



MIND MATTERS

Rotary  Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives
RID 3030 India

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE DISTRICT ACTION GROUP ON MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

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EDITORIAL



"Children have mental health problems too"

It's a common myth that 'children don't suffer mental health issues'. If a child displays disturbing

behaviours, it is believed that 'they are either misbehaving or moody or it's just a phase or are in-disciplined'. The child is blamed for bad behaviour without trying to know the underlying causes. Accurate information and effective treatment is what is needed. **When left untreated children suffer and are at risk for serious mental disorders.**

A child goes through, from the time of birth, different developmental stages and all is not smooth sailing for the child. There could be many delays and disruptions on the path of growth where the child needs help from a caring parent and a mental health specialist. **Sometimes the symptoms of mental health disorders can be confused with a developmental delay and thereby ignored.** That is where the well-being of the child is damaged. Utmost care needs to be taken to such symptoms. An alert, informed, open-minded parent should consult a Psychologist and take an opinion.

Another myth is that 'my child does not need therapy, just a pill from the family physician will do'. There is a huge stigma to mental health and parents fear 'labelling' the child as 'mad' by visiting a psychologist. A healthy acceptance of emotional disturbances is needed. **The most popular myth is that most parents feel 'I can counsel my child- we don't need a therapist or psychologist'.** When enough time has passed and matters have multiplied into greater proportions, and everything has failed, a Psychologist is sought. Be a good Parent,

Be a good Parent,

Rita Aggarwal

ROTARY CLUB OF NAGPUR

PRESIDENT RTN. DR. JERESTIN WATCHMAKER

It was indeed refreshing to talk to the energetic and enthusiastic President Dr. Jerestin Watchmaker. At the outset itself, she complimented DAGMHI for the passion and commitment towards promoting mental health in the society. Dr Jerestin studied MBBS, MD Microbiology from GMC Nagpur. Currently, she is a Consultant Microbiologist at National Cancer Institute, Nagpur.

She is the doting mother to two grown up children. Ruxshin graduated in English Literature and completed Advanced Integrated Communication Program Course from Xavier's College, Mumbai. Currently she is pursuing MBA, while working as a PR Executive at Lintas, Mumbai. Danesh has graduated in Commerce and pursuing his MBA at Symbiosis Pune.

This 51 years' young doctor loves being active all day long. She believes that investing in a fit body is the path to a healthy and happy mind. She is a total fitness enthusiast and plays cricket, cycles and runs marathons. She is spiritual and feels the presence of the Almighty in every moment. She trusts the Universe to look after her and her family. She enjoys cooking and taking care of her family. Her relationships with family and friends give her strength and hope. She finds joy and hope in the little moments of life.

Her Happiness Mantra- Take only positive things from any situation. Her positive attitude is instrumental in creating a happy and peaceful atmosphere. According to her DAGMHI can try to be more active on social media. She believes that the youth today need special attention. We can use their social sites and handles for promoting important and relevant issues. She has vouched to be a part of our mental health initiative by joining the group next year.

-Dr. Shantala Bhole, Rotary Club of Nagpur Vision, Director, DAGMHI.



CLUB REPORTS

DAGMHI organised a webinar on 12th of November, 'Susamwad: effective parent-child communication' an inter district program, jointly hosted by RC Nashik Grapecity RID 3030 and RC Thane Greencity RID 3142. Dr. Alkesh Patil, explained about the four ways of communication, importance of effective communication, why and how a parent and a child should treat each other to increase the dialogue. The session was attended by 90 parents and children.

RC Nagpur Downtown on 26th November, organised an interactive talk on 'Imperfect Relationships' under the banner of DAGMHI. The speaker Rtn Jyoti Kapoor spoke about relationships being blissful gifts and how they must be nurtured responsibly. She further explained the 3 'C's - Commitment, Care and Communication, to maintain family relationships, friendships, acquaintances and Romantic relationships.

Rotary Club of Akola - Organised a Mental Health awareness program for the Interact club and students of Khandelwal Dnyanmandir, Akola. Dr Radhika Kelkar, Psychiatrist, guided the students about Passive, Aggressive and Affirmative conversations. The session was interactive. 68 students were present. Rtn. Dr Asha Nikte, organised the event.

-Dr. Aabha Pimprikar, President, DAGMHI, RC Nasik Grapecity.

CO-EDITORS



Dr. Aabha Pimprikar, Dentist & Entrepreneur, President DAGMHI, RC Nasik Grapecity.



Dr. Geetanjali Jha, Homeopath, Counsellor, Chairman-Reiki Council of India. Bhopal.



CHILD MENTAL HEALTH SPECIAL

MENTAL ILLNESS IN CHILDREN

KNOW THE SIGNS

Mental health disorders in children are generally defined as delays or disruptions in developing age-appropriate thinking, behaviours, social skills or regulation of emotions. These problems are distressing to children and disrupt their ability to function well at home, in school or in other social situations. Mental illness in children can be hard for parents to identify. As a result, many children who could benefit from treatment don't get the help they need. Understand how to recognize warning signs of mental illness in children and how you can help your child.

Common disorders among children:

Anxiety disorders. Anxiety disorders in children are persistent fears, worries or anxiety that disrupt their ability to participate in play, school or typical age-appropriate social situations. Diagnoses include social anxiety, generalized anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorders.

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Compared with most children of the same age, children with ADHD have difficulty with attention, impulsive behaviours, hyperactivity or some combination of these problems.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Autism spectrum disorder is a neurological

condition that appears in early childhood — usually before age 3. Although the severity of ASD varies, a child with this disorder has difficulty communicating and interacting with others.

Eating disorders. — such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge-eating disorder — can result in emotional and social dysfunction and life-threatening physical complications.

Depression and other mood disorders. Depression is persistent feelings of sadness and loss of interest that disrupt a child's ability to function in school and interact with others. Bipolar disorder results in extreme mood swings between depression and extreme emotional or behavioural highs that may be unguarded, risky or unsafe.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is prolonged emotional distress, anxiety, distressing memories, nightmares and disruptive behaviours in response to violence, abuse, injury or other traumatic events.

Schizophrenia. Schizophrenia is a disorder in perceptions and thoughts that cause a person to lose touch with reality (psychosis). Most often appearing in the late teens through the 20s, schizophrenia results in hallucinations, delusions, and disordered thinking and behaviour.

Warning signs of mental illness in children: Persistent sadness — two or more weeks/ Withdrawing from or avoiding social interactions/ Hurting oneself or talking

about hurting oneself/ Talking about death or suicide/ Outbursts or extreme irritability/ Out-of-control behavior that can be harmful/ Drastic changes in mood, behaviour or personality/ Changes in eating habits/ Loss of weight/ Difficulty sleeping/ Frequent headaches or stomachaches/ Difficulty concentrating/ Changes in academic performance/ Avoiding or missing school.

Treatment of mental illness in children:

Psychotherapy. Psychotherapy, also known as talk therapy or behavior therapy, is a way to address mental health concerns by talking with a psychologist or other mental health professional. With young children, psychotherapy may include play time or games, as well as talk about what happens while playing. During psychotherapy, children and adolescents learn how to talk about thoughts and feelings, how to respond to them, and how to learn new behaviors and coping skills.

Medication. Your child's doctor or mental health professional may recommend a medication — such as a stimulant, antidepressant, anti-anxiety medication, antipsychotic or mood stabilizer — as part of the treatment plan. The doctor will explain risks, side effects and benefits of drug treatments.

-Dr Pritam Chandak

Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist
Synapse Mind Care, Nagpur.

AUTISM: A MOTHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Autism, the word itself makes every parent worried as hell. **Life becomes very turbulent when you have to live with a child who has been diagnosed with Autism.** They say motherhood is a bliss, and I was Blessed with Aarav 6 years ago. He was a healthy happy child, he achieved all his milestones in time. He started speaking small two word sentences by the age of one.

He was a year and a half when my life turned upside down, when I started noticing that Aarav's behavior has changed a lot. He had stopped responding to his name, ate very less, slept all the time throughout the day, he used to side gaze, flap his hands, have severe melt downs and cried for hours. Initially I thought maybe he is not well, but later I decided to take him to my pediatrician. He suggested that we consult a child psychologist.



Autism and requires immediate intervention through occupational therapy (OT). I was worried, I and my husband both lost hope, started blaming our karma, I was made feel guilty by people around for not taking proper care of my son. The journey ahead seemed very tough, I was not sure if my son will ever be able to live a normal life, go to a normal school, talk again, do his daily chores, how will he fit in or survive in this world.

We began with his OT sessions and with proper guidance and a lot of effort I saw him begin to speak in a few months. Now most of his sensory issues have been resolved, he goes to a regular school and studies well. **Early intervention helped me get my son back. There is always a hope if we do not give up.**

-Sushma Dwivedi,
Reiki Grand master, Healer,
Biology teacher. New Delhi.

We were apprehensive but had to do what needs to be done, the psychologist, said that child is showing all classic red flags of



CHILD MENTAL HEALTH SPECIAL

BODY IMAGE : IT'S PERFECT!

Body Image is how we think and feel about ourselves physically, and how we believe others see us. Research suggests that children as young as 3 years old can have body image issues.

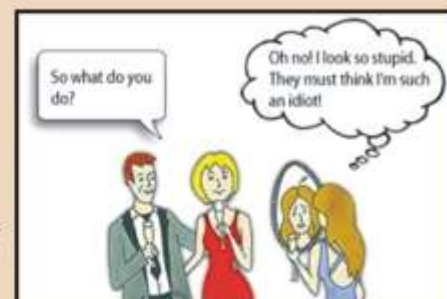
Body Image concerns among 16–25 year adolescents is considered the third biggest challenge, causing harm to young people.

The worldwide cosmetics and perfume industry currently generates an estimated annual turnover of US\$170 billion. Social media impacts mindsets significantly. The phenomenon of editing photos of ladies to make them look stunning, often make others insecure about their own looks. Fair is lovely, flawless pimple free skin still dominate Indians as the ideal. Dark skin tone, and fat body type are considered unattractive. This stereotype is not just restricted to women but men also go through a

"macho personality" stereotyping. Research shows that hypermasculinity is always linked with sexual and physical aggression towards women. Advertisements depicting male aggression towards women and women as sexy attractive models, lead to gender stereotyping and setting unrealistic behavioral norms. **Even our fashion industry promotes people who are skinny and barbie doll figures.** Supermodels are thinner, fairer and beautiful. Women strive for acceptance and "perfection" causing major emotional damages. **Today's perfect is accepting the imperfect.**

Body image can change the way you understand your value and worth. **Healthy body image will directly influence your self-esteem and self-image.** Most teens with high self-esteem find life enjoyable, have better relationships, find it easier to deal with disappointments. Having a negative body image damages your self-esteem. Parents can play critical role in developing positive body image in children and teenagers. **Healthy life needs healthy mindsets.**

-Lavina Keswani, Astt. Professor, English, Nagpur.



Pranati was dismayed, when her son's teacher mentioned that he lacks learning skills and is always sluggish. She had a tough time feeding her elder kid, Poorna 8 years, who is under-nourished, less active and less interested in learning. She taught Mano 5 years, who is chubby, could outshine and excel in learning. Irrespective of careful, cooking and feeding, both were struggling with cognitive difficulties due to poor nutritional status.

What is cognitive development??

Children grow and develop rapidly in their first five years across four main areas of development- physical, language, communication, cognitive and emotional.

Cognition is the development of knowledge, skills, problem solving and dispositions and how one thinks and explores. It is affected by many factors, including nutrition.

What is nutrition?

Nutrition is about eating a healthy and balanced diet.

1. Carbohydrates –Triggers the entry of tryptophan to brain, required for synthesis of serotonin and melatonin, important bio-molecules, like millets and whole grains and vegetables, with low glycemic index (GI).
2. Proteins- Essential for synthesis of many neurotransmitters in brain.
3. Vitamins - Folate and B12 are essential for neurological function

NURTURE WITH RIGHT NUTRITION



through metabolism of S-adenosylmethionine.

4. Minerals like zinc, magnesium and iron.
5. Fats - Structural components of brain cell membranes. Omega-3 fatty acids are particularly important to brain.

Why nutrition for cognitive development?

It sharpens the mind; increases concentration and reduces stress. It increases emotional quotient; improves creative thinking, decision making and manage mood fluctuations.

When to eat?

Breakfast: Within two hours of waking up.
Lunch: Better between 12 pm to 2 pm as the body is able to digest it.

Dinner: A gap of 4 hours between lunch and dinner and 2 hours between dinner and bedtime is ideal.

Where to eat??

Homemade foods are always safe and best. Remember to read food label and understand the ingredients. A healthy diet synergistically enhances physical and mental abilities. Malnutrition affects physical growth, cognitive abilities and psychosocial skills, with multiple downstream effects later.

-Dr. SriPriya Shaji Ph.D

Counselling Psychologist & Nutritionist
Srisha Counselling, Kozhikode, Kerala

PARENT CHILD SYMBIOSIS

Nothing can compare to the bond between a parent and child. This bond needs a lot of work, to make it a pillar of strength. It is a bitter truth that not all parent-child relationships are healthy and positive by default. But nevertheless, they have a deep impact on the emotional, physical and social development of the child.

This bond starts in-utero. The mother's emotions and her environment has a deep impact on the developing fetus. **During infancy when the child is fed and cleaned on time, picked up, soothed, and shown affection, s/he grows up into a secure and trusting adult.** It is a less known fact that children who grow up with plenty of pats on the back, kisses on the forehead, hugs, from parents, develop high self-esteem. Listening to stories and lullabies at night deepens the child's sense of comfort in the relationship and s/he grows up with hope and courage.

During the teenage years, there is no substitute for a good dialogue between parents and children. When youngsters are involved in the process of taking decisions with the family, they develop skills of logic, reasoning, problem-solving, and informed decision making. It heightens their sense of responsibility and belongingness. When parents share experiences of challenges, the adolescent also learns to share. Having dinner together, watching movies together is more effective than the yearly vacations.

The best way is to appreciate the little things that can be done each day to cultivate a healthy parent-child relationship.

-Dr. Geetanjali Jha Homeopath, Counsellor, Chairman-Reiki Council of India.

BOOK REVIEW

"SERENITY WITH COLOURS"

A debut book from Dr. Geetanjali Jha. It is useful for children and adults. The uniqueness of the book lies in the fact that it combines the aspect of art therapy with mindfulness. It is a wonderful tool for releasing stress, improving focus, enhancing attention span, and overall psychological well-being in a creative manner. The book guides its users through the steps and techniques of mindful coloring to ensure maximum benefits. It also explains how colors affect our emotions, moods, and personality. All the designs on coloring are hand-drawn and original work of Dr. Geetanjali Jha. It is available on Amazon and Flipkart with an MRP of Rs. 299. It is a slim work-book with ten pages for coloring and some theory.



CHILD MENTAL HEALTH SPECIAL

EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCES IN CHILDREN

Every disturbance is not a sign of mental illness. It could be an emotional reaction to a situation at home, at school, with friends or with family. **Majority of emotional disturbances are negative reactions to a situation a child is not equipped to handle. The child is un-skilled or semi-skilled to cope with the recurring event and either internalises the problem or externalises it.**

Disruptive behavioural problems such as temper tantrums, oppositional, defiant or conduct disorders are the commonest problems in preschool and school age children. They are associated with poor academic and psychosocial functioning. They are known as **"externalizing"** problems for the behaviour is targeted outward at another person. **"Internalizing"** problems are emotional problems such as depression and anxiety which is suppressed within the mind and hence targeted towards the self. Low-intensity naughty, defiant and impulsive behaviour from time to time, losing one's temper, destruction of property, and deceitfulness/stealing in the preschool children are regarded as **normal misdemeanours**'. Extremely difficult and challenging behaviours such as unpredictable, prolonged, and destructive tantrums and severe outbursts of temper loss are recognized as behaviour disorders.

A significant set of problems worth mentioning are **"learning disorders"**. A child could have various degrees of difficulties in reading, writing, languages, maths, comprehension, etc. If left unidentified and un-treated will lead to emotional disturbances besides loss of interest in academics. Many times a child reporting to a psychologist for behavioural problems actually has an underlying learning disorder. **Early intervention and counselling for emotional problems can save it from escalating into a disorder. "A stitch in time saves nine".**

-Rita Aggarwal,
Consultant Psychologist.

PRECIOUS PEERS

The journey of life is peppered with a very dynamic yet constant variable called friends. Friends, peers, pals, buddies are very crucial in the early years. We often discuss the ill effects of friends, who may misguide, or coax one another into unhealthy habits. But when we look deep into the psychosocial and developmental aspects, then we realize that **peer relationships are extremely vital and play a positive role in the wholesome development of personality.**

In the growing years, children learn more from their friends than elders.

Having friends with high moral fiber and a positive attitude towards school develops strength of character much more than teachings from elders, helps to develop righteousness. Having friends with different cultural values and psychological attributes makes a child tolerant and accepting, helping him understand the values, principles, ideals s/he cannot compromise on.

Friends help in developing empathy, sharing, trustworthiness, and belongingness. All these are crucial for becoming responsible, resourceful, caring, and dependable.

There are many parents who want to become their child's friend. To them, I suggest two things – **One**, your child will have many friends but only one set of parents, so in the process of being 'friendly' with your child, don't give up your role as a parent! **Two**, as a concerned adult to ensure your child's safety and integrity, get acquainted with your child's friends. This will build mutual trust and be a cool parent who is accepting, open and positive about healthy peer relationships. Don't be a helicopter parent!

That tag line from an ad is actually true **"har ek friend zaroori hota hai!"**

-Dr. Geetanjali Jha
Homeopath, Counsellor,
Chairman-Reiki Council of India.

THE MAGIC OF TEACHER STUDENT BONDING



Teaching is a profession that takes not only brains but heart. **A good teacher can inspire, motivate and transform lives! Teachers teach their students far more than just academic. Students desperately need a caring and sensitive adult to look up to as a role-model.** The benefits of strong teacher student bond are many: it helps in better academic progress, reduced behavioral problems, good communication and social skills, improves the student's self-esteem, and develops emotional intelligence.

A review of Educational Research analysis of 46 studies found that strong teacher-student bonds were associated with both the short-term and long-term improvements in all aspects of personality. Teachers who are **patient, caring, empathetic, show respect** towards their students have changed students' attitude towards learning and life.

Teachers should be taught communication strategies, building emotionally safe learning spaces, learning to laugh with students, allowing students to make mistakes and the belief that all students can succeed.

Children and teens who are struggling with emotional, behavioral and learning problems, find school extra hard and often suffer from low self-esteem and other mental health concerns. Teachers who are generous in their praise towards students, downplaying their shortcomings, have developed better relationships with students. As they rightly say, **"A good education can change anyone. A good teacher can change everything."**

-Lavina Keswani,
Astt. Professor, English, Nagpur.

MUMMY YOU ARE ENOUGH

Motherhood is accompanied by societal pressure beginning from pregnancy. The mother is to monitor her diet, movement, what she watches on TV/movies, and the one I found most challenging of all: 'remain happy, otherwise it can have negative effects on your baby'. Is it humanly possible to remain happy for 40+ weeks straight without feeling any other emotion?

The types of pressures on mother increase as the child is born and grows: is she a working mom or a stay-at-home mom; does her child use technology or not; does her child eat home cooked food or not; does she keep the house clean or not; does she breastfeed or bottle feed her infant...the list is endless. **When these pressures inevitably become internalised by the mother, she is flooded with 'mom guilt'.** This can be defined as a mother feeling as though she has not done enough for her child or has not done the right things for her child. **Mom guilt constantly nags some mothers with the message: no matter what you do, you are a bad mother. Perhaps, it is time to support mothers in their choices instead of inducing guilt.**

D.W. Winnicott writes about a **"good enough mother"**. She is one who attends to her child's emotional and physical needs while making them feel loved and safe. This is all she needs to do. There is no prescriptive way of doing this; the only way she can is by intuitively responding to her child as required. If her child feels safe and loved with her, she is a good enough mother. **So, if your child loves you and feels safe with you in every possible way, then one can say "mummy, you are enough."**

-Radhika Malhotra,
Psychosynthesis Therapist in
Training, London (UK)