

"Hope is the heartbeat of the human experience."

UDAAN



*A collection of articles,
thoughts, posters, and more,
made by students with love*

FOURTH EDITION



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MAGAZINE 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



We, the Counselling Services Team conveys its heartfelt gratitude to all the contributors of Udaan, the fourth edition. We sincerely appreciate your effort to collaborate with us.

Our heartfelt thanks go to our Honorable Director Prof. Shreepad Karmalkar, Dean of Student Affairs, Prof. Rajesh Roshan Dash, and other Institute functionaries, Faculty, Staff, Officers, and students for their constant support, cooperation, and encouragement.

Thank you!

Team CST
IIT Bhubaneswar

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

"You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection."

Dear All,

This inspiring quote from Lord Buddha reflects the significance of self-care and soul care. He also said: "The mind is everything. What you think you become." But as the denizens of this modern, yet chaotic world, most of us have become ignorant about our thoughts and their effects on our mental health and emotional wellbeing. While we are more concerned about our physical health, we hardly spare time to pause and ponder over our emotional and psychological health.

This ignorance towards mental health and complacency over our physical health have become the major reasons behind the deterioration of our mental health, causing disturbances at personal, social, and professional levels. And to address this issue, we need to have more conversations to rekindle the beam of self-belief and self-love. Here, I remember the lines from the famous Harry Potter character Albus Dumbledore: "Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times if one only remembers to turn on the light." Let us become our own sunshine.

I am glad that at IIT Bhubaneswar, the Counselling Services Cell is taking initiatives towards inculcating the habit of mental and emotional care and is coming up with a magazine, aptly named 'Udaan', as a platform to encourage such conversations among the members of IIT Bhubaneswar. I would like to wish the Magazine a success and convey my best wishes to the Team for their future endeavours.

Prof. Shreepad Karmalkar
Director
IIT Bhubaneswar

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN STUDENT AFFAIRS

My Dear Students,

Life is a beautiful yet complicated voyage filled with high and low tides, and it's perfectly acceptable to experience difficulties in the process. We have all come to terms with the unpredictable nature of the world, where "lockdown" has replaced our "independence" and "online" engagement has replaced "offline" living. I want you to know that it is perfectly acceptable to seek assistance and support when you need it, as I have been in your shoes too. It is, in fact, a courageous step towards self-love and healing.

Believing in seeking a bit of positivity every day, even on bad days, is your progress. Most importantly, invest in thoughtful and compassionate actions and behaviors since it is through our safe social circle that we can strive to survive the long journey of life. Engage to amplify your skills and interests, along with handling your weaknesses. One of the effects I have come across of the post-pandemic is a sense of burnout. Learn to actively take breaks. Even though work is important, it shouldn't be a priority over your mental, emotional, and physical health. The greatest gift you can give yourself is by treating yourself right and then extrapolating it to the outer world. Initiate communicating your distress and worries along with your success stories among your closest friends to clear your mental scape; indulge in reading and writing sessions to align your thoughts; and express yourself in ways that you are comfortable with. However, understand that with a suitable work-life balance, you can truly achieve ambitious goals along with a healthy social life.

I believe we are not here to tell you what to do; rather, we are here to help you take your journey, offering a variety of perspectives and honoring your unique and individual path to mental welfare. My invitation goes to all of you to interact with us, share your experiences, and become a member of our community. Together, we can create a space that uplifts and supports one another to upgrade our overall wellbeing.

On the occasion of World Mental Health Day, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the entirety of the Counselling Services Team at IIT Bhubaneswar for developing such a platform in the form of 'Udaan' for individuals to share their experiences, insights, and moments of inspiration that can help one live a life that is happier, healthier, as well as fulfilling.

I extend my sincerest well-wishes to you in your pursuit of both happiness and a successful career.

With regards,
Prof. Rajesh Roshan Dash
IIT Bhubaneswar

MESSAGE FROM THE PIC COUNSELLING

In the age of social media, we have a lot of online acquaintances, but we hardly ever meet a friend in person with whom we can openly discuss our feelings, challenges, and problems or safely let out our rage. As a result of our inability to express our emotions, worries, and issues with others, the emotional hole starts to widen. Furthermore, we are ignorant of how our person-specific approaches, concerns about the repercussions, or what other people think of me, intensify our issues.

In the present climate, the majority of us quickly lose our patience or become irritated, isolating ourselves both physically and socially. When something doesn't go as planned, we try to avoid it or become anxious. We always look for the bad aspects of others' actions and maintain suspicion of them.

The capacity of an individual to successfully balance their obligations, activities, and attempts to develop psychological resilience. The typical symptoms of mental health conditions, which can interfere with a person's sense of wellness in general, include stress, depression, and anxiety, to mention a few.

'Udaan' is a place for people to talk about their own mental health concerns and raise awareness of them in general. The professionals' writings addressing these concerns and other people's experiences may aid readers in evaluating their own mental health.

I am sending team Udaan and its coordinator and editor, Dr. Gagandeep Kaur Makkar, my best wishes for bringing this issue to light and taking care of the IIT Bhubaneswar community's mental health concerns.

Thanking you,

With best regards,
Raj Kumar Singh
IIT Bhubaneswar

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear students and readers,

It has been 13 years since I have been in the profession of solving some of the most complex puzzles- the human mind. My takeaway from my clinical work is that the most difficult place to escape is one's own mind. Our mind has the potential to become either a cage or a kingdom. What it becomes depends upon what kind of belief system, thoughts, attitudes, and feelings the mind nests. Hence, it becomes imperative to take care of our mind and nurture it.

Over the years by working with people from varied backgrounds, I have also collected many stories (please allow me to use the word stories). Stories of struggles, conflicts, confused identities, survival, and perseverance. What stands out in each of these stories is the unimaginable capacity of humans to navigate extreme circumstances.

My role in the journey of the people I have worked with has been of a facilitator, a listener, and someone who has tried to offer unconditional and non-judgmental support.

If you look around, you too will find stories of fellow humans to inspire you. You are also certain to find a facilitator to help you sail through the crises. This facilitator can be your friend, a parent, a teacher, any book, your pet, a philosophical idea, or even you. What is important to note here is that we are not alone and people before us have survived and so can we. All you need to do is hang on, do whatever is in your hand, and then let time do its work. Remember to embrace your journey. As Friedrich Nietzsche says, "There are no beautiful surfaces without a terrible depth."

Coming to Udaan, it started its humble journey in the year 2020, with an idea to initiate dialogue among the IIT BBS community about mental health. Fast forward 4 years, and Udaan is still on its mission to promote adopting a healthy mindset and strategies. It aims to normalize conversations about individual struggles and increase tolerance in accepting oneself and others.

It is an honor and a privilege to have the opportunity to present the fourth edition of Udaan with the help of my wonderful team - Ms. Dinisha Nayak and Ms. Akhila Ajith for proofreading and editing and Mr. Dinesh Kumar for designing it.

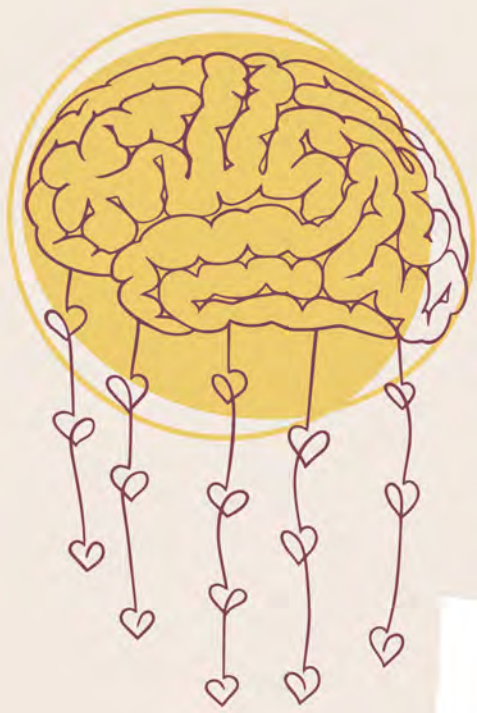
This edition of Udaan contains experiences and resources from individuals across various arenas of life. It highlights perspectives from the Bhagavad Gita, the importance of yoga in maintaining well-being, the need for a digital detox, sleep hygiene, personal anecdotes, and strategies that can enable a mentally healthy lifestyle. The Udaan team has worked diligently for the last two months and on behalf of the team, I sincerely hope that you will find this edition of Udaan engaging and helpful.

I sincerely thank Dr. Raj Kumar Singh, PIC Counselling, and the students of Counselling Services Team. Their efforts in promoting mental health through various activities are greatly appreciated.

Best wishes,
Dr. Gagandeep Kaur Makkar

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Mind Matters

1 Nurturing Mental Health Through Animated Worlds

2 Embracing Diversity: Beyond Binary

3 When Do You Need Therapy?

Are you ready to dive into a world of vibrant characters, captivating storylines, and thought-provoking themes? Look no further than the realm of Anime! With its skyrocketing popularity in recent years, Anime has become more than just a form of entertainment; it has emerged as a powerful tool for addressing mental health issues. Whether you're seeking solace, inspiration, or simply an escape from reality, Anime offers a diverse range of genres and narratives that can resonate deeply with individuals facing various mental health challenges.

Relatable Characters and Storylines

Anime often portrays complex characters facing personal challenges and growth, which can resonate deeply with viewers. Shows like "Neon Genesis Evangelion" and "March Comes in Like a Lion" explore themes of depression, isolation, and self-discovery. By showcasing these struggles, anime reminds viewers that they are not alone in their emotional battles. This relatability can be incredibly comforting and even therapeutic, as it encourages self-reflection and empathy.

Empowering Narratives

Many anime series emphasize themes of resilience, determination, and personal growth. The journey of characters like Goku in "Dragon Ball" or Gon in "Hunter x Hunter" teaches viewers that no matter how challenging life becomes, there is always

room for personal development and improvement. These empowering narratives can inspire individuals to confront their own obstacles with a more positive mindset, fostering mental resilience.



Exploration of Mental Health

Some anime series go beyond mere portrayal and delve deep into the intricacies of mental health issues. "Welcome to the NHK" explores social anxiety and *hikikomori* (social withdrawal), while "Colorful" delves into the concepts of redemption and self-acceptance. These series not only raise awareness about mental health but also help break the stigma surrounding it, encouraging viewers to seek help when needed.

Community and Support

The anime community is diverse and inclusive, where fans can connect over

shared interests. Whether through online forums, conventions, or local fan clubs, anime enthusiasts can find a sense of belonging and support. This community aspect can be vital for individuals struggling with mental health issues, as it provides a space for open discussions and a network of people who understand and care.

Mindful Consumption

While anime can offer numerous mental health benefits, it's essential to consume it mindfully. Binge-watching for extended periods can have adverse effects on mental health, such as sleep deprivation and isolation. Moderation is the key, and viewers should strike a balance between enjoying their favorite shows and engaging in other activities that promote overall well-being.

Anime, with its captivating narratives and profound exploration of human emotions, can be a powerful tool for nurturing mental health. Whether it's through providing an escape from reality, offering relatable characters and stories, or fostering a supportive community, anime has the potential to positively impact the lives of its viewers. As long as viewers approach anime consumption mindfully, this medium can continue to serve as a source of comfort, inspiration, and healing for individuals navigating the complexities of their mental well-being.

Mr. Arpan Bhattacharjee
23CL06004
23cl06004@iitbbs.ac.in

10TH OCTOBER

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

DON'T HESITATE TO ASK FOR HELP.

 gagandeep@iitbbs.ac.in

 <https://www.iitbbs.ac.in/cst/student-counsellor.php>

With over a decade on a college campus, I've discovered a core truth: LGBTQIA+ mental health hurdles often arise from insufficient support within families and society. Amid societal pressures, family unity stands as a resilient anchor.

It's vital to grasp that beyond gender labels lies our shared humanity. Parents too share this reality, transcending gender norms. No matter if their children identify differently, eschew labels, or deviate from norms, the unassailable fact is their parental bond. Embracing them with love, unwavering care, vital support, and unconditional acknowledgment grants them the gifts of vitality and belonging. In our societal fabric, the significance of belonging is reinforced by constitutional principles of equality.

I've seen hasty criticism of LGBTQIA+ individuals born of ignorance. This drives me to address these misconceptions and reveal truths. By sharing accurate information, we pave a path to empathy and inclusion.

The following account delves into the LGBTQIA+ tapestry, dispelling myths and reaffirming realities. My hope is that this endeavour nurtures compassion and acceptance, regardless of identity or orientation.

It's important to note that the mental health challenges faced by LGBTQIA individuals are a result of societal attitudes and discrimination, rather than being inherent to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Providing supportive and inclusive environments, respecting individuals'

identities, and combating discrimination are crucial steps towards promoting positive mental health outcomes for everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Despite the progress towards achieving recognition, acceptance, and equality in recent years, misinformation and stereotypes still persist. It's important to address these misconceptions and provide accurate information to foster a more inclusive and empathetic society.

Myth: Being LGBTQIA+ is a Choice

Fact: Sexual orientation and gender identity are not choices. Research consistently supports the understanding that these aspects of a person's identity are deeply ingrained and not something that can be altered willingly. Just as heterosexual and cisgender individuals do not choose their identities, LGBTQIA+ individuals do not choose theirs either.

Myth: LGBTQIA+ Identities are Western Concepts

Fact: Diverse sexual orientations and gender identities are not limited to Western societies. Cultures all around the world have recognized and included individuals with non-binary identities and same-sex relationships throughout history. The terminology may differ, but the existence of LGBTQIA+ individuals is a universal reality.

Myth: All LGBTQIA+ Individuals Undergo Gender Transition

Fact: Not all transgender individuals undergo medical or surgical gender

transition. Gender transition is a deeply personal journey, and each person's experience is unique. Some transgender individuals may choose to pursue hormone therapy, surgery, or other interventions, while others may not. Gender identity is about how a person feels and identifies, not solely about physical changes.

Myth: Homosexuality is Just a Phase

Fact: Homosexuality is not a transitional phase. Sexual orientation, including being homosexual, is a natural and enduring aspect of a person's identity.

Myth: LGBTQIA+ Individuals Are Promiscuous

Fact: The notion that LGBTQIA+ individuals are inherently more promiscuous is a harmful stereotype. Just like anyone else, the level of promiscuity varies from person to person and is not determined by one's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Myth: LGBTQIA+ Individuals are Mentally Ill

Fact: Being LGBTQIA+ is not a mental illness. Since 1973, all major medical and mental health organizations including the World Health Organization (WHO) have gradually recognized that being homosexual is not a mental disorder. However, the stigma, discrimination, and lack of acceptance that LGBTQIA+ individuals may face can lead to mental health challenges.

Myth: Having LGBTQIA+ people in anyone's family, friend circle, or workplace will make one LGBTQIA+

Fact: Liking or loving someone is not contagious. Spending time with people who are

LGBTQIA+ does not make anyone LGBTQIA+ any more than liking someone who is left-handed or tall or short.

Myth: LGBTQIA+ Rights Conflict with Religious Beliefs

Fact: Supporting LGBTQIA+ rights does not necessarily conflict with religious beliefs. People of various religious backgrounds interpret their texts and beliefs differently, leading to a range of attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ issues. Many religious groups and leaders openly embrace and advocate for LGBTQIA+ acceptance.

While significant progress has been made in terms of LGBTQIA+ rights and acceptance, challenges persist. Legal rights, healthcare access, workplace discrimination, and cultural biases still affect many individuals. Advocacy groups and allies continue to push for equality, aiming to create a world where everyone can live authentically without fear of discrimination.

The LGBTQIA+ acronym is a powerful testament to the diversity of human experience and the importance of inclusivity. It reminds us that identity is not fixed or simple and that everyone deserves respect and acceptance. By embracing and understanding the various identities under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella, we can foster a more compassionate and inclusive world where everyone is free to express their true selves.

Ms. Debarati Acharya

Senior Counsellor Grade-II

Counselling Centre

Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur

debarati.a@adm.iitkgp.ac.in

WORLD
Mental Health
DAY



In the midst of life's shadows, keep your spirit shining bright. For even a tiny spark of hope can lead to pure delight!

When Do You Need Therapy?

3

We experience a plethora of emotions ranging from happiness to sadness in our lives. In other words, we are at different points of the mentally healthy-unhealthy spectrum during the course of our life.

Our position in the spectrum can depend on daily life incidents, physical health, relationships, and many other factors. But, when our life starts positioning itself more in the mentally unhealthy part of the spectrum, it is always good to seek therapy for your mental and consequent physical well-being. Therapy can be life-changing for a person who is undergoing mental health issues.

But at what point in the mentally healthy-unhealthy spectrum in one's life, do we realise that we need to seek therapy? It can be confusing to many because no indicator in that spectrum tells us it is time to seek therapy.

Here are some parameters that you can look out for regarding your mental health that may help you decide when to seek therapy:

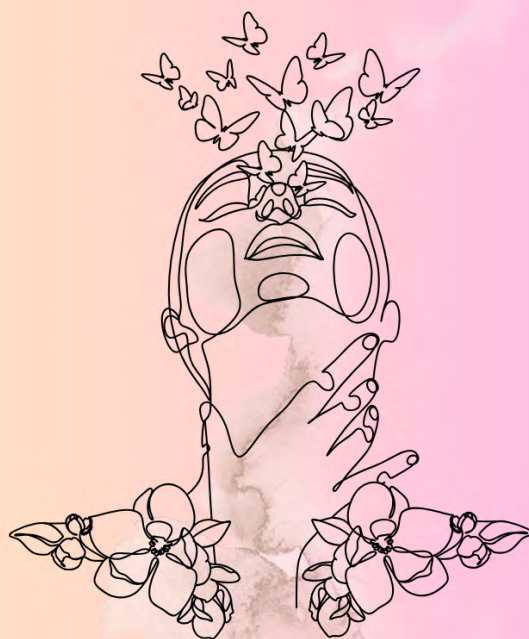
- **Irregular Sleeping habits:** Sleep is significantly related to mental health. Inability to sleep, restless sleep, or the want to over-sleep are indicators of poor sleep hygiene. A therapist can help you improve your sleep hygiene.
- **Prolonged Overwhelming feelings:** Feeling intense and extreme emotions can make you feel overwhelmed. It might affect your daily functioning, ability to make rational decisions, control emotions, etc. Such prolonged overwhelming feelings might be due to stress and emotional distress. It is good to seek therapy which might help you better deal with such overwhelming feelings.
- **Escaping social situations:** If you have been an outgoing person, but lately trying to isolate yourself and avoid social situations, then it might indicate that you are more than just a little down. This might be the case if you also avoid doing activities you used to love or enjoy doing. Know that therapy at such instances can address your underlying problems.
- **Grief:** Bereavement from the loss of a loved one or a break-up with your partner can be very emotionally and physically exhausting. It is normal to take some time to move on from the grief. But, if it takes too long and it starts affecting your daily life, it is time to seek help.
- **Trauma:** If you have experienced trauma and are unable to deal with it, therapy can be of great help.
- **Workplace or school-related issues:** Stress from academics and work can disrupt daily life and routine. If relationships with friends, peers, supervisors, etc. are becoming overwhelming to deal with and causing you discomfort, you should seek therapy.

- **Change in eating habits:** If you notice a change in your eating habits- loss of appetite or binge eating and it is persisting for a considerable amount of time, it must be a manifestation of some underlying stress or discomfort.
- **Intrusive thoughts:** If you feel that your intrusive thoughts are overpowering your ability to control them and you end up ruminating about them or have become compulsive, you could seek help from a therapist which might help you manage them better.
- **Indulgence in unhealthy behaviours:** Indulging in consuming alcohol, smoking or other behaviours that are detrimental to your well-being,

so as to avoid or escape from stresses that you are going through, is not a healthy way of dealing with your stresses or problems in life. Therapy will enable you to deal with your stresses in the healthiest manner.

If you experience any one or more of these above said issues, do not hesitate to seek therapy to enhance your mental well-being. Remember that mental health is as important as physical health, and the former requires its due attention and care.

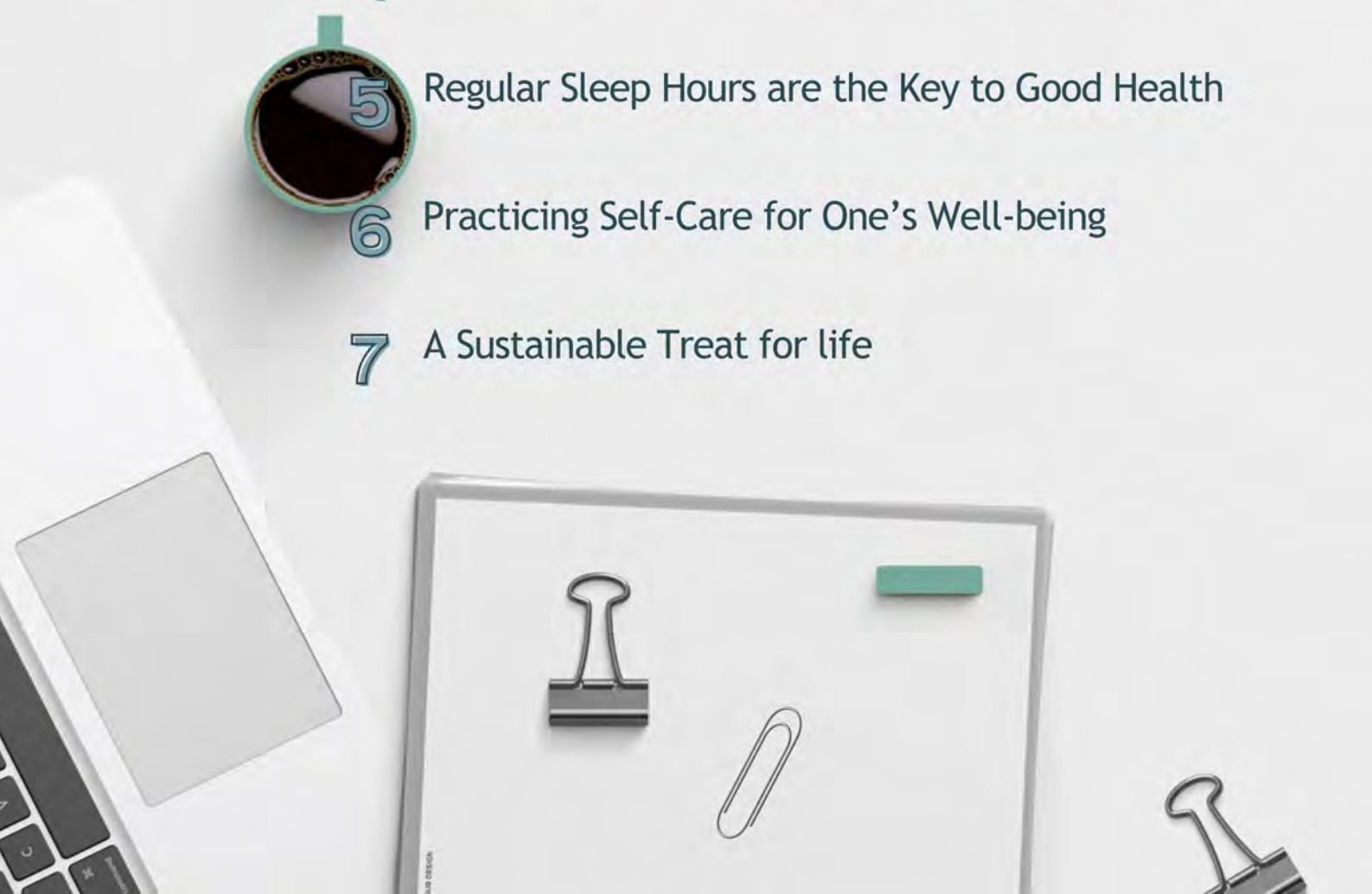
Ms. Akhila Ajith
S23HS09001
s23hs09001@iitbbs.ac.in



Your mental health deserves care.



FROM YOUR DESK

- 1 Yoga for Cognitive Health and Overall Well-being
 - 2 Juggling Life's Demands: The Simple Magic of Self-Care
 - 3 Elevating Your Digital Habits is as Simple as ABC: A Path to Improved Academic Performance, Focus, and Happiness
 - 4 Mental Health: The Bhagavad Geeta Perspective
 - 5 Regular Sleep Hours are the Key to Good Health
 - 6 Practicing Self-Care for One's Well-being
 - 7 A Sustainable Treat for life
- 

Yoga for Cognitive Health and Overall Well-Being

1

In today's fast-paced world, the mental well-being of youth is facing unprecedented challenges. The pursuit of academic excellence, the pressure to establish a social presence, and the complexities of life can become quite stressful and take a toll on one's mental health. Yoga can help you maintain a healthy lifestyle and deal with such stress.

Stress is not just a psychological condition but has an impact on our nervous system, immune system, hormonal levels, digestion, sleep, and mood. Chronic stress forms a precursor to other mental and physical health issues, including depression, hypertension, diabetes, high blood pressure, and more. The hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis in our body involves the central nervous system and the endocrine system and regulates the body's response to stress.

Research has shown that yoga and meditation not only help to counter the effects of stress by regulating the activity of the HPA axis but also help prevent the onset of many physical and mental health conditions associated with it. They balance the neurotransmitters and hormonal levels and lead to enhanced well-being and positive mental and emotional health.

While the popular understanding of yoga is a set of physical postures and breathing practices, it is a holistic system of well-being that offers philosophical, psychological, and practical tools for living a balanced and healthy life. Classical texts such as Maharishi

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras define yoga as regulating the various activities of the mind and offer systematic techniques, cognitive models, and practices to achieve it.

Studies have shown that regular practice of yoga and meditation leads to higher self-awareness and enhancements in cognitive capabilities, including attention, memory, decision-making, and problem solving. Research has shown that yoga helps reduce mind wandering, distractions, and digital addiction. They also help to develop positive self-esteem and improve relationships.

Asanas such as Surya Namaskar help to develop muscle strength, improve the blood flow in the body, and help reduce fatigue. Regular practice helps develop resilience and strength, which allow one to fulfil one's responsibilities without worrying about physical health.

Simple pranayama practices enhance the oxygen levels and the overall energy levels in our body. Recognizing the scientific evidence, yoga and meditation have been included as part of the mental health policy in several countries, especially because of their universal applicability, lack of side effects, and holistic benefits. Yoga and meditation-based therapies are being adopted globally to treat mental health conditions including stress and anxiety, hypertension, depression, addictions, insomnia, eating disorders, autism, and schizophrenia. Ultimately, mental health contributes to overall happiness and life satisfaction, enhancing the quality of life.

What can you do?

- Take a simple asana routine. Suryanamaskar is a holistic practice. You could do 6 rounds of Suryanamaskar
- Lie down in Shavasana for 10 minutes
- Get up gently and do anuloma-viloma (alternate nostril breathing) for 5 minutes
- Sit quietly with a smile and invoke a sense of gratitude

- Pray for the well-being of all
- Meditate in quietness for 5 minutes
- Do this as regularly as possible

*Shri Adinarayanan V¹, Smrithi Rekha V
Founders, Anaadi Foundation*

*¹ Adjunct Professor of Practice, NRCVVE,
IIT Delhi*

adi@anaadi.org , smrithi@anaadi.org



**YOGA IS THE JOURNEY OF
THE SELF, THROUGH THE
SELF, TO THE SELF**



"Pineapple on pizza- It's literal trauma!"



"I lost my Harry Styles concert's ticket...this is sooo traumatic!"



"My chips are over! This is such a trauma!"

IS TRAUMA THAT SILLY?

Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster. A traumatic event can be so impactful that it can cause flashbacks, make you experience unpredictable emotions, strain personal relationships, and even manifest as physical symptoms.

What trauma could actually be...

- Break-up
- Domestic violence
- Sexual/physical abuse
- War or combat situation
- Unexpected death of a loved one
- Being bullied

Anything bad is not a trauma. Be mindful when you use the word 'trauma'.

We thoroughly understand the busyness of daily tasks, the commitments to studies, and the things we're responsible for. We always care about the feelings of our loved ones and try our best to satisfy them and make them happy. But have you ever taken a moment to think about the importance of self-care, your feelings, and self-satisfaction? Let's dive into this idea, which is more than just what's popular right now. It's about finding ways to take care of your thoughts and feelings in a way that makes sense in your everyday life.

Imagine starting your day with a pause—not rushing around but simply enjoying the morning sun. Take a deep breath, feel the warmth on your skin, and let this calm moment set the tone for the day ahead.

Life can feel like a race, leaving little room for fun. But here's the secret: spontaneous dance breaks. Turn up the music and dance like nobody's watching or sing like nobody's listening. These moments of playfulness can help you de-stress and feel more present. Being you, regardless of your surroundings, can make your mind feel light and peaceful. Though it might appear quite simple, these small steps bring out a fresh perspective and construct an entirely different world.

In a world full of screens, consider a tech-break. Spend time reading a book or writing in a journal. This simple step can clear your mind and give you a break from the digital world. Get in touch with the real world by penning your thoughts, desires, feelings, or

sketches. It recharges your body and empties your mind, making you work more efficiently.

Boundaries are similar to having personal regulations. It's acceptable to say "no" when necessary. Saying "it's okay" when you really mean "no" is the problem. Save your strength for the things that truly matter. This frees up time for activities that can rejuvenate your spirit and leave you feeling fulfilled. And keep trying new things, even if it makes you feel uncomfortable at first. Try it out and see what transpires.

Amidst deadlines, pause to appreciate life's small joys. Each day, write down a few things you're thankful for. It could be a good meal or a moment of laughter. This practice can shift your focus towards positivity and satisfy you. Writing up unpleasant events is also fine, as long as it doesn't demotivate you. You can grow up considering and improving those moments and making them beautiful one day. That is all what life is about.

Nature has its magic. Spend time outdoors, whether playing a game or taking a walk. The sounds and sights of nature can calm your mind and remind you of simple pleasures. It has a way of stripping away the unnecessary complexities, leaving behind the essence of pure joy that often eludes us in our busy lives.

Lastly, let's talk about food. Having a good meal can be a form of self-care. Try having your favorite food or a comforting bowl of soup. As you nourish your body, you're also taking care of your soul. Even if

you can't always get the exact meal you want, ensure you eat enough during each meal to stay healthy.

Ultimately, the heart of self-care lies in these simple moments that bring joy, peace, and a renewed perspective. Dancing, stepping outdoors, asserting your boundaries, indulging in creativity, and nurturing relationships are all threads that weave into the shade of self-care. Self-care is

not being selfish; it's something required daily to ensure your mental health. So, let these simple threads guide you towards a harmonious life amidst the bustling world around you.

Ms. Chagam Krishnaja
22CS01024
22cs01024@iitbbs.ac.in



Elevating Your Digital Habits Is as Simple as ABC: a Path to Improved Academic Performance, Focus, and Happiness

3

Are you struggling to focus on studies due to distractions from social media, communication platforms, and other apps on your screens?

Does your screen time seem to be spiraling out of control, leaving you overwhelmed and fatigued?

Perhaps you find yourself engrossed in late-night gaming sessions with friends or endlessly binge-watching series on streaming platforms, only to pay the price in the form of disrupted sleep and groggy mornings. It's a cycle we've all been caught in at some point.

The next day, we all regret not going to classes or feeling sleepy during classes and make a resolution to get up early again!

Later to fall into that recurring pattern of going down that rabbit hole of playing games late at night, binge-watching series, mindless scrolling on social media feeds ... Repeat!

If you can relate to these struggles, you're not alone. We are not in control of our screens. Our screens control us.

Before we dive into the solution, let's pause for a moment. How many of you were able to make it here to this point of the article without getting distracted from your phone or switching to something else on our screen? Congratulations! You have a better attention span than an average human being! As per research, the average human has an attention span of just 8.25 seconds.

That's less than the goldfish's 9-second attention span.

But it's not the end of the world. The good news is that we have control and agency over our screens.

Drawing from insights in psychology, neuroscience and cutting-edge research in this area, transforming your digital habits is as simple as ABC.

"The first step towards change is awareness. The second step is acceptance. And the third step is action."

- Unknown

1. Awareness: changing your habits starts with understanding what the problems are in the first place!

(i) Quantitatively: begin by assessing your screen time using tools like *Android Digital Wellbeing*, *Apple Screen Time*, or *Rescue Time* on your laptop. This will reveal your top three troublesome apps

(ii) Reflection: reflect on your digital habits to identify your major pain points

(iii) Qualitatively: assess your digital wellness by taking [Digital Wellness Institute Flourishing Survey](#).

2. Behavior Change: let's become an engineer in the Habit Lab and experiment with our digital habits! If from awareness, you found out that:

(i) Endless social media feeds are a problem, check out this Chrome extension [Todobook](#) to make your feed intentional

(ii) Get free from YouTube distractions by using DF Tube Chrome extension

(iii) Block distracting apps for certain periods of time through Freedom tool on Play Store

(iv) Anything else, Screen Time Genie by Stanford can answer

(v) If the Screen Time Genie is not able to answer, you can reach out to me, 'Your Screen Time Advisor and Consultant' for personalized assistance

(vi) The mantra is to keep experimenting with your digital habits and see what works best for you!

3. Consistency: From the experiments above, there might be some habits that worked well for you. Once you've identified the effective habits, make them a part of your daily routine.

"It's not what we do once in a while that shapes our lives, but what we do consistently."

- Tony Robbins (Leading American author, coach and speaker)

Remember to start small with one micro-step and avoid procrastinating by putting

things off until tomorrow or next week. Let's start by checking our screen time today to understand what problems we are facing with our screens.

For additional techniques and in-depth research on establishing a healthy relationship with technology, you can access my highest rated Udemey course on Digital Wellness for FREE here (<https://www.udemy.com/course/digitalwellness/?couponCode=4A54020825EE50A69FF1>).

I want to quickly conclude, as I'm not sure how long I have your attention span for. In conclusion, Digital Wellness is no longer a luxury. It's a lifestyle imperative for academic performance, happiness and focus. Your future self will thank you for taking the steps to cultivate a healthier relationship with technology.

For more queries, reach out to your Screen Time Advisor and Consultant below:

Rijul Arora, Best Selling Author, Speaker, Consultant and Coach on Digital Wellness (www.rijularora.com)

Mr. Rijul Arora

Digital Wellness Author, Speaker, Coach and Thought Leader, TEDx Speaker

rijul@rijularora.com

DIGITAL DETOX

SET DESIGNATED TECH-FREE TIMES

Identify periods like dinner, evenings, or weekends when you will not use technology.

REMOVE DISTRACTING APPS

Delete or hide apps that lead to mindless scrolling and replace them with useful tools.

DISABLE NOTIFICATIONS

Mute non-essential notifications so your devices aren't constantly pulling your attention.

ESTABLISH NO-SCREEN ZONES

Keep tech out of places like the bedroom so they don't interfere with sleep.

REPLACE SCREEN TIME WITH NATURE

Trade online activities for outdoor time to relieve stress.

PRIORITIZE IN-PERSON INTERACTIONS

Focus on family and friend get-togethers without distractions.



MAKE PLANS TO AVOID BOREDOM

Schedule workouts, social events, hobbies so you aren't tempted to default to screens.

REPLACE SCREEN TIME WITH NATURE

Trade online activities for outdoor time to relieve stress.

NOTICE HOW YOU FEEL

Observe the impacts less tech time has on your mood and wellbeing.

DON'T BE TOO HARD ON YOURSELF

Allow for gradual change rather than absolute tech abstinence.

Hearing about mental health on a regular basis, it's pertinent to ask the question: What is mental health? How can it be assessed? In simple words, mental health is like physical health. When our body is healthy, we are more productive, which aids us in doing a lot of things. Otherwise, it causes us pain and suffering. Similarly, our mind is meant to aid us as a competitive tool in our daily functioning. Our ancient scriptures, like the Bhagavad Gita, describe the mind as a linking medium between our soul (the true us) and our physical body. Thus, our mind acts as a conduit for our perceptions of the physical world to go in and our actions to come out. Therefore, it plays a role in processing perceptions and making decisions.

Evidently, when the mind is healthy, it helps make good decisions in any situation. However, an unfit mind leads to biased perceptions and short-sighted decisions. Mental illness can be sometimes attributed to our misalignment between true reality and our perceived reality.

The Bhagavad Gita explains how the mind functions in three modes. A mind that is in the mode of goodness views a situation holistically, taking into account both its material and spiritual aspects. A mind in the mode of passion sees reality partially, mainly in its material nature, which is enjoyable. While the ignorance-affected mind sees reality fragmentally and mixes it up with unreal things.

Digging deeper into mental health, we can observe that mental health problems are increasing at a rapid rate. Nowadays, these problems arise not only due to personal afflictions but also due to overall societal factors that are responsible for such trends. One of the main reasons for this problem is a distortion of our perception of reality. And social media is one of those factors that are leading to this distortion. It can be understood from this scenario: Suppose a girl browses social media and follows a woman with a model-like figure, and then she laments not having such beauty. Similarly, a boy laments not being like an actor. Though we know that, in reality, the model or actor would be different and would be facing different problems; their social media would be filled with happy faces.

This type of distorted reality affects the user mentally. Does this mean social media or technology cause mental health problems? Not exactly; it's just an example of how today's society exposes us to forces that distort our perception and make us more vulnerable to mental health problems.

Then the question arises: How can we protect and improve our mental health? Let's understand it by considering how we improve our physical health: by providing the body with good nutrition and exercise, and by protecting it from harmful substances. The mind can also be improved in the same way, but there are some differences between the workings of the mind and the body:

1. Though food enters only the mouth, stimuli go into our mind through all senses.

2. Our body takes in food only a few times a day, while the mind takes in stimuli constantly.

3. We are conscious of what goes on in our bodies, but we are generally unaware of what goes on in our minds.

Given the greater vulnerability of our minds, we need to be more careful about what goes into them. The Bhagavad Gita (6.35) gives two guidelines for this. It says:

श्रीभगवानुवाच

☒ संशयमहाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहंचलम्।

☒ भ्यासेन तुकौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते॥

- BG (6.35)

"It is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by suitable practice and by detachment."

Practice: The mind is like a child who doesn't want to eat healthy or exercise regularly. Now that we know its nature, we need consistent practice to focus the mind on nourishing stimuli. Knowledge like the wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita can provide this nourishment by bringing perception and reality into alignment.

Detachment: The mind is restless, turbulent, obstinate, and very strong. It

always rushes to the stimuli that seem enjoyable, even after knowing that stimuli can be unproductive or counterproductive. Those stimuli can be anything from social media notifications to agitating sensory perceptions. Through self-observation, we can learn which stimuli affect our minds negatively and which situations expose us to those stimuli. We will have to detach ourselves from those situations to keep our minds healthy.

Thus, spiritual knowledge, like the knowledge of the Bhagavad Gita, can counter misperceptions at their root by giving us a true understanding of who we are and what the deepest purpose of our existence is. Spiritual practices can connect us with our pure essence as souls and with the all-pure ultimate reality. That connection gradually removes our inner impurities. Being thus illuminated and purified, we can better ensure that our mind aids us in living effectively.

Mr. Ankit Kumar Singh

22EE01029

22ee01029@iitbbs.ac.in



Sleep, along with the right kind of food and exercise, is essential for maintaining good health. Getting enough restful sleep on a regular basis offers a plethora of benefits. Quality sleep helps boost energy levels and immune function, and supports cognitive processes like memory consolidation. What will qualify as quality sleep? To understand that, we need to know about the *circadian rhythms* of the body.

Circadian rhythms are the cycles that tell the body when to sleep, wake, and eat—the biological and psychological processes that oscillate in predictable patterns each day. The circadian rhythms throughout the body are generated by an internal clock in the

brain. The suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN), which is located in the hypothalamus of the brain, is responsible for generating circadian rhythms for the body. During the day, natural light exposure causes the internal clock to send signals that generate the cortisol hormone. The cortisol levels are highest between 6 and 8 AM in the morning. They stimulate wakefulness and help keep us awake and active. As night falls, the internal clock initiates the production of melatonin, a hormone that promotes sleep. The internal clock keeps transmitting signals that help us stay asleep through the night, ensuring a restful, deep sleep.

The latest research has confirmed the deleterious impact of a disrupted circadian

rhythm, such as sleep disorders, obesity, diabetes, depression, and bipolar disorder. At the cognitive level, a disturbed circadian rhythm results in difficulty in concentrating and staying productive. Also, these alterations in sleep play an important role in accentuating many commonly encountered digestive diseases, such as gastro-oesophageal reflux disease, irritable bowel syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease, and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

How To Maintain a Healthy Circadian Rhythm

- **Seek out the sun:** Exposure to natural light, especially early in the day, helps reinforce the strongest circadian cue.
- **Follow a consistent sleep schedule:** Varying your bedtime or morning wake-up time can hinder your body's ability to adjust to a stable circadian rhythm. In fact, in a strict sense, sleeping late is not necessarily bad, as long as you can sleep within a reasonable range of sleep time(10 p.m. to 10 a.m.). For example, if you fall asleep at midnight, wake up at 7-9 o'clock, and follow this routine regularly, then your circadian rhythm may work well. However, on the whole, you should aim at starting your circadian rhythm by exposing yourself to morning sunlight.
- **Get daily exercise:** Activity during the day can support your internal clock and help make it easier to fall asleep at night.
- **Avoid caffeine:** Stimulants like caffeine can keep you awake and throw off the natural balance between sleep and wakefulness. Everyone is different, but if you are having trouble

sleeping at night, you should avoid caffeine after noon.

- **Limit light before bed:** Artificial light exposure at night can interfere with circadian rhythm. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes that blue wavelength light has the strongest impact.

Blue and white lights during sensitive periods of the day, such as two hours before bed, can make it difficult for a person to fall asleep or stay asleep. Common sources include electronic screens on devices such as phones, computers, and televisions. Experts advise dimming the lights and putting down electronic devices in the lead-up to bedtime.

- **Keep naps short and early in the afternoon:** Late and long naps can push back your bedtime and throw your sleep schedule off-kilter.
- **Make the bedroom conducive to sleep:** Your bedroom setting can influence your sleep habits and the quality of your sleep at night. Invest in a comfortable mattress, bedding, and accessories.

Sleep right, Sleep well. Zzzz!

Suggested reading:

1. [What Is Circadian Rhythm? | Sleep Foundation](#)
2. [Circadian rhythms: How it works, what affects it, and more \(medicalnewstoday.com\)](#)
3. [Physiology, Circadian Rhythm - StatPearls - NCBI Bookshelf \(nih.gov\)](#)

Dr. Anu Bansal
Sanjeevan Health Centre
anubansal@iitbbs.ac.in

There is no denying the fact that the transition from school life to college life is quite challenging. Like most people, I had to go through this challenging phase too. In the beginning, everything felt out of place, and it was as if I was alienated. It is indeed a fact that a change of place can impact your emotions and well-being. Moving to a new location, whether temporarily or permanently, can bring about a range of feelings. It is normal to experience an adjustment period when you move to a new place. You feel very unsettled and out of your comfort zone initially. Leaving behind your familiar surroundings, friends, and routines does lead to feelings of sadness and nostalgia. The unknown aspects of a new place can cause anxiety and stress while you are trying to adapt to a different environment. Going to a completely different zone brings about a lot of cultural differences, changes in your basic staple intake, and changes in norms and practices. All of this leads to a feeling of disorientation and frustration. Changes in daily routines and activities can impact your sense of stability. All these combined can prompt reflection on your sense of identity and belonging.

Building a new social network takes time, and during that time, feeling lonely or disconnected is quite common. One more issue that people face during this time is their disconnection from everything. People go through the feeling of being lonely even when they are with a group of friends. Feeling left behind can be challenging and

disheartening, and this subsequently gives you an inferiority complex.

But to be competitive on the professional front, we ignore the importance of our wellness and continue doing our work without even thinking about our mental health. Continuing with work while dealing with depression can be taxing, but instead of ignoring your situation, you should work on healing yourself. You should start by reaching out to people, and if needed, consider going to a mental health professional for guidance and treatment. If you are comfortable around anyone, then try having open communication with them, as it might offer you insights and reassurance.

Some techniques for taking better care of oneself can be practiced. Prioritizing self-care is the key; you should get enough sleep, eat well, exercise, and engage in activities that bring you joy. Setting achievable goals for each day and working towards them. Celebrating these small victories helps by boosting your morale and gives you a sense of satisfaction, which is important for one's stability. In this process of working, never forget to take breaks, as they help you recharge and manage your energy levels. One can practice mindfulness or some deep breathing exercises to help manage stress and anxiety. Working on oneself is indeed, very important.

If you are feeling left behind, then take some time to streamline your thoughts in one direction and acknowledge your feelings. It is okay to feel hurt and disappointed. Try avoiding comparing

yourself with others; your sole focus should be on you. Everyone has their own path, and it is important to focus on your progress. Always practice self compassion and be kind to yourself. Pursue your hobbies that interest you, which can provide a sense of accomplishment and opportunities to meet like-minded individuals. Consider expanding your social circle by attending events or joining groups that align with your interests.

Life is full of changes and transitions, and you should embrace these changes. Remember that your journey is unique, and it's okay to take things at your own pace. Challenges can lead to growth, and you have the strength to combat these situations.

Ms. Shreya Tripathi
22EE01033
22ee01033@iitbbs.ac.in



A couple of months ago, one of my friends visited the doctor for her medical check-up and was reported to have some deficiencies in her blood. The doctor suggested she engage more in an iron-protein-rich diet. Alarmed by her borderline profile and a frantic effort to get her levels right, she planned her three meals of the day full of items that would assist iron and protein absorption in her body. She appeared pretty motivated while picking up this new regime for herself and started to work on it. A month later, I asked her, how's your diet plan working for you? She appeared frustrated and guilty about dropping it soon because "she easily got bored eating the same meal almost every day and that she can't appreciate it anymore; she needs some change". I laughed out loud at her giving up on her version of turning healthy and subtly suggested how about shifting to a "balanced diet" that favours your palate and meets your nutrient needs as well. After all, we are humans wired to feel novelty to feel fresh or happy, and that will also feel more satisfying to you! "Oh yes, like I keep pursuing my hobbies. They help me keep up with my routine tasks, and of course, they are a great source of pleasure for me," she exclaimed.

While most of us complain that we have no time to pursue our hobbies while chasing our dreams, we forget that happiness is one of the main things we are trying to build our lives around. Our areas of interest and hobbies are a great source of pleasure for our brains, as they stimulate the regions of

our brain that capture the immediate reward, make it feel happy by releasing the happy hormones, and motivate it to engage in them more. The human brain is designed in a way where it needs constant feedback to stay motivated with a task, and positive feedback as a "feel-good factor" is the ultimate bait it can't resist. Another important need of the human brain is to experience new things and to break the inertia or monotony of things. Novelty drifts the brain towards divergent thinking and adds creativity to the task at hand, making it interesting to go on with. Engaging in different hobbies, exploring new interest areas, and sitting with new tasks till one starts to enjoy them act as novelty factors for the brain, aiding its productivity. Pursuing something that we enjoy also brings us a sense of satisfaction. A lot of people report a feeling of self-connectivity when they allow themselves to spend time with the little things that are of significance to them. While most of us, due to the wave of "follow your passion," exert ourselves to the point of exhaustion where we give up on our hobbies if we fail to do them perfectly, understanding them as a safe resort to sit with and relax could be a very enriching and fulfilling experience. Our hobbies are a sustainable source of happiness. After all, we all need contrasting palates to add color and richness to our everyday life!

Ms. Shivani Tewari

Institute Student Counsellor, IIT Roorkee

shivani.sw@srict.iitr.ac.in

HIDDEN SHELVES

1

**JOURNEY TO SELF-
ACCEPTANCE**

2

**BEYOND PPO: STORY
OF RESILIENCE**

3

**"THEN WE'LL DO THAT
TOGETHER, TOO"**

Journey to Self-Acceptance

1

What follows is a made-up discussion taking place solely within Kavya's thoughts. Kavya (the character) confronts her fear of failure and exam stress while also learning to prioritize her mental well-being and recognizing that there's more to life beyond placements and examinations. Through self-reflection and resilience, she finds a healthier perspective on success and embraces the journey of growth and self-improvement.

Kavya: The burden of these impending exams and placements is taking a toll on me. It's as if my entire future is riding on how I do it, and the persistent anxiety just won't let me be at peace.

Inner Voice (representing fear of failure and anxiety): *You're right, Kavya. If you don't do well, your life will be a complete failure. Everyone expects so much from you, and you can't let them down.*

Kavya: That's not entirely true. While exams and placements are important, I need to remember that they don't define my entire worth or determine my entire future. There's more to life than just academic achievements and job placements.

Inner Voice: *You must devote your full effort to excel in these exams and placements. There's no room for breaks; otherwise, you risk falling behind.*

Kavya: I understand the importance of preparation, but I also know that pushing myself beyond my limits will only lead to burnout. I need to strike a balance between studying and taking care of myself. If I'm not mentally well, my performance will suffer anyway.

Inner Voice: *(persisting) You will never succeed if you don't give your absolute best.*

Kavya: Success has different meanings. I know I'll give my best effort, and I'll be proud of that regardless of the outcome. I won't define my success solely based on grades or job offers.

Inner Voice: *(hesitates) But what if you fail? What if you disappoint everyone?*

Kavya: Failure is a possibility, and it's okay to acknowledge that. If it happens, I'll deal with it and learn from it. I won't let fear of failure stop me from trying. Besides, the people who truly care about me will support me no matter what.

Inner Voice: *(reluctantly) Fine, do what feels right to you. But remember, I offered you a caveat.*

Kavya: Thank you for your concern, but I won't let the fear of failure control my life anymore. I'll give my best to my studies, and I'll also make time for hobbies, friends, and self-care. These things are equally important for my overall well-being.

Inner Voice: *We'll see how well you manage everything.*

Kavya: It might be a challenge, but I'm not alone in this. I have friends and family who support me, and I'll seek help from counsellors or mentors if I need it. I'm determined to prioritize my mental health and remember that there's more to life beyond these exams and placements.

(A few weeks later, after exams and placements.)

Kavya: Phew, that was intense, but I survived! I worked hard and gave my best, and I'm proud of my efforts.

Inner Voice: *You're just saying that to feel better about yourself. What if your results aren't as good as you hoped?*

Kavya: It's possible, but I won't let that define my worth. I learned so much during this process, and the experience itself was valuable. Life is a journey, and this was just one step.

Inner Voice: *(persisting) But what if you don't get the job you wanted?*

Kavya: If that happens, I'll keep trying. There are plenty of opportunities out there, and I'll find the right path for me. I won't let a single setback define my entire future.

Inner Voice: *(softening) I guess you're more resilient than I thought.*

Kavya: We all have inner strength, and it's essential to believe in ourselves. I also realized that taking care of my mental well-being was crucial throughout this process. It helped me stay focused and positive.

Inner Voice: *(hesitates) I still worry about what others think.*

Kavya: It's natural to care about others' opinions, but I can't let them dictate my choices. The people who truly care about me will support me, regardless of the outcome.

Inner Voice: *(reluctantly) I suppose you're right.*

Kavya: I've come to understand that life is about growth and learning. Exams and placements are significant, but they're not everything. There's a whole world out there waiting for me to explore and experience.

Inner Voice: *I hope you won't forget these lessons when facing future challenges.*

Kavya: I won't. Recognizing the need to strike a balance between ambition and self-compassion has been enlightening. I'll persistently prioritize my mental well-being and cherish the realization that life's journey is a meaningful adventure, not solely focused on reaching the destination.

Dr. Sreetama Misra

Assistant Professor

School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Management, IIT Bhubaneswar

sreetama@iitbbs.ac.in

Are you delulu?

"Delulu" is a word which is trending on social media these days. 'Delulu' refers to being delusional as you know...but do you really know what delusional or delusion means psychologically!?

Delusion is an unshakable belief in something that is untrue. No matter how solid an evidence is provided, the delusion remains unshakable!

Delusions are of many types:

- **Grandiose delusions:** the person believes they are very talented, rich or influential
- **Paranoid delusions:** the person believes others want to harm them or are persecuting them
- **Somatic delusions:** the person believes there is something wrong with a part of their body, or that part of them is missing
- **Reference delusions:** the person believes other people's thoughts or actions are directed towards them, or that special messages are being sent to them via the TV or radio
- **Bizarre delusions:** the person believes in something that is physically impossible
- **Delusional jealousy:** the person believes their partner is being unfaithful, even when that's impossible

MOVIES THAT EXPLORE DELUSIONS...



Hence, delulu is not the solulu 😊

Being an ardent sportsperson, I had won various state-level championships and was playing multiple national-level chess tournaments. However, the other side of the story lies in my average grades until 7th grade. While winning one of the national tournaments became one of my best achievements, followed by appreciation from my classmates and teachers, the topper of my class commented, "You might play chess well, but then you are not capable of scoring good marks." Triggered, this made me question my intellectual potential. In response, I diligently prepared for the subsequent examination beginning in the following grade and achieved nearly perfect scores in all subjects, including Hindi, a non-native language for me.

The parent-teacher meeting that followed these exams was the turning point. My parents had tears in their eyes as every teacher praised me eloquently for my intelligence. Seeing that, I felt great and continued to top the following exams while managing chess. When I came to 10th grade, I had to make a choice as I was unable to manage both chess and academics. While playing chess was my interest, I realized it consumed a lot of my energy. Further, I felt the work-life balance would be disrupted if I solely focused on growing as a professional chess player. Having explored every subject to its depth, I realized I thoroughly enjoy math, physics, and computers in comparison to other subjects.

I scored 96 percent in board exams. Until then, I had no idea what an IIT was. On my father's suggestion, I joined an IIT coaching center where the best math faculty in the city teaches. My nightmare started after the first weekend of mock JEE mains and JEE advanced tests. I was at the bottom of the list, and all the students behind me on the list were absentees. I experienced an identity crisis, which was followed by the students' and instructors' indifference towards me. Despite the setback, I persisted due to my passion for mathematics and problem-solving.

Peer pressure caused me to experience extreme anxiety and fear for nearly a year, to the point where I was in a degenerating state. Then, I began to read self-help books and delved into spirituality, particularly Eckhart Tolle's writings; his words assisted me in attaining a profound sense of tranquility, and I lost interest in the weekend practice exam, the students, and the instructors. I was taken aback by my JEE advanced ranking of 3706. I had not contemplated it; I simply studied mathematics and physics out of a desire to do so.

I aspired to enroll in IITs in the highest category. However, as I conducted additional research on the various engineering disciplines, I came to the conclusion that computer science was the discipline that would most effectively satisfy my desire to solve problems. At IIT Bhubaneswar, I enrolled. At the start of my first year, I struggled with my decision, despised the online mode, and never felt the desire to

study. I arrived at college in my second year, and I typically require more time to adapt to new situations. In the interim, I had developed resentment toward the subjects, prepared at the last minute, and managed to earn a decent score, concentrating primarily on athletics, as I had been missing my all-rounder for the previous three years.

I got a terrible grade in the third term. There were other personal reasons for it, but the subject felt challenging for me, and my habit of leaving things until the last minute didn't help either. There was no connection at all between the easy-going overachiever I was in school and the resentful one-night study person I had become. I began making better decisions. I started looking for things I was really interested in. I began to learn a lot about them.

Unfortunately, I didn't expect a job because I thought I was a failure, but my desire to solve problems kept me going. Around the end of my second year, I got into a training program at Microsoft. At the end of the mentorship program, I was able to get a paid job because of my constant hard work. I had a lot of worries about myself even before my internship started. But from the first day of my job, I felt like I was meant to be there. I had a great time at work and pushed myself to do better while playing chess and foosball with my friends. I also loved all the free food in the food court.

My final presentation went satisfactorily, and I was hoping for a PPO. But the results were not made public for a long time after the internship. A lot of other companies had stopped hiring, but I was still positive about getting the PPO. During the job, we were told

there would be no coding round. But all of a sudden, I got an email telling me that I had an interview round coming up. They could ask me anything, even questions about code and HR. I did everything I could to get ready for it, even missing some classes that hurt my grades. It went well with my interview. After two weeks, I got an email telling me I wouldn't be getting the full-time job offer. According to my boss, the possible reason for the rejection was that "we are missing great talents because of the economic situation."

Yes, my heart was broken. It wasn't hard for me to work from 9 to 9 because I had made great friends there and I loved what I did. It was my ideal business. I wish I could work there every day. But now I have to work hard again to get placements, even though the job market is very unclear right now. I cried when I realized that my fear of tests and evaluations had made me feel less confident during the interview. As I get over my fear, I remember how much I love fixing problems. Some of the best times of my life were when I used logic and intuition to carefully solve hard questions without worrying about whether I could do it or whether other students could. When I go back to that state of happiness, I can see that I have a newfound sense of hope. I am hopeful since I do know that if I keep enjoying fixing problems like I used to, I will be happy. Of course, it might not be the best place in society's eyes, but who cares? I will be happy in my own world while doing good things for society at the same time. What could I want more of?

– *Anonymous*

"Then We'll Do That Together, Too"

3

Hello reader! Are you dealing with a lot of stuff that is affecting your mental health? Well, just want to say that you are not alone. (Smile and keep reading.)

The genesis of the idea of 'mental health' dates back to the ancient Greeks. Since then there has been significant changes in its meaning throughout the ages, and it has consistently been evoking discussions. WHO conceives 'mental health' as a "state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can make a contribution to his or her community." Since, our 'mental health' is surely at the driver seat, taking us on long drives on each long day. Therefore, taking care of our mental health and well-being becomes crucial. It is good to see that in recent years people are aware and being vocal about their mental issues - stress, anxiety, depression, PTSD, etc. - instead of hushing up about their mental state and thoughts. So, I too would like to tell a tiny tale of mine.

I am a lucky person, though; almost every day I am an audience of boxing and wrestling matches, both verbal, inside the four walls of my house. Most of the time, I am alone, shy, and introverted, not a pro at attracting bees (friends) with dews of honey (social skills). Fear of being judged, unaccepted, and disliked by everyone around has been no less haunting than watching *Nun* or *Conjuring* 1, 2, 3, 4,... you can number it as you like. Well, then, I had only one person to rely on—guess who!

I, Me, Myself.

I made myself my best friend by talking to myself, writing letters (journaling), doing things I love, and each day getting to know this friend of mine in a better way. Well, I'm still in the process of getting there.

One thing I learned from my experience, and that helps me a lot to deal with things which also act as a coping mechanism, is **Acceptance**. Whatever the situation or problem, I accept that, be it pain or "pensive pleasure," experience it all. I too have my own moments of weakness, but uplifting myself is my responsibility.

I am grateful for all the beautiful experiences and thankful for all the wonderful people in my life. I would focus on them and cherish them forever.

Thank you, reader, for bearing with me patiently, and thank you to the entire Udaan team for such an endeavor.

– *Anonymous*



1

**MARKERS FOR IDENTIFYING
EMOTIONALLY SUFFERING
FRIEND**

2

**FREQUENTLY ASKED
QUESTIONS ABOUT
COUNSELLING**

3

**HOW TO BE A GOOD
LISTENER WHEN SOMEONE
IS VENTING?**

Markers for Identifying Emotionally Suffering Friend

1

If any of the following or all the markers are observed in your friend in extreme intensity, frequency or duration then you should certainly talk to your friend, report it to his/her parents, warden council, hostel council or the student counsellor. Your promptness and alertness can help your friend cope the emotional crisis better. More number of markers with high intensity and frequency are indicative of high risk factors.

Socially withdrawn - It's not a bad idea to talk to your friend who is *lately avoiding social gatherings*.

Skipping Meals - If your friend is lately skipping meals then don't hesitate to ask if he/she is feeling alright.

Sleep disturbances - Change in sleep pattern like *excessive sleep, decreased sleep, disturbed sleep, unable to feel fresh in the morning after waking up* indicates some emotional disturbance.

Personal Hygiene - Inability or difficulty in maintaining regular personal hygiene like bathing, washing clothes, keeping the room clean are indicative either negligence, stress or some deep emotional problem.

Missing Classes - It is worth your attention, if you find that your friend is *academically feeling stressed and begins to miss classes*. Please remember, avoiding starts on a small scale but gradually increases.

Unhealthy Coping Mechanism - You should be alarmed if you see that your friend has started using *unhealthy coping mechanisms like substance abuse* (cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana or any other substance),

excessively playing online games, binge watching, binge eating, watching pornography or masturbating quite regularly and is not being able to stop despite your suggestion.

Impulsive - If you find a friend with above markers and you feel he/she is impulsive too i.e. has low frustration tolerance, gets irritated easily, picks fight easily, gets into a reckless behavior (sexual encounters with multiple partners, high on sexting or gambling) easily then your friend is at a potential risk of underlying or apparent emotional problem.

Extreme Emotion - If you observe or sense any extreme emotion like sadness, anger, worry, irritation, jealousy, lust, guilt or sudden mood fluctuations in your friend then please talk or suggest your friend to the student counsellor.

Recent significant life event - Talk to your friend, be supportive and vigilant if you are aware that something significantly unpleasant has happened in your friend's life like relationship breakup, family tensions, disappointment in academics, difficulty in expressing orientation (gay or lesbian), failure to get internship or placement or any other significant event.

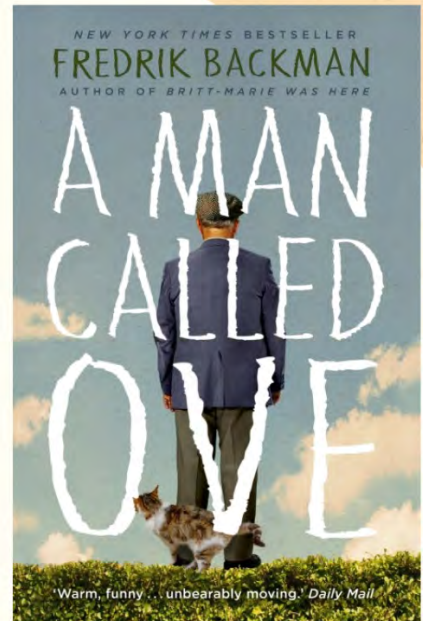
Please be sure of the secret you are maintaining about your friend's mental health. The trade off is between your friend's emotional well being and fear related to authority or judgement. It's always better to support your friend in facing the consequences (if may be the case) then risking your friend's well being.

Finally, it goes without saying that you can approach your **friend's parents, student**

counsellor or any other trusted person in the time of crisis. At least, it is worth a try. If at all that fails then also your friend will know

that you care. Sometimes, this assurance alone can make a positive difference.

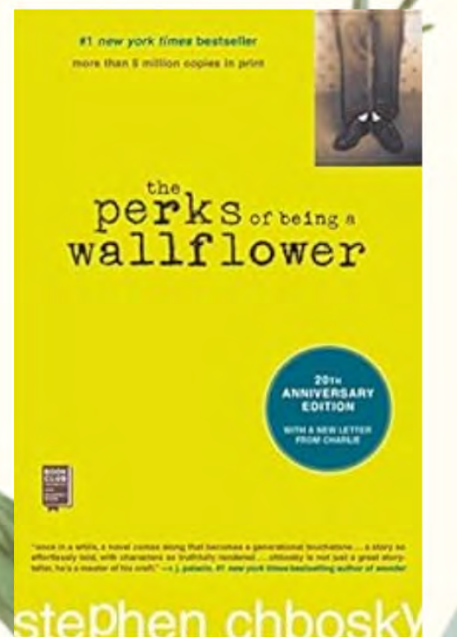
FEEL GOOD BOOKS



*The Boy, the mole,
the fox and the Horse*



Charlie Mackesy



**You
matter.
Your story
is not over
yet.**



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HELPLINE NUMBER

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**HELP IS
AVAILABLE**

CALL SOMEONE NOW

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Frequently Asked Questions About Counselling

2

Q. WHAT IS COUNSELLING?

Counselling (Scientific term is Psychotherapy) is a 1:1 professional relationship where whatever you discuss remains confidential between you and your therapist. You can talk anything under the sun with your therapist. The best part is you will neither be judged nor reprimanded by your therapist. So, you are free to talk anything without any inhibition.

Q. HOW LONG THE PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSION GOES?

You will generally be asked to meet once a week minimum or more (depending upon the severity of the problems) for 45 minutes session. Sessions are generally time bound and hence maintaining the time is important. Also, it's likely that your therapist have another appointment after your session.

Q. HOW MUCH TIME DOES IT TAKE TO OVERCOME MY PROBLEMS?

It again depends from individual to individual. However, factors like frequency of sessions, motivation of the person to overcome the difficulties, severity of the problem and efficiency of the therapist are some of the defining factors for the outcome of the therapy.

Q. WHAT HAPPENS IN THE FIRST CONSULTATION?

The therapist will make you feel comfortable and will encourage you to speak about your problems. Besides that, your therapist will take some preliminary information about your background necessary for understanding you. Once again, you can be assured that whatever notes your therapist is making on the first day or in subsequent sessions are meant for his/her personal records only.

Q. HOW CAN I BE SURE OF CONFIDENTIALITY?

Your therapist is ethically bound to maintain confidentiality. In fact, the therapist will suggest you also to keep the content of sessions confidential for good prognosis of the treatment. However, please be informed the therapist is bound to divulge the confidentiality under 03 circumstances i.e.:

- When a person is having strong suicidal tendencies
- When a person is having strong homicidal tendencies
- When legal matters are involved

Once again, the therapist will not discuss about what you have shared with him/her other than alerting your family members or concern persons in the first two cases. While, in legal cases the therapist will divulge details which are unavoidable for the process.

Q. CAN I CANCEL MY APPOINTMENT?

Yes, you can. However, it is not advisable to cancel your appointment unless it is utmost needed. Your sessions are like your medicine dose. Continuity of the session is highly important for the positive outcome of the therapy. In case, you need to cancel the appointment then, if possible, try cancelling it 24 hours before your session so that your therapist can book an another appointment.

Q. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PSYCHIATRIST AND A CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST?

Both Psychiatrist and Clinical Psychologist treat the emotional problems. The mode of treatment used by Psychiatrist is medication while a Clinical Psychologist does it through psychotherapy (talking and listening are essential elements of psychotherapy other than psychotherapy techniques).

Q. DO I NEED TO TAKE PSYCHIATRIC MEDICINES?

Once again, it depends from case to case. In some cases, medicine is needed along with psychotherapy while for others it is not needed at all. In such cases, Psychotherapy alone is the treatment method.

Q. DOES PSYCHIATRIC MEDICINE MAKE ME DEPENDENT AND DROWSY?

NO. It's the most common myth that a psychiatric drug makes you dependent forever. In fact, the right kind of intervention facilitates the psychotherapy process further leading to positive outcome of the treatment wherein you not only discontinue the medicines but will lead a good quality life too.

Q. WHEN CAN I SEEK A CONSULTATION WITH A PROFESSIONAL?

You can come to talk to the Student Counsellor whenever you feel its needed may it be a relationship issue, family problem, academic concerns, emotional conflicts or dilemmas. The thumb rule would be whenever you feel that you are feeling distressed and your personal life, social life or academic/professional life is getting compromised, you can consider talking to a professional.

Q. HOW DO I UNDERSTAND WHETHER I SHOULD MEET A PSYCHOLOGIST OR A PSYCHIATRIST?

You can always come for a consultation with a Student Counsellor or any of the Doctor's available in the Medical Unit for seeking clarity on the same.

Will I be labelled as 'mad' or 'mental' if I seek a psychiatric or psychological consultation?

NO. A mental health professional will never label you with a derogatory comments like above or any for that matter. Please remember, you and I make a society and if we decide to give importance to our mental health and do not judge ourselves and others seeking mental help then it will no longer be stigmatized. The change begins with you. So, stop feeling bad

about seeking mental help as there is nothing wrong in it. We all at some point go to a tough time and need a neutral person to share our inner feelings. Still, if someone calls you name for seeking help them simply ignore that person because if you don't react then that person will stoop commenting.

Q. WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES OF THE PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSIONS?

- It will help you deal range of distressful emotions like sadness, anxiety, guilt, rage, anger, jealousy, impulsiveness, conflicts or dilemmas.
- It will help you fight significant unpleasant events or stressors in life.
- It will help you identify and modify your maladaptive traits, attitudes or habits.
- It will help you gain control over the choices and decisions you make in life.
- It will help you improve your interpersonal relationships.
- It will help you identify your personality strengths and limitations leaving you with a good self image.
- It will give you a space to talk freely and explore the 'secret chambers' of your mind without any fear of judgement or confidentiality.
- All of the above will help you gain sense of control over your life, will make you feel happy and set you adjust and adapt well with stressors of life. Overall, the psychotherapy process will help you improve your quality of life.

HOW TO IDENTIFY SOMEONE AT RISK OF SUICIDE



- Feeling like a burden
- Being isolated
- Increased anxiety
- Feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Increased substance use
- Looking for a way to access lethal means
- Increased anger or rage
- Extreme mood swings
- Expressing hopelessness
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Talking or posting about wanting to die
- Existing social media platforms
- Trying to complete unfinished tasks/engagement (especially is in hurry to complete them)
- Writing a will
- Making plans for suicide



SUPPORTING LOVED ONES AT RISK OF SUICIDE



- Listen and talk openly. Have honest conversations about their feelings.
- Prioritize their safety. Remove access to harmful objects. Stay with them if they are in crisis.
- Provide consistent support. Check in regularly. Don't underestimate the power of just being present.
- Connect them with help. Share the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-call 9152987821) and other mental health resources.
- Encourage professional treatment. Gently recommend evaluation by a psychologist, counselor, or psychiatrist. Offer to help make appointments.
- Follow up frequently. Continue showing you care after any suicidal crisis. Recovery takes time and ongoing support.



How To Be a Good Listener When Someone Is Venting?

3

When your friends or your family members come to you to vent, how can you help them?

Do not jump to advising or calming them down: Let them take their time to vent everything. Remember that a venting session is not about what you talk, but about how much you enable them to talk.

Be welcoming to them: Maintain a fair amount of eye contact with them, and maintain body language that conveys that their emotions are welcome in the space between you and them (do not be cross-armed, be busy with something else, or be looking elsewhere).

Prompt them: You can prompt them to vent effectively by asking them a few fundamental, yet insightful questions, like 'What are you most irritated/angry/worried about?'. Ask more about intense words like 'never', 'messed up' etc. if they use them.

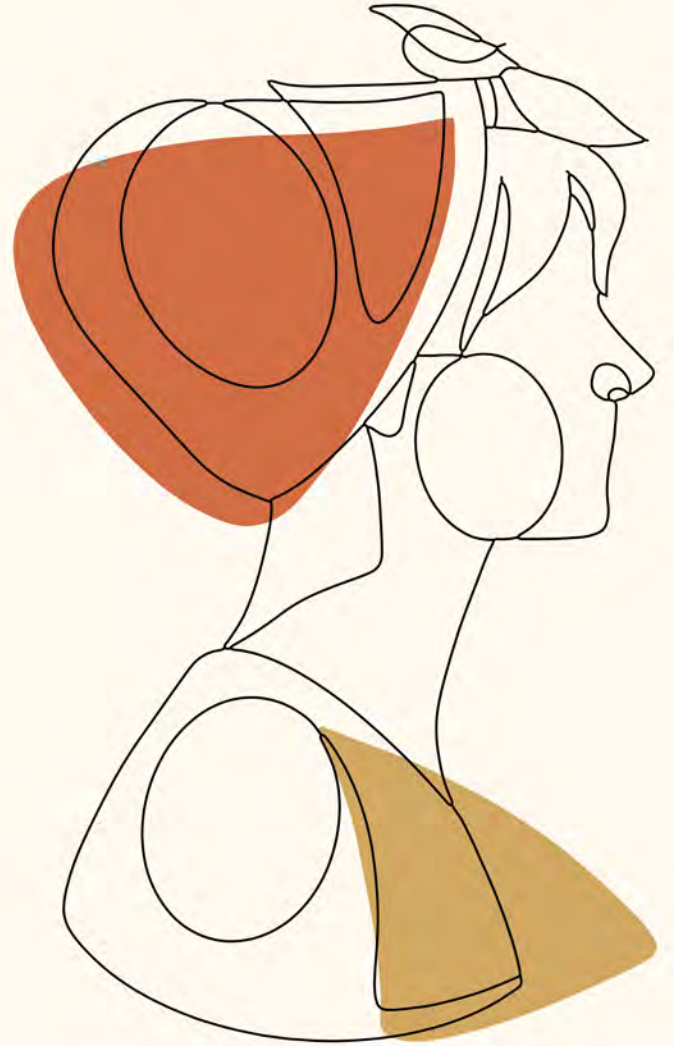
Validate their feelings: A venting session should not be a uni-directional talk. It is important to make your friend feel that you understand and empathise with their frustration. Hence, their feelings need to be validated. You can use your body language (head nods), or by using affirmative words, and even rephrase their statements to show that you understand what they are talking about, thereby validating their feelings.

Do not judge them: There might be statements they make as part of their venting that you may not agree with, or you think they are wrong about. But never judge them. Remember that being judged or criticised for their frustration is the last thing they want. Judging or criticising them would also make them lose their reliance on you the next time they go through difficulty and they might suppress it within themselves.

Offer support: Once they are done venting and you acknowledge their frustration or hurt, you can make them feel better by guiding them to think from a different perspective, or doing an activity that might create a change of mood for them.

As the listener, if you feel that your friend is going through an emotional disturbance that may not resolve with venting and that it is better handled by a mental health professional, please encourage them to consult one.

While being a good listener is very important, not internalising the negative vibes or emotions that come out from venting is also crucial. Nevertheless, if you feel that the talk has been overwhelming for you and taking a toll on you, you should not hesitate to consult a mental health professional yourself.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- 1. Balancing Collaboration and Competition: The Way Forward for Nurturing Happier Students and Citizens**
- 2. Expand Your Psychology Vocabulary**
- 3. Most Loyal Form of Self-Love**

Balancing Collaboration and Competition: the Way Forward for Nurturing Happier Students and Citizens

1



Better, faster, sooner!”

I have been conditioned through life, by personal and professional influences and contexts, to continuously strive for winning. My life has centered on competition; it’s a deeply rooted emotion. In my school days, scoring the highest marks was the ultimate aim. Learning was never rewarded, and collaboration was hardly mentioned in pedagogy, curriculum, or assessment.

One reason competition is so ingrained in my genes may be that I grew up in India in the 1990s. It was a time when the Indian

middle class was living modestly, without modern-day amenities like cars or air conditioners. My friends and I were alien to the idea of pocket money; we only heard about it in the Hollywood series dubbed in Hindi. The means were limited. In that India, we competed against each other for the best opportunities. The other reason could be that the traces of British imperialism profoundly impacted our education system, which was designed to mass produce intellectually identical and similarly trained workers focused on remembering things rather than creative thinking. Honestly, collaboration was never part of the expected learning outcomes. I was taught to struggle alone and leave others behind to become “somebody.” I am unsure, but the struggle may have worsened for the next generation. Though the middle class has attained amenities, the competition seems to have intensified. When I teach business students and suggest group presentations or assignments, I still come across individually written pieces put together at the last moment.

Fortunately or unfortunately, the reality is that everything around me works best through collaboration, whether interacting with my students, being on committees with my colleagues, organizing training programs, or living at home with my partner. Competition may help me, but what helps everyone, including my organization, is my effective collaboration with those around me. So, I was taught almost the opposite of what I

was supposed to do, leading to classical, evergreen cognitive dissonance. It makes me doubtful, anxious, and frustrated. If it affects my mental health, what about my students' mental health who have yet to experience life?

Nature balances collaboration and competition beautifully. While it creates competition where the fittest survive, it also shows ample examples of the interdependence of communities and species. As we advance, integrating the principles of collaboration in our education

system across pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment may help us nurture happier individuals and citizens. We may then stop measuring our individual success and realize that being happy together in a community can also be a measure of success and, in fact, a more fulfilling and sustainable one!

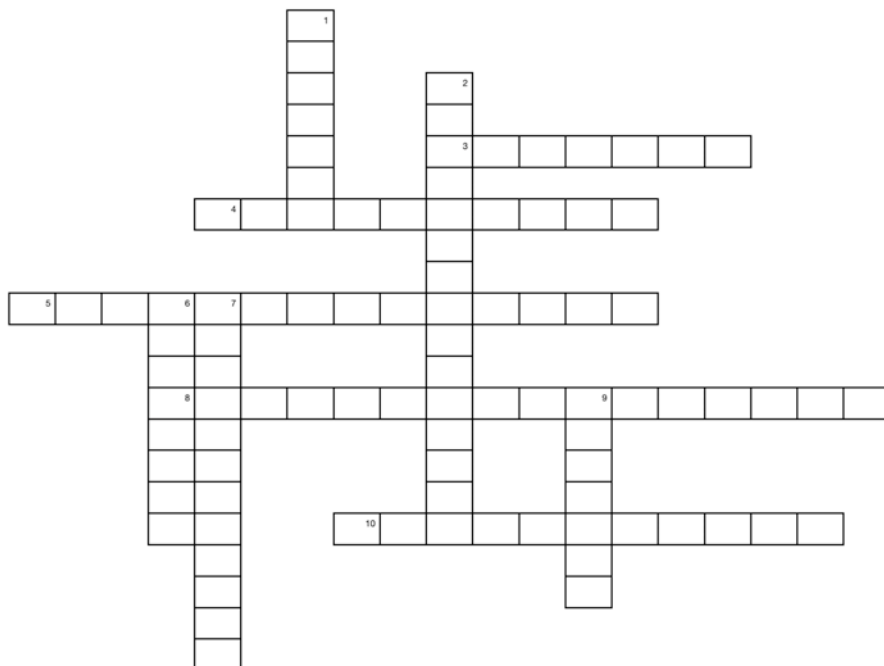
Dr. Ritika Mahajan
Assistant Professor,
Department of Management Studies,
MNIT Jaipur
ritika.dms@mnit.ac.in

Expand Your Psychology Vocabulary

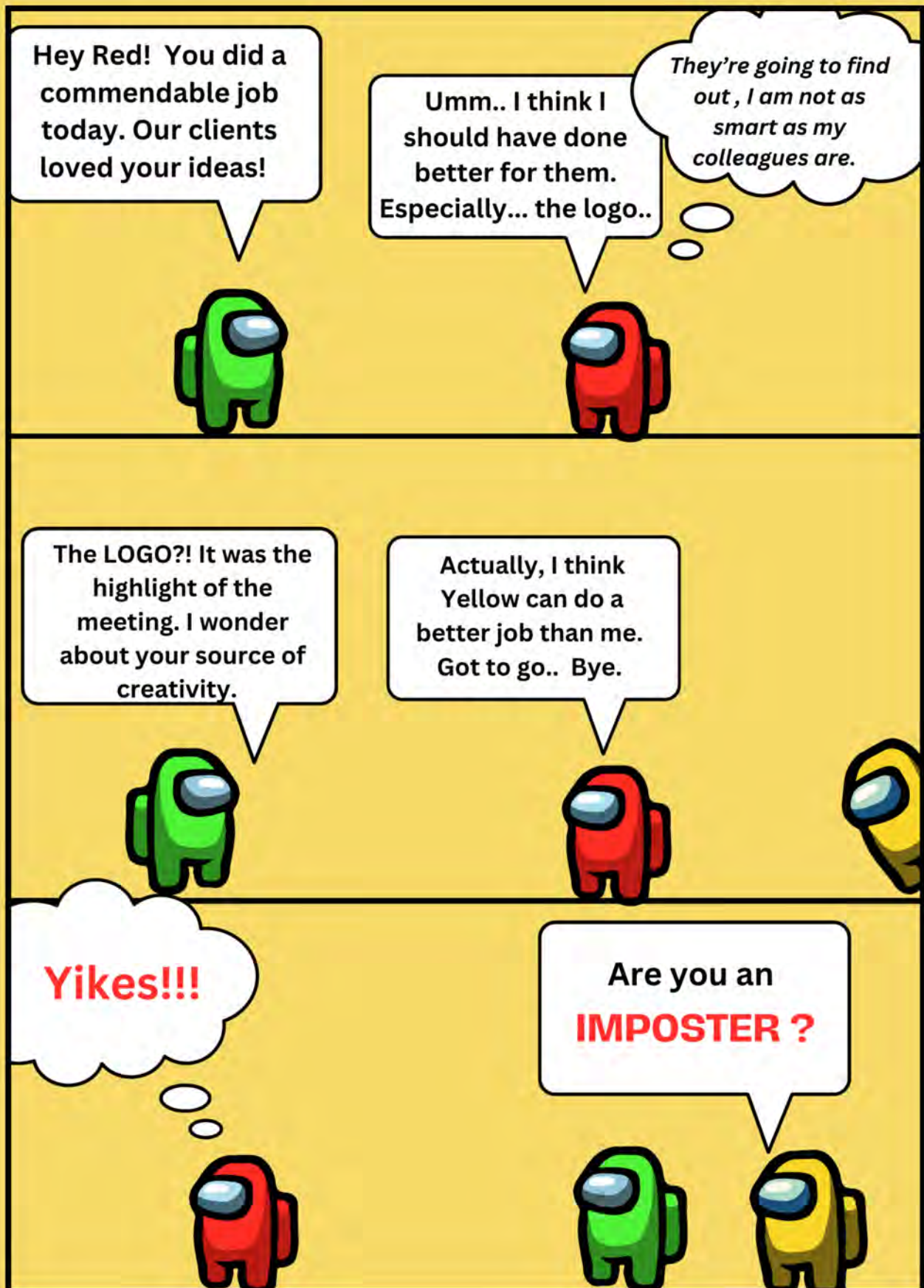
2

ACROSS	DOWN
3. Remediation of physical, mental, or behavioural disorders or disease	1. Understanding a person from his or her frame of reference rather than one's own, or vicariously experiencing that person's feelings, perceptions, and thoughts
4. The study of the mind and behaviour	2. An ego defense in which apparently logical reasons are given to justify unacceptable behaviour that is motivated by unconscious instinctual impulses
5. An approach to the mind, personality, psychological disorders, and psychological treatment originally developed by Sigmund Freud at the beginning of the 20th century	6. A corticosteroid hormone, that is considered the primary stress hormone
8. The inability to recognize salient environmental stimuli such as landmarks	7. Morbid concern with the state of one's health, including unfounded beliefs of ill health
10. Consuming abnormally large quantities of food in a discrete time period with a concurrent sense of loss of control	9. An emotion characterized by apprehension and somatic symptoms of tension in which an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune

Solution to this crossword is at the end of this section.



IMPOSTER Syndrome



Most Loyal Form of Self-Love

3

■ Self-Love' is a buzzword. Cosmetic companies use it to sell body-pampering products. Travel companies promote experiences to expand the horizons of our experiences. Mentors and coaches advocate practices for honing our latent potential. Relationship experts caution about plunging into connections without clear awareness of our own personality patterns and motives. Psychotherapists nudge us towards self-acceptance by demonstrating how to knit together seemingly-conflicting thoughts, motives and emotions.

Any of these approaches to self-love might be beneficial. But do you know what is the most interesting part? This journey will invariably, at some point, require us to step beyond the very 'self' that we have spent so much effort to refine and adapt. This is a self-concept beyond our strengths, beyond skills, and beyond social influences.

Those of you who practise meditation or mindfulness may perhaps have had fleeting glimpses of this Self-as-Observer or the Transcendent Self. In this, the person may feel detached from the usual parameters of successful living—such as achievement of one's goals, maintaining fulfilling relationships, being respected in society, or catering sufficiently to one's needs. (This should not be confused with the 'apathy' or numbness of depressed states, and from certain drug-induced experiences.)

In fact, they may also not feel as strongly about their cherished ideas, dreams, and feelings. Those are very much there; but something larger emerges. It's like a clear awareness of all such phenomena as something "not I, but is".

That sounds scary! Imagine working so hard to be the best version of yourself, only to discover that you are looking at an aspect of you that is so different from the 'you' that you have always known.

However, the shift between the known-self and this unknown-emerging self is rarely irreversible. Usually, we step back-and-forth between these two selves until we are more comfortable with the latter.

Readers who are not into spirituality may feel unconvinced at this point. Well, many schools of psychology have also talked about an expansion of the self through certain illuminating experiences. These may include experiencing or creating art, music and literature; encounters with Nature; mystical states; or selfless service to others even at the cost of one's own interests. Some of you may already know about Maslow's hierarchy of needs. His theory eventually put forth a higher level of motivation than even *self-actualization* ("the person's desire for self-fulfillment ... the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially.") This sixth, highest motivational level is *self-transcendence*.

Mindfulness approaches also aim to tap into an 'observing self' that is calmly detached from the continuous flow of internal experiences and external outcomes. Carl Jung, founder of Analytical Psychology, wrote about a 'collective unconscious' that is the deepest level of the self—a container of myths, symbols and experiences from all of human evolution—and therefore not limited to a personal identity.

What does this mean for Self-Love? We are living in a competitive society that constantly challenges our worth. Many of us are living away from our homes, struggling with bouts of homesickness and even alienation from our peers. There are injustices that shake our confidence to overcome. We feel helpless against larger sociopolitical systems. No matter how hard we work upon our responses to external conditions, certain things defeat us. In such conditions, the validation has to come from within.

Any of the above 'illuminating experiences' can help us access this transcendent self. It may take regular practice, but it is possible for every single person on this earth.

It gives us hope that even when we are living a life that, despite our best efforts, still seems out of alignment with the "person we wanted to be when we were younger", there is still an aspect of us that is complete, whole and powerful.

After you finish reading this article, do take a moment to reflect on how you can get acquainted with this aspect. Remember, it is not only 'yours', but 'you', so there is no way you can miss out!

Dr. Anjali Bhatia
 Author, and Counsellor: IIT-Jodhpur
 bhatia.anjali82@gmail.com

SOLUTIONS TO EXPAND YOUR PSYCHOLOGY VOCABULARY CROSSWORD

ACROSS	DOWN
3. Therapy	1. Empathy
4. Psychology	2. Rationalization
5. Psychoanalysis	6. Cortisol
8. Topographagnosia	7. Hypochondria
10. Binge Eating	9. Anxiety

MEET THIS YEAR'S TEAM UDAAN



DR.
GAGANDEEP
KAUR MAKKAR

Student Counsellor, IIT
Bhubaneswar

Coordinator &
Editor



AKHILA AJITH

Research Scholar – Psychology,
IIT Bhubaneswar

Editing Team



DINISHA NAYAK

Research Scholar – English,
IIT Bhubaneswar

Editing Team



DINESH KUMAR

Undergraduate – Electrical Engg.,
IIT Bhubaneswar

Designer



A NEW BEGINNING

"Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. Take care of your mind and seek help when needed. Together, we can break the stigma surrounding mental health and create a world where everyone has access to the support they need."



- ✉ gagandeep@iitbbs.ac.in
- ✉ pic.counselling@iitbbs.ac.in
- ✉ coordinator.cst@iitbbs.ac.in
- 🌐 <https://www.iitbbs.ac.in/cst/student-counsellor.php>

