



World Mental Health Day: Steer away from the Detrimental

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According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”¹ It is the state of emotional well-being by the virtue of which an individual is in harmony with himself and the society.

Various factors such as any mental disorders/conditions, childhood trauma, loss of a family member, financial troubles, drug abuse etc can undermine a person’s psychological balance and bring about a negative effect in the overall development of the individual.²

According to a study in which World Mental Health (WMH) surveys were conducted across 17 countries in 2007, more than 50% individuals are suffering from a mental disorder at a given point of their life.³

There is a pertinent association between physical and mental health. Patients who suffer from a chronic mental illness are at an increased risk of physical health disorders such as Diabetes Mellitus, Hypertension, Psychosomatic disorders. Similarly, chronic health diseases such as Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) or a malignancy can lead to long standing stress.⁴

Mental health and mental illness are two distinct terms which are often confused with each other. According to the CDC, mental illness refers to “conditions that affect a person’s thinking, feeling, mood, or behaviour” whereas mental health, as mentioned above, is an individual’s emotional and psychological state of well-being.⁵

Recently, COVID-19 has had a major negative impact on every individual’s emotional and psychological state. This deadly disease has proved to be detrimental for the

mental health for every person across the whole world. It has led to depression, anxiety and even suicides, especially in the phase of lockdown. 6 According to a pilot study in India in 2021, 151 COVID-19 related suicide reports were retrieved during various lockdown phases. Out of those, 95% of the individuals were under mental stress.⁷

For the World Mental Health Day (WHMD) 2021 on 10th October, WHO has initiated a campaign with the slogan “Mental health care for all: let’s make it a reality” keeping in mind the COVID-19 pandemic and improvements that can be made for healthcare workers (HCWs), students, frontline workers etc.⁸

It is of paramount importance that all individuals must put an effort towards creating a perfect environment for their mind. The well-known traditional methods such as connecting to near and dear ones, exercise, practicing empathy, mindfulness or meditation, avoiding use of drugs and alcohol can instil a sense of positivity in a person and enhance the mental well-being. After all, the established phrase “A sound mind in a sound body” can be put to use.

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