



MIND MATTERS

Rotary
RID 3030 India
Action Group on
Mental Health
Initiatives

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EDITORIAL



"Ravaging Pandemic"

I asked my 94-year-old Father, 'have you ever witnessed a pandemic before in your life'? He nodded his head and said 'No'. He was

baffled, with his slowing reflexes, with the news that kept pouring in through the news channels. You have to experience a pandemic to understand the full implication of what it does to you and your world. Those who are Covid survivors have horror stories to narrate and are still in the throes of the 'unknown'. There are others who have been indirectly hit with Covid, through loss of dear ones and gone through trauma, grief, stress, anxiety and depression. It is the resilience and tenacity of the human being to fight for survival against all odds that keeps the world ticking. Yet there are powerful lessons to be learnt.

We are known to be neurologically the most advanced species and hence considered superior, but, psychologically and spiritually we seem to be failing miserably and hence suffering. This is one lesson that stares at us starkly. The rate with which mental health is declining, post Covid and pre-Covid, speaks about the lives and life-styles of people. Corona has taught us to pause, introspect, adapt and change priorities and life-styles. It has taught us to connect with ourself and the family. It has taught us to strike a balance between materialism and mental happiness. It taught us the value of 'being alive' when people were dying by the thousands.

Times are still uncertain. The damages will persist for we-don't-know-how-long. Writers wanted to re-assess and re-valuate the losses and the gains. We bring you a variety of articles on the never-before-experienced Pandemic. Accept, Adjust and Adapt! Stay safe and fit!

-Rita Aggarwal.

ROTARY CLUB OF NAGPUR DOWNTOWN PRESIDENT DR. RISHIKESH MAYEE



It was a pleasure talking to Dr Rishikesh Mayee, President of Rotary Club of Nagpur Downtown, an experienced Eye Surgeon. His wife Dr Pratiksha Mayee, is Dy Gen. Manager, Research, Ankur Seeds Pvt Ltd. They are blessed with a son "Idhant" (class 5) and daughter "Arohi" (class 3). Idhant loves cricket, geography, history, while Arohi likes dancing, art and craft. Both children have their own You Tube channels. Dr Rishikesh and his wife love traveling and exploring new places and also like solving sudoku puzzles and crosswords.

He starts his day with a cup of tea followed by exercise (run or bodyweight training). His healthy habit is "Early to bed and early to rise." His motto is to be self-motivated to perform better, accept and learn from own mistakes. He nurtures hobbies like sports, history and geography.

His happiness mantra is to - "Live in the present and make it memorable". He ensures to look at himself in the mirror every night and feel happy and satisfied for having done something good to someone on that day!

His expectations from DAGMHI - is to increase the awareness on mental health problems in all age groups. He feels that people must realise that mental well-being is an important part of being healthy. He would be happy if DAGMHI could organise a symposium on mental health issues during the forthcoming district event and ensure every club has an active mental health committee.

We wish him good health and happiness on his birthday which falls on 5th September!!

-IPP Murali Raghavan, RC Deolali, Director, DAGMHI.

CLUB REPORTS

Rotary action groups: Why and How?

16th August 2021:

District Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives organized a webinar on "Rotary Action Groups: Why and How". The chief guest was the District Governor 3030 Rtn Ramesh Meher and the speakers were Rtn Rita Aggarwal, Director RAG on Mental health Initiatives (Global), District Chair RAG and Rtn Dr Abha Pimprikar, President DAGMHI. Rt Ann Dr Kalpana Date, Vice President DAGMHI gave the welcome address. Rtn Devang Shah introduced the District Governor, DG Rameshji in his speech stressed the importance of awareness about mental health and appreciated the efforts taken by DAGMHI. Rtn Rita Aggarwal was introduced by Rtn Dr Shantala Bhole, and Rtn Rita in her speech gave a brief idea about RAGs, their purpose and formation. Rtn Dr. Abha was introduced by Rtn Dr. Smita Hantodkar. Dr Abha elaborated on the vision and mission of DAGMHI, the programs conducted so far, the forthcoming events. She also requested Rotary Clubs to form mental health committees and conduct programs as per the vision of DAGMHI. Rtn Dr Pratiksha Mayee briefed about the competition "Joyful July". The winners of Joyful July were announced by DG Rtn Ramesh Meher. Rtn Suraj Choudhary proposed the vote of thanks. The program was ably conducted by Rtn Pankaj Aggarwal.

"SWOT through Chanakya"

20th August 2021:

Rotary Club of Nagpur Downtown organized "SWOT Through Chanakya" by Rtn Dr. Mrunalini Dasture, Principal of South Point School. Dr. Pratiksha Mayee member of Downtown and Secretary DAGMHI introduced Dr Aabha Pimprikar, President of DAGMHI who briefed about activities. She invited members to be part of DAGMHI by paying nominal membership fees of Rs 500. Activities done by DAGMHI can be seen in District publications like GML, besides the newsletter Mind Matters. Rtn Prajakta Mangrulkar, introduced the speaker. Rtn Dr. Mrunalini Dasture beautifully explained and demonstrated how SWOT analysis can be done on Kautilya's Arthashastra.

READERS MAY SEND QUERIES TO THE EDITOR ON
mindmatterseditor@gmail.com



PANDEMIC SPECIAL

The Power of a Pause

I invite you to reflect on your experiences during the pandemic. These are some of my reflections.

What is a pause?

A pause here refers to nothingness, 'shunyata', a blank. For example, the brief moment between two musical notes, when there is no instrument playing. And yet, it is that very pause that creates the music. Visually, it is represented by the blank space between two words. It is as integral to the sentence as the words. In the initial months of the pandemic, when work and education were stalled, and mobility restricted, it was experienced as a pause. A fearful one for almost all, but a pause nonetheless. In the absence of the usual stimulations, we are used to, it was an invitation to stillness.

What did people engage in during the pause?

Given this change of pace, and environment, people coped in different ways. Some engaged with people: neighbors, family, friends, either in person or virtually. Others took up reading, yoga, meditation, learning new courses, writing. Still others reveled in keeping their houses clean and cooking. Others took to indoor games like carom and online shopping with great gusto!

Loss, Mourning and support.

Admittedly, most people suffered losses

during the pandemic. Loss of self, relationships, physical and/ or mental health, job, status, trust, loved ones, confidence, income, shelter, independence, livelihood, the list goes on. It laid bare their vulnerable selves. Some asked for help and support. Others extended their love and care: distributing food, caring for the sick, elderly, praying, listening, providing transport, facilitating networking and connections.



A lot of people haven't been able to fathom or mourn their losses. For them, living each day is a challenge. It means meeting their usual needs with fewer resources, pushing their losses into the background, and focusing on the task at hand. Still others are reflecting under their losses, trying to cope. Mourning, for them, at this point in time, is a 'luxury', beyond their current means or resources.

Reflecting

For some, this pandemic has involved reflecting, re-looking at their priorities, re-

calibrating their values, answering questions: what do I look for from my life? How do I achieve my goals? Is the journey important? Or is it the destination?

Some people have realized the value of the environment, and changed habits to be in alignment with green goals. Others have realized the impact of their fast-paced lifestyle and slowed down. Still others, have chosen to acknowledge their vulnerability, seek help, and trust.

Some of the experiences during the pandemic, have been unique, and have ruddered change.

Life

Some people have experienced and expressed gratitude for that which they continue to have or gain: Life, time, health, money, moments of peace, togetherness, the gift of silence. They are grateful to the people who support their lives: family, neighbors, house help, policy makers, health professionals, IT experts, service providers (bankers), sanitation workers, farmers, amongst many others.

Meaning

This pause will gain meaning, and assume power depending on the meaning we imbue it with. Opening a window of hope...

Dr. Shazneen,

Mental Health Professional, Management Trainer, Mumbai.



My Affirmation Cards

As I simplify, things in my life become easier!

I care for my loved ones from a distance too!

I focus on my overall healing and well-being!

I am stronger and resilient than I know!

We all are in this and we will be out of this together!

Everything is impermanent. This too shall pass!

I choose to focus on what I can control!

I am worthy even if I am not productive!

Effects of the Pandemic on our life are numerous like losing a loved one to losing a job. From changing life style to becoming more self reliant, from taking full time care of children to having no breathing space for self. From being low and sad to being hyperactive and anxious. From facing our fears to confronting our mental patterns. From missing something to creating new routines, from facing uncertainty to depending on self, from laughing to crying and so on.

With ARTITUDE we are sharing these affirmations which will help as a gentle reminder and train our unconscious mind to shift to a better outlook in the present moment. We need to focus more on what we want than what we do not want, as the energy of our intentions flows where our attention goes, so says the law of attraction too. However, the future is not predictable anymore and we all are sceptical about challenges we might have to face again. Shifting from our unconscious fears to consciously, instilling faith helps. Affirmation practices can help us a lot and are a powerful tool to reprogram our old program, which do not serve us. Renowned author Louise L Hay has published and mentions it in her self-help books to practice affirmations and different affirmations for different issues.

You can take a printout or make it DIY cards, stick it on your study board or even write on your sticky notes and paste it at a place where you see it at least 2 times a day! Repeat it at least 5 times each of the affirmation while feeling it too. You can synchronize your breath with the affirmations too. Take short pause between each affirmation and neutralise. You can practice it for at least 21 days and change the affirmations further as you need. Hope these Affirmation cards can help regulate and manage the effects of the pandemic better!

Kavita Saraf,

Life coach, Soft skills trainer, Art Therapist.



PANDEMIC SPECIAL

BUCKET BABIES

Recently, I heard friends and acquaintances say something familiar- 'I don't feel like getting out of the house'. Obviously, there is fear of the pandemic but also that most of their necessities are being met at home. But what are bucket babies?

Bucket babies or container babies are babies, small children who were confined in car seats, prams, swings, for prolonged durations and don't get sufficient tummy time. Due to this prolonged confinement and lack of sufficient tummy time, the kids develop few symptoms - some mild, some severe-like delay in achieving expected motor milestones, flat spots on head, stiff neck, mal-position of neck, asymmetrical face, impaired speech and vision etc. Together these symptoms are called CBS or container baby syndrome. This is increasingly becoming a serious problem in America.

What does this have to do with us adults?

Due to pandemic, we all have been confined at home. While there are few who have no choice than getting out of the house to earn their wages; few are privileged to enjoy the comfort and warmth of their houses. This prolonged confinement in the house is going to have deleterious effects on us; majorly these effects will be of social isolation and loneliness hampering physical, mental and cognitive health.

How do we prevent this?

- Limit the confinement time (follow covid safety protocol)
- Increase the tummy time (now this tummy time for babies is the time spent by the baby awake and on his/ her stomach; which is crucial for the babies for motor visual and sensory development. For adults, it will be getting out of the house for doing small chores or maybe a small walk in the neighbourhood.

- Dr. Aabha Pimprikar,
President, DAGMHI.

BEING IN HARMONY

"Choices In Crisis"

One of the key teachings of "Bhagwat Gita" is the ability to remain calm, happy, peaceful in every situation - favourable or adverse. How does one stay calm and maintain harmony under an adverse situation? Here I propose some solutions that should be followed with discipline, regularity and possibly daily.

- A) Fill up your idle time with productive, creative activity. This will avoid unnecessary brooding.
- B) Keep up contact with your loved ones, family, friends and colleagues.
- C) Keep good health by eating healthy, exercising and sleeping well.
- D) Boost your immune system with yoga and pranayama.

Some yoga – (1) Garudasana (2) Tadasana (3) Parivrttasana (4) Salabhasana
Few pranayama- (1) Nadi Shodhan (2) Ujjai (3) Bhastrika

Once your mind is calm and in harmony by pursuing above; you will be empowered to make the right choice in adverse situations.

-Deepa Aggarwal.



TADASANA



GARUDASANA



PARIVRTTASANA



SALABHASANA

YOUNG MINDS

EFFECTS OF PANDEMIC ON CHILDREN:

School closures, social distancing and confinement, dramatically increased stress in children. Widespread digitalization mitigated the educational loss, but children from poor homes suffered the most. Although children are less physically affected by the disease, the same cannot be said for their mental health. Parents stress directly affects child's mental health. Parents who have lost their jobs, salaries, directly affected children. It is not unusual for children to experience negative emotion such as fear, disappointment, sadness, anxiety, anger and loss.

PARENTS CAN HELP CHILDREN BY:

Being aware of how we talk about COVID-19: your discussion can increase or decrease child's fear. Continuously, remind your child that everything and everyone will be taken care of.

Focus on the positive: celebrate having more time to spend with the family. Explore more hobbies, cooking together, dish washing, reading, playing, laughing. Meditating together: deep breathing is a valuable tool for calming our nervous system. We can meditate together and create breath awareness.

Being grateful: it is one of the best times to connect with nature and enjoy sunrise and sunsets and be grateful for little things in life. We can be grateful for the fact that we are alive.

Monitoring television viewing and social media: parents/ guardians should monitor television, internet and social media viewing – both for themselves and children.

The quote circulating in Italy remind us: "we are standing far apart now so we can embrace each other later."

-Lavina Keswani,
Asstt. Professor, English.



PANDEMIC SPECIAL

LANGUOROUS

LOCKDOWN

REVAMP!

'Work from home'...these words were sweet as honey to Anjali, as she had been finding it difficult to spend quality time with her children and husband and cater to the needs of in-laws without time bound pressure. She decided to enjoy the 'at home' atmosphere and prepared a long list of 'to do' that included making cookies for the children, lifting dumbbells & daily walk for fitness, watching some favourite shows & amazon prime new releases, reading fiction that was bought and kept for long and to grow vegetables in her terrace garden.

Whoa!!!

While the initial fun lasted for a few weeks, everyone in the family became more demanding and dependent and her availability at home was taken for granted. The family ignored the fact that she was working from home and was not on a long holiday. The discipline system of the family collapsed completely with improper meal time, binging on couches, late to bed and waking up in the afternoon, increased screen time of elders with TV, lingering on laptop or mobile screens by children apart from their regular academic schedule, late or no bath, wearing the same clothes for days together, asking for snacks at odd hours..... just to say that life became a mess for Anjali would be an under-statement.

More than anything, Anjali looked dull and pathetic in her nightwear throughout day with a lazy hair bun. She attended her zoom and google meets with a dupatta around her nightwear and uncombed free hair. Finding time for eating was so tough that she gulped her food in a hurry to keep going.

While house-hold chores doubled without any support, her work also became saprophytic and demanded more because of additional pressures in the corporate industry. Every day made Anjali exhausted and irritated and at the end of one and half years, she was frustrated and depressed.

Her family had their own reasons for stress, like being tucked at home that crippled their social life and the scary forwarded WhatsApp messages. Eventually they turned to food and screens for diversion.

6 things to revamp from this pandemic driven slothful life style:

Early to bed and early to rise is not just an old saying but also the ideal program for our biological clock.

Increased screen time will affect both physical & mental health by interfering with your melatonin, while moving around and playing improves the blood circulation and oxygen flow. Have a fixed and disciplined screen time.

Spread age-appropriate responsibilities to every member of family. Home is a place where everyone shares responsibilities to convert a house into a home

Make use of lunch and dinner timings and see to that all dine at same time for good quality and regular interaction among family members

Don't neglect yourself. It is not being selfish but understanding that your family needs you.

Have a creative hobby—it will enhance an adaptive and resilient response to any crisis situation.

Dr Sripriya Shaji Ph.D.

Psychologist, Art Therapist.

Srisha Counselling, Kozhikode, Kerala

BOOK REVIEW

THE ART OF MENTAL TOUGHNESS

- Survival Lessons from the Pandemic

Author: Nona Walia

The author has written this book to help people cope with COVID related mental stress and anxiety and for furthering mental wellbeing. She writes that mental toughness is an art which needs to be cultivated. We need to develop control over our feelings which makes us soft. Once softness develops our mind becomes tough and in control. When you are staring at failure, focus on the victory. That's how an ultra-marathoner completes his course. It is very important to create a discipline in life. It's a part of toughness training. Nawaz Modi Singhania says 'Pandemic made us remove the junk, what is toxic in our lives'. When all else fails, look to something new – A new hobby, a new goal, a new experience, anything that builds your self - esteem. The key is to adapt and adapt again. Says Dr. Nisha Khanna, a Psychiatrist, 'Inner flexibility is the key. It is time to tap into your strengths'. You get tough by being in balance, physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually. You are tougher than you think.

"Keep your goals in sight always. Small, tiny individual choices build our mental toughness muscles. Your thoughts are your stimuli. You must focus on your thoughts to feel better about yourself. You must continually get out of your comfort zone, pursue your dreams and set small milestones for yourself". If your life situation is overwhelming, find your inner 'Sisu'. Sisu means GUTS in Finnish. There is a spiritual take on finding your own inner toughness. You need to detach, disconnect, embrace the silence and schedule alone time. Yoga, meditation, keeping a Gratitude Book are some ways of maintaining inner calm and control on your thoughts.

I found this book extremely helpful to prioritize my focus areas and achieve mental strength during these COVID times. Highly recommend as a read.

(Paperback Price: Rs.180)

-CA Hetal Sampat,

Rotary Club Nagpur Vision.

