATES A STIGMA AROUND IT, THUS PREVENTING THEM FROM SEEKING HELP.

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK




Mental Illness Awareness Week is aimed at raising public awareness about mental health issues and destigmatizing mental illnesses. Held in the first week of October, this week-long campaign provides a platform for individuals, organizations, and communities to come together and promote understanding and support for those affected by mental health conditions. It serves as an opportunity to educate the public about various mental disorders, their prevalence, and the available resources for treatment and support.



The theme for this year's Mental Illness Awareness Week, "Together we care, together we share," encapsulates the profound impact of community support in the realm of mental health.

Sharing personal struggles, triumphs, and coping strategies can foster a sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation. Knowing that others have faced similar hurdles and have found ways to navigate them can be immensely reassuring for those grappling with their own mental health issues.



Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) has a rich history dating back to the early 1990s. It was established by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), one of the largest mental health advocacy organizations in the United States.

The choice of October for MIAW is significant, as it follows the equinox, symbolizing a period of transition and change. This timing serves as a metaphor for the transformation and progress that individuals affected by mental health conditions can achieve with appropriate support and resources.

CAREGIVING BURDEN

Caregiving burden is the stress felt from caring for others, and caregiver burden is the emotional and physical strain felt by caregivers.

Individuals with profound or severe mental illnesses find it debilitating to function daily. Hence, causing increasing dependence on caregivers.

This burden can cause psychological distress in a caregiver and affect their quality of life. Some of the effects of the caregiving burden include :



Emotional Strain: Providing care for someone with a mental illness can be emotionally challenging. Caregivers may witness their loved one experiencing intense emotional distress, mood swings, or behavioral changes. This can lead to feelings of helplessness, frustration, sadness, and sometimes even fear for the safety of the person they are caring for.



Stigma and Isolation: Mental health conditions are still stigmatized in many societies, which can lead to social isolation for both the person with the condition and their caregiver. Caregivers may face judgment, misunderstanding, or avoidance from others, which can be isolating and contribute to their own mental health struggles.



Balancing Personal Needs: Caregivers of individuals with mental illness often face the challenge of balancing their caregiving role with their own needs for self-care, work, and maintaining their own mental health. Neglecting self-care can lead to caregiver burnout and additional stress.



Guilt and Self-blame: Caregivers may experience feelings of guilt or self-blame, especially if they struggle to help the person they care for or if they need to set boundaries for their own well-being.



Experienced Shame and Embarrassment: Given the stigma present, it is very normal to experience feelings of shame and embarrassment, be it the caregiver or the person themselves. In situations like such, remember that help is available.

It is important to recognize that caring for someone with a mental illness is an act of love, compassion, and profound significance. It showcases the strength and resilience of caregivers who commit themselves to the well-being of their loved ones. While it can be challenging and emotionally demanding, it's essential to recognize that seeking help, setting boundaries, and practicing self-care are not signs of weakness, but rather acts of self-compassion and understanding.

Thus, it is important not only for people with mental illnesses to seek professional help but also for their caregivers to do the same. *Because mental health is for everyone.*

EXPERTS DIALOGUE

WHY SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS IS OUR SHARED RESPONSIBILITY



Bhavana Issar
Founder and CEO, Caregiver Saathi

Our society thrives when we stand together and pool our resources to face common challenges. As someone who has been intricately involved in building caregiver support systems, I find that this is an area that is unfortunately overlooked but increasingly essential. That is why I am reaching out to you today: to talk about the cornerstone of healthcare that we often miss— our caregivers, and their mental health. This is a call to action, and here's why.

Priya, a promising engineering student in Mumbai, had to drop out of college when her younger brother, Rohan, was diagnosed with a rare neurological condition. While her peers pursued careers and dreams, Priya administered medication, managed hospital visits, and watched her spirited brother slowly become bedridden. Nights were the hardest. Rohan's seizures would intensify, leaving Priya sleep-deprived and perpetually anxious. She felt isolated, overwhelmed, missing the life he once had, and grieving the life his sister might never have. During one of these nights, a caregiver volunteer reached out. Offering physical support and emotional solace, the volunteer brought Priya back from the brink of despair, connecting her with a community that understood her struggles and challenges.

If you look around there is a caregiver in every home. Caregiving for those navigating mental illnesses, the elderly, the chronically ill, or children with special needs, is emotionally taxing and physically draining. Its relentless - a 24/7 job with no holidays. The pain and the suffering of the patients or the care receivers is visible, and we focus on the needs of the care recipients (or patients). We overlook that caregivers, too, require emotional, psychological, and sometimes financial care. This neglect has consequences not just for caregivers, their mental health but also for society at large. Burnout, depression, and financial strain among caregivers eventually destabilize the quality of care the recipients receive.

It's time that we see the Caregivers for their significant role and contributions. Its time we change the narratives around caregiving and caregivers.

Let's consider what it would mean to have a robust caregiving ecosystem. It would be a system that recognizes and supports caregivers' integral role in health outcomes. It would be one where caregivers no longer have to operate in isolation, weighed down by societal expectations and void of institutional support. The caregiving ecosystem must be part of the equation if we aim to make strides in healthcare, education, our collective well-being.

FOOD FOR YOUR BRAIN!

I	S	S	T	C	O	S	R	A	T	D	T	T	N
T	C	X	U	R	N	R	O	C	D	N	L	A	O
S	H	T	B	R	N	X	N	I	R	E	A	N	I
P	I	C	A	U	P	E	S	N	I	N	E	O	S
E	Z	E	N	C	L	A	P	O	I	A	N	R	S
P	O	R	T	A	B	I	N	N	C	A	B	E	E
D	P	A	I	P	I	N	M	X	C	X	P	X	R
B	H	L	S	I	T	P	D	I	I	U	D	I	P
I	R	O	O	N	I	S	B	M	A	E	D	A	E
Y	E	P	C	R	I	Z	D	E	D	O	T	S	D
X	N	I	I	S	D	Z	P	O	U	I	D	Y	O
S	I	B	A	O	I	B	X	Y	T	X	X	Y	C
R	A	R	L	C	D	C	B	O	O	A	O	R	L
I	A	T	A	S	O	T	S	I	I	A	C	L	S

- Schizophrenia:** Causes distorted thinking, hallucinations, delusions, and impaired social functioning.
- Antisocial Personality Disorder:** Personality disorder characterized by impulsive, socially exploitative and often criminal behaviour.
- BPD(Borderline Personality Disorder):** Severely impacts a person's ability to regulate their emotions and thus results in unstable moods and relationships.
- Depression:** A mood disorder characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, and a range of physical and emotional symptoms.
- OCD (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder) is marked** by persistent, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviors or mental acts (compulsions).
- Bipolar Disorder:** A mood disorder involving periods of mania (elevated mood, high energy) and depressive episodes, often leading to significant shifts in mood and behavior.
- Bulimia:** An eating disorder characterized by recurrent episodes of overeating followed by compensatory behaviors like vomiting or excessive exercise.
- PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder):** caused and triggered by exposure to a traumatic event, causing symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, and severe anxiety.
- Anxiety:** A common mental health condition involving excessive worry, fear, or nervousness, often accompanied by physical symptoms like rapid heartbeat or sweating.
- Anorexia:** An eating disorder characterized by an extreme fear of gaining weight, leading to restricted food intake and distorted body image.

Help is a call away!

PROJECT MUMBAI IS HERE FOR YOU!

If you or someone you know is experiencing any mental or emotional distress, kindly call on Project Mumbai toll-free mental health helpline number:

SAMVAAD
1800-102-4040

This helpline is active from 8 am to 8 pm, seven days a week and is handled by counsellors with varied expertise.

In case of any mental health related concerns, please feel free to reach us on mentalhealth@projectmumbai.org

- **ICALL HELPLINE (GENERAL COUNSELLING)- 02225521111 (MON-SAT, 8AM-10 PM)**
- **HUMSAFAR TRUST (LGBTQIA+)- 0226673800 (MON-FRI, 10 AM-8PM)**
- **ARPAN (CSA)- +91-9819086444 (MON-FRI, 9 AM-6PM)**
- **AASRA (SUICIDE PREVENTION)- +91-9820466726 (7 DAYS A WEEK, 24 HOURS)**

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Reach out to us on info@projectmumbai.org

or

visit us at www.projectmumbai.org



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Project Mumbai

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