

EDITORIAL

Opening

Opportunities



The science of mental health has been a sort of a pariah, ridiculed, disdained and rejected over the decades. As mental health professionals we have been 'persona non grata' socially. Clients would be uncomfortable to recognise us in public! The global pandemic has changed all that for it has thrown the mental health concerns centre-stage as each person gets negatively impacted. People are less ashamed to express their emotions. Fear, anxiety, anger, sorrow and fatigue have gripped the world population like never before. Parents, families are over anxious about managing behavioural changes in children, teens, besides handling their own stresses. The need and the demand for mental health services have shot up tremendously. Virtual webinars, talks, panel discussions on 'emotional well-being, mental immunity, stress management and prevention of depression' continue unabated. Stress, depression, fear, anger and anxiety have become household names.

The pandemic has however, opened opportunities for the expansion of the scope of mental health services worldwide. It was critical to start free flowing conversations on mental health. Responding to the need, under the vision and guidance of the District Governor, Shabbir Shakir, Rotary District 3030 started a District Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives (DAGMHI) in June 2020 and began a series of activities for the benefit of different target groups, such as Interactors, Rotaractors, Rotarians and general community. Individual Clubs conducted activities in their community, as well as many Clubs joined hands for common programs reaching a wider audience. A free helpline was started by one Club, last year for school children. A competition named 'Mind your Mind', on

slogan writing and poster-making, was held jointly by four Clubs which fetched a fantastic response of over 600 participants. Many more innovative ideas came in from dedicated Rotarians. This newsletter is an initiative of Presidents of three Clubs of the city of Nagpur and supported by them.

The primary objective of the newsletter is to reach out to a larger audience, to disseminate information to dispel ignorance, to generate awareness on mental health issues, to start conversations around 'taboo' subjects so as to break the huge stigma around mental health and develop positive attitudes towards it. As we make a modest effort to launch this newsletter, we hope it will be beneficial to readers.

Take good care of your Mind,
Warm wishes,

Rita
-Rita Aggarwal.

DISTRICT GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE



Dear Editor Rita and Team Mental Health,

Many congratulations for all the good work that you all have been doing for the last many months. Coming up with a monthly newsletter is another step in the right direction. Best wishes to all three Clubs - Nagpur Downtown, Nagpur Vision and Nagpur.

Keep doing good!!!

-Shabbir Shakir

READERS MAY SEND QUERIES TO THE EDITOR ON
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News from Global RAG on Mental Health Initiatives

Rotary Club of Mumbai Coastline, (Maharashtra, India), on 31st March, hosted a session "Battling Mental Health Issues" and invited Rita Aggarwal, Psychologist and Charter member/ Director on the Board of the Global Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives (RAGMHI). Rita explained in detail about the pre-requisites of the formation of a new Rotary Action Group (RAG), structure, purpose, functioning, and how RAGS can effectively benefit society. Then specifically speaking about RAGMHI, she spoke about the mental health projects that Clubs can do on an individual basis and also highlighted two community projects that qualify for Global Grants. She explained the project titled "Wellness in a Box" and "Project Maanasi" which is recognised by WHO as model project. The RAGMHI website has tool-kits and resources available to Clubs free of cost. Rita invited Hauwa Abbas, a Public Health Advocate and Coach from Nigeria and a member of the Board of RAGMHI to speak on how RAGMHI can help Clubs to promote mental health. Rtn Dwaine Souveny from Canada West (member of RAGMHI) also attended and interacted with the audience. The question answer session was highly interactive with participation of 9 Rotary Clubs from 4 countries. It was truly an international webinar. The session was coordinated by President elect Rtn Abhay Bhatia and organised by Rtn Aditya Mehta.

(Interested Rotarians can visit the website of RAGMHI and become members and avail resources. www.ragonmentalhealth.org)

EDITORIAL TEAM



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DECODING



Each one of us desire happiness and peace of mind but unfortunately end up never getting to the essence of true happiness. Stress is caused by being 'here' but wanting to be 'there', as we humans strive all our lives on improving our outer persona ignoring the inner persona completely. And in the bargain blame 'Stress' for everything. But what is this STRESS?

Stress is unavoidable and part of our body and our mind. Stress is our body's response to any kind of threat or demand that is over-bearing. Stress happens when a negative internal chatter starts in the mind, taking over our judgements, controlling our emotions and imposing opinions or assuming things, resulting in anxiety, if the chatter is not controlled. Stress triggers the release of stress hormones that prepare our body to either stay and deal with a threat or to run away to safety. This is known as the 'fight or flight' response. The stressors could be anything from exams, relationships, marriage, work related issues to Corona.

A few signs of stress overload which you should be aware of are:

- ◆ Inability to concentrate
- ◆ Anxious or racing thoughts
- ◆ Moodiness
- ◆ Nausea, dizziness
- ◆ Eating and sleeping Disorder
- ◆ Substance Use

"Chitta Vritti" is the Sanskrit term for 'Mind chatter'. Chitta means not only the mind, but is the source of consciousness of a person. Vritti is the fluctuations of fickle thoughts that affect our perception of experiencing the reality. There are 5 Vritti's connecting with Covid 19. They are as follows:

*Right cognition (Pramana) -Limit the amount of time you spend reading or watching things which are not making you feel better.

*Misconception (Viparyaya)- There is a lot of misinformation swirling around - stay informed by sticking to trusted sources of information.

*Imagination (Vikalpa)- The human imagination has no end. Learn to stop imagining and saying NO in your mind. Controlling mind talk.

*Sleep (Nidra)- Strike a balance between work and enough sleep.

*Memory (Smriti)- It is particularly important to have downtime or me time. Have a positive memory of lockdown time.

Let me elaborate two techniques to handle stress overload. One is called the "Apple" technique and the other is the "Apricot" technique. Let's talk about them one by one.

The "Apple" technique goes like this:

Acknowledge: Acknowledge the feeling of uncertainty as it comes to mind

Pause: Do not react at all, try to be blank and breathe deep.



Pull back: Tell yourself strongly -Don't believe everything you think. After all thoughts are not facts or statements.

Let go: Let go of the feeling or thought in your mind, just let it go. Do not respond to the thought. Just imagine the thought floating away in a bubble or cloud.

Explore: Explore and feel the present moment - All is Well. Feel your breathing and the way you are breathing.

The "Apricot" Technique goes like this:

Awareness about yourself. Focussing on feelings and thoughts. For example, mindfulness, ME time.

Physical Time. Now a days it is said Sitting is the New Smoking. Few Ideas, Dance, Yoga, Take the stairs, playing with pets.

Rest and Recover. Have quality sleep (turning off electronics devices 60 minutes before sleep time.

Isolation to Solution. Isolation can make you anxious and stressed. Self-care activities (Exercise, art, craft, Journaling, music) enjoyable activities by balancing structured time and unstructured time.

Clock. Start with setting your alarm clocks (as this lockdown has played a havoc with your natural circadian rhythms)

Opportunities - Every crisis brings with it an Opportunity. It lies within us how we use our core capabilities in achieving it.

Try to maintain your normal routine.

Happy de-stressing!

-Smita Ghosh

(Psychologist/ Healer, Ahmedabad)

BRAIN



SCIENCE

Dr. Hans Selye explained STRESS by the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) model. Based on physiology and psychobiology, a stressor, leads to a three-stage bodily response. The first stage is "The Alarm reaction stage". Here a distress signal is sent to a part of the brain which triggers the release of adrenaline governed by sympathetic path of autonomic nervous system. This adrenaline gives a person a boost of energy by increasing the heart rate, blood pressure, blood sugar levels thus preparing a person to respond to the stressor they are experiencing. This is known as a "fight or flight" response which makes you either flee or protect yourself in dangerous/stressful situations.

The second stage is "Resistance". When the stressful situation ends, the body will repair and recover itself until the hormone levels, heart rate, and blood pressure reach a pre-stress state which is governed by Parasympathetic path of autonomic nervous system. However, if the stressor remains, the body stays in a state of alert, and triggers release of stress hormones by activating Hypothalamus - Pituitary Axis (HPA) thus leading to release of stress hormone Cortisol, which initially allows body to deal adaptively with stressors, but this continuous high level of Cortisol starts affecting the body. Thus, resistance to new stressor is impaired leading to negative symptoms.

The third stage is "Exhaustion". After an extended period of stress, the body's capacity to respond to continuous new stressors becomes seriously compromised, making the person prone to depression, anxiety, diabetes, asthma, skin disease, cancer and high blood pressure.

MY STORY

“Love you dear Zindagi”

I am Nidhi, a student of BBA. We shifted to Mumbai recently actually on my insistence. I stay along with my younger sister who is pursuing engineering; my younger brother is in school. My parents are orthodox and we are a middle-class family. Till the onset of Corona, things were quite okay, but now I started feeling suffocated in my home, my tolerance level had gone down, I became easily irritable. I lost my focus on studies, in fact I used to lead my college mates in many assignments, but then I started having frequent quarrels with them, also my scores were affected. Being a girl there were some restrictions on my time which I spent outside home. As we came from a town it was little difficult for me to adapt to the metro culture, but still I managed to mould myself. I was able to take up different challenges, was moving around the city comfortably but with Covid pandemic the scene changed, everything was disturbed. I could not sleep well, was apparently aggressive towards my mother who could not retaliate and tolerated my anger. I felt like shifting to a new place, where I won't be monitored. My friends could feel the change in me. And with all this continued situation I suddenly had an episode of breathless, my heart was beating fast, felt as if someone is sitting on my chest, was perspiring and felt as if I had suffered heart attack. My physician after all baseline investigation referred me to a psychiatrist for seeking advice who diagnosed it as Panic attack. I started medications and was referred to a psychologist. She enquired about schooling, friends, relations with parents and family members. I was initially reluctant to attend the therapy but my friends insisted and to my surprise it was very helpful. After several sessions I could develop an insight to my behaviour. Through the sessions, I was guided on resolving the relationship issues, learnt various relaxation techniques, breathing exercises and also learnt to identify stressors, my anxiety and ways to control it. My medications were tapered and stopped once my functioning improved. Now I have learned to breathe freely, let go and remind myself that this very moment is the only one I know I have for sure. I feel alive!

-Dr. Snehal Nimbhorkar

F-actual

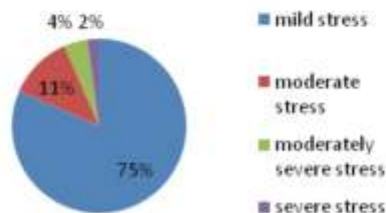
American Medical Association has noted stress is the basic cause of more than 60% of human illness and diseases.

Working persons –7 out of 10 Indian workers experienced stress at least once a week regularly

Indian women are most stressed in the world, 87% of Indian women felt stressed most of the time, and approximately 82% of Indian women had no time to relax.

A survey by The center for Healing, Delhi shows 75% Indians suffering from stress during Covid.

stress levels among population



PSYCHE TIP

OPTIMISM :

One of the important positive emotion and hopeful emotion that encourages you to look forward to a bright future, one in which you believe that things will mostly work out. Research has shown that optimism is correlated with many positive life outcomes including increased life expectancy, general health, better mental health, increased success in sports and work, greater recovery rates from heart operations and better coping strategies when faced with adversity.

"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

-Winston Churchill

reach out

“Divorce dilemma”

Q: My name is Mita and I am 28 years old. I was married two years ago -it was an arranged marriage, and now my husband says that he wants to divorce me as he had an affair earlier and it was a forced marriage. All my resorts to convince him have failed. I really don't want to get divorced. Please help me.

A: Dear Mita, this is a very unfortunate situation and I can understand your pain and trauma when your husband announced his decision. Since yours is an arranged marriage both of you must have taken decision after meeting each other. In that case why in first place your husband agreed to get married is something to be explored, if he had succumbed to the family pressure as he says then we may conclude that he may be having issues regarding decision making. Another point is why he did not take you in confidence soon after the marriage? What are the major factors triggering his decision now? We need to understand his version as well. Mita, marriage is a complex phenomenon and it has many social, psychological, legal, sexual dimensions attached to it. When someone decides to step out of a formal relationship it usually has strong reasons. Mita, should we forcibly make someone stay in such relationship? I know it is difficult to digest the fact but why are you not in a position to accept the fact that he is no more interested in you? Do you not feel that by not accepting the facts you are damaging your self-respect? Do you feel that after divorce you would not be able to find another better partner? Can you not think of living independent life? Why are you not willing to give divorce? Is the pressure of people or family weighing on your mind? When divorce is not by mutual consent there are usually very lengthy legal procedures, are you prepared to face the legal battle? The Family Court will call both of you for reconciliation and if you feel counselling would help, you both should take up couple counselling before the process of divorce is started. Life has two types of circumstances –one which we can change and another we cannot change; and when we are in circumstances, we cannot change we need to accept those and move on. Best wishes.

-Dr Swati Dharmadhikari.

BEING IN HARMONY



“Breath”

When you are perplexed, stressed you need to think with a calm mind and find a resolution. One of the many techniques to calm your mind is controlling your “breath”. Are you aware of your breath? For different levels of thoughts and emotions ones breathing also changes accordingly.

Of the many ways our body discharges the toxins, breath plays a very vital role. We can use breath as a tool to do many things with body and mind. The technique I will explain today will help you achieve peace and calm.

1. Sit with your back straight to allow your lungs to fill properly.
2. Keep the tip of your tongue resting lightly behind the front upper teeth throughout the entire exercise.
3. Exhale all the air from the lungs before starting the following steps—
 - a) Inhale quietly through your nose to the count of 4
 - b) Hold your breath for the count of 7
 - c) Exhale through your mouth to the count of 8 while making an audible “whoooooosh” sound.
 - d) Repeat this cycle a total of 4 times.

This will help you focus on your breath and bring it in alignment to your mind to feel your inner peace and harmony.



-Deepa Aggarwal

CLUB REPORTS

Women's Day celebrations: 6 Mar 2021

“WOMEN AS CARE GIVERS- VULNERABILITIES AND CHALLENGES

President Rtn. Nishikant Kashikar of RC Nagpur Downtown called the meeting to order. On behalf of the Women's Mental Health Team of the District Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives, Rtn. Dr Pratiksha Mayee Club Sec. RCN Downtown welcomed all.

Dr Nadja Reilly, who worked for 15 years at the Boston Children's Hospital at Harvard Medical School as a Psychologist. She congratulated the Women's Mental Health Team for doing a wonderful job through a video message.

District Governor and Chief Guest Shabbir Shakir and first lady Jumana Shakir then released the logo ASMI, for Mental Health Initiatives, sponsored by Rotary Club of Nagpur. DG Shabbir Shakir congratulated the team for spreading awareness about mental health and talked about the role of women in today's world. The District Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives has formed a sub-committee on Women's mental health to address the special needs of women.



This was the first seminar in the series of programs that they are planning for women. Dr Lakshmi Ravindra, special educator from Hyderabad talked about types of care givers and their sufferings. Dr Sunita Balani, Psychologist from Amity University Lucknow talked about taking care of self without feeling guilty while shouldering the responsibility as caregivers. Adv. Rtn. Bharti Kulkarni from Deolali explained the role of women as caregivers and the importance of self-care. Rotary District 3030 Chair for Mental Health Initiatives Rita Aggarwal summarized the points raised by the three speakers and gave key take home messages for all listeners. The concluding remarks were given by President Rtn. Sandeep Dhodapkar of RC Nagpur. Vote of thanks was given by Joint Secretary Rtn. Neerja Shukul from RC Nagpur.

“Emotional Fitness”: 20 Mar 2021

Rotary Club of Nagpur Fort conducted an online program on “Emotional Fitness”. The speaker was Rita Aggarwal, Psychologist and District Chair for Mental Health Initiatives. President Madhav Kukde gave the opening remarks. The Guest speaker was introduced by Devayani Tak. Rita Aggarwal spoke on the components of emotional fitness and gave practical tips on achieving it. It was followed by an interactive session. Vote of thanks was given by the club Secretary Shashikant Khandekar. It was well attended and appreciated.

“Emotional wellness” : 23 Mar 2021

Rotary Club Of Nagpur and Yashodhara B Sangh, organized a webinar for the teachers & staff of St. Claret School, Butibori, Nagpur, other school teachers and change makers. Psychologist Rita Aggarwal and Rotary Chair for Mental Health spoke on “Rejuvenating and Balancing during Covid”. She explained the psychological factors of stress and methods to balance and rejuvenate the emotions and thoughts. Ms. Deepa Aggarwal, Yoga and Meditation Trainer, spoke on “Being in Harmony” and gave practical tips on calming the mind and de-stressing the body. Principal of St. Claret school Rev. Father Martin Roshan D’ Souza welcomed the guests. President of Rotary Club of Nagpur Sandeep Dhodapkar gave the opening remarks. Mr. Tanveer Mirza Director, Yashodhara, gave his opinion and expressed his gratitude. The MOC was Shagufta Sayed. Mrs. Bibiyana Isaac, staff of St. Claret gave the vote of thanks. 90 people attended the webinar. The session was hugely interactive and had an overwhelming response.

-Anjuli Minocha