



# MIND MATTERS

Rotary  Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives  
RID 3030 India

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE DISTRICT ACTION GROUP ON MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES JULY 2021 ISSUE 04



## ROTARY INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT RTN. SHEKHAR MEHTA

IN AN EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION WITH  
RTN. RITA AGGARWAL  
EDITOR, MIND MATTERS.



### "Create a Buzz on Mental Health to remove Taboo"

It was an honour and privilege to engage in an exclusive conversation with Rotary International President Shekhar Mehta. He came across as an extremely sensitive, kind, humble, realistic, approachable, passionate and compassionate person. A thorough Gentleman besides being a mover and shaker! I was impressed with his understanding and approach to mental health issues and his empathy for children, youth and especially the girl child. I introduced him briefly about the **Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives (RAGMHI)**, and its **District 3030 Chapter (DAGMHI)**. I also informed him about the various projects and the launching of the monthly e-newsletter "Mind Matters" in April 2021, which is circulated nationally and internationally through various channels. He smiled, congratulated me and the team for the good work. His gentle response was encouraging and re-assuring.

Responding to a question on his **expectation from Action Groups on Mental Health**, he stated that, "mental health has become very relevant in current times when Covid has created a havoc not only with just bodily health but mental health. It affects not just the people who have had COVID but people who are around Covid affected. People are under lockdown for months, when they have not gone out of their homes. That itself becomes a problem. It hurts the mental framework of young people. When they live with their parents it's great, but you know living in small houses with the parents always around them, creates a pressure on them. Everybody needs their space and that space is compromised-there are issues of mental health. Even otherwise the fear of Covid is affecting us all. You keep hearing news of XYZ who is

known to you, passed away-young people passing away and it becomes such a mental pressure that mental health has become a major issue. Awareness needs to be created, people need to come out and be free to talk about mental illness. **The taboo will go only when awareness is created and we're ready to talk about it, when a buzz is created.** If there's anything I can do just let me know I'll do it. Your RAG would become extremely vibrant and robust".

Shekharji says, "these last few days I've been discussing on various zoom calls about mental health only. **We had a meeting with the spiritual Guru, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar; with the Director and Dean of NIMHANS, which happens to be the premier institute in India as far as mental health is concerned. We talked of a partnership with them. Again, we had a meeting with the UNICEF officers on mental health and with the Indian Association of Paediatrics, for child mental health and now I'm having this discussion with you. I guess it just shows how important it is.** I would like you to be getting associated with the Rotary Humanity Foundation and the group of people who are functioning there", he said encouragingly.

### Focus on Girl child and a Toll-free Helpline for the Youth

He says "you could have a toll-free-number, people can call on- you know at times young people don't want to discuss this with anybody they know. As you said, there is at times a stigma to mental health in some parts of the world and so how about starting a mental health helpline. People can call up there and maybe people could take turns. It's in different languages and they could be provided help on various issues of counselling.

...continued on page 2

## DISTRICT GOVERNOR

2021-22  
RTN. RAMESH MEHER



It was a pleasant conversation with our new District Governor Ramesh Meher, on phone. A soft spoken, amicable personality, ever ready to help.

He is a Rotarian since 1991, Past President and District Secretary, an MBA in Finance, a hotelier and owner of 3 Star hotel Surya at Nashik, who has now taken over as the new DG of our District 3030.

His wife Sharda is actively involved in the hotel business and they are blessed with two daughters, Dr Neha who is a Neurophysician married to Dr Swapnil and Sanskruti, with a degree in MBA Finance, like her father, plays a major role in the hotel business.

His day begins as early as 5.30 am with brisk walking for 30 minutes, followed by reading books and doing house hold chores. He usually has a long working day until 9.30 pm at his hotel with a short break for lunch at home A pure vegetarian, non-smoker and teetotaler, which is rare amongst hoteliers, prefers home cooked food and enjoys light music and reading.

DG Meher believes in "not to expect anything from others and doing your maximum to help others". Both DG Ramesh and Rtn Sharda are major donors while both his daughters are Paul Harris fellows. Their grandson Ranveer became a Paul Harris fellow on the day he was born.

DG Meher, during his term, would like to concentrate on doing more for women and children. He feels that due to covid pandemic, women at home are suffering silently and children are missing out on schools, friends and play time. He would be happy if Team DAGMHI can create some interesting activities or videos or programs via zoom to keep the children engaged.

On behalf of DAGMHI, we wish Rtn, Meher all the very best for his tenure as District Governor.

-Rtn Murali Raghavan, IPP Deolali.





**My focus is on empowering girls and one of the things I'm promoting is how about having a helpline for mental counselling for empowering the girls.** Suppose a girl is physically or mentally abused or sexually abused, at times they cannot go and tell this to anybody who is known to them but they can pick up a telephone if they know there is a telephone line which is going to help them you know. People who are having mental issues need a shoulder to cry on. **I'm propagating various countries can have helplines for empowering girls**", he said with emotional conviction. Elaborating, he said "We should try to disseminate the information about the toll-free-number in partnership with Rotaractors and Interactors. Short films could be shown on the network of the various school based online curriculum, on TV, -short films."

**On his expectations for RAGs in general- "RAGs bring passionate people from across the world.** People join Rotary for different purposes, but over a period of time I always realized it is service that keeps them ticking. Somebody likes to work for disease prevention, for disaster management, literacy etc. Rotary has formed niche groups, niche opportunities for them. **RAGs should also try and increase their membership, geographically, as well as in numbers, so that people who are interested come together to do meaningful work. I expect RAGs to be very vibrant.** First, increase membership, then, start thinking of implementing projects.

Projects increase interaction amongst people- idea sharing, sharing of best practices, sharing success stories, what are the challenges, so that more people become knowledgeable and can contribute. **'Environment' is going to be a new area of focus. I was an active member of RAG but now have taken a back-seat**" he said reminiscing his long engagement with Rotary.

**On his happiness mantra:**  
"Let me put it the other way-**my mantra in life is to be happy- moreover I'm happy in any situation.** You know it's not that I don't face challenges in life but that's what I have- the ability that I can adapt to any big challenge or a setback very fast, extremely fast. **It would take me at times just a few minutes and never more than half an hour to adjust to any situation. So, once you've adjusted to the situation, you know this too shall pass.** It's nice to be patient and the best way to be patient during that-is not to keep thinking about the situation that you are in but to be happy even during that time -

**that makes you strong and resilient to be able to cope up and tackle that adverse situation".**  
**"Rotary's legacy: Bigger, Better, Bolder"**  
**"One message I would like to leave with all the RAGs is, it is a time where we need to do 'programs of scale'.** An organization which is so old, which has a legacy for doing some great work, whatever the scale of work that we do now needs national media. In each of the countries we do projects and programs where we can make a difference. We have a role to play in the nations education system, water sanitation system, environment issues, in the country's Economic Community development, and let me tell you Rotary is quite capable of it. It has played a world role when it came to eradicating a disease, so it's not that we don't have a legacy. **We have a legacy-let's learn from it and do some bigger better bolder projects".**  
-Rita Aggarwal,  
Consulting Psychologist,  
Editor, Mind Matters.



YouTube link for the interview : <https://youtu.be/IViSCBSJRFI>

## MORAL METAPHOR

Guest Column by Vijay Phanshikar, Editor, The Hitavada.

### All 'ran'. All helped. All won!

The race was truly world class -- or out of this world. Eight or ten challenged children below ten years of age stood at the starting line -- dressed in bright pull-overs and furry caps etc. Their mothers behind the starting line and fathers beyond the finish line stood steeped in anxiety about how the kids were to perform in that little race of just 20 meters. The whistle went up, and the kids started 'running' -- sort of, but concerned more about how others were doing. In moments, the kids' chubby cheeks assumed glorious red hue as they ran. Mothers shouted 'Go. Go. Go. Fast. Faastttt...!'

At the other end, fathers waved their hands inviting their kids to come racing. The world's greatest race was on. Yes--the world's greatest race. After just a few steps, one little girl stumbled to the ground. Bewildered and crying, she tried to get up, expecting mother or father to rush up. And a miracle of sorts took place. All other 'running' kids stopped in their tracks, and wobbled back to that girl and helped her up. She smiled. All smiled -- and the race resumed. Mothers laughed. Fathers laughed. That little pool of people around laughed -- a clean, happy, healthy laughter that lighted up the ground of the kindergarten. Together, hand in hand, all those challenged kids wobbled to the finish line

all smiles, stopping in between, looking kindly at one another, touching others' cheeks and caps. Thus they 'ran' the world's greatest race. All won. For, all 'ran' for winning -- not alone but together, with each one in tow. True, competition has helped humans to forge ahead. But humans progressed truly in collaboration -- of the divine kind those kids displayed. They knew instinctively that each of them had a problem, and so each of them wanted to help everybody else. That brings us to a great truth -- we all are handicapped this or that way. And all of us need a helping hand.





## GRIEF SPECIAL

### COPING WITH GRIEF



When we talk about coping with grief we focus on both grief counselling -that is where the person is battling the issues of everyday life and looking for coping mechanisms to deal with them and we also talk about grief therapy- in which more pervasive, chronic and difficult problems are addressed.

According to J.W. Worden, there are 4 stages of mourning we go through, in order to heal-

- 1) To accept the reality of loss.
- 2) To work through the pain of grief.
- 3) To adjust to the new life situation.
- 4) To maintain connection with the deceased while moving on with life, by recalling the positive memories.

#### Initiating grief counselling -

- 1) Processing the event - the therapist encourages the client into a cathartic retelling of the loss.

- 2) Assessing the backstory of the relationship - learning about the client's relationship with the deceased.
- 3) Asking questions like the impact they had on the client's life, what they would advise you to do right now, etc. can be asked.
- 4) Help them deal with guilt - unexpressed feelings can often be a cause of deep trauma. Therapists may ask the client to take part in the grieving rituals in order to get rid of the guilt, it can be a way to pay tribute to the lost person.
- 5) Differentiating between grief and trauma - by assessing the depth and pervasiveness of emotions around grieving.

#### The therapies used specifically for grief healing are -

- 1) Complicated grief therapy - it is a new psychotherapy model that has been found effective in treating complicated and prolonged grief. It follows a natural and adaptive process.

- 2) Cognitive behavioural therapy - helps to change maladaptive thoughts and behaviour stemming from grief into healthy ones, as well as helps in bereavement.
- 3) Rational emotive behavioural therapy - helps to gain a rational and realistic handle on emotions during the grieving process.
- 4) Medication - may be required in extreme cases.

#### Help a grieving person by -

- Letting them know they are not alone and listen to them
- Letting them weep if they feel like it
- Offering support after the funeral
- Accepting their emotions
- Sitting in silence if they do not feel like talking

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

## DECODING GRIEF

Grief occurs not only when you lose someone close to you, such as a family member, parent, child, abortion, but also a pet, job or loss in business. At this pandemic, many suffered in various ways, from loss of dear ones, struggles for medical expense and food, loss of job and loss of friends. Grief is an affliction or pain of missing someone, something like bereavement. Grief experiences are often based on age, the personality, the emotional stability of a person and the circumstances of death.

#### Types of Grief -

The various types of grief are secondary losses grief, exaggerated grief, masked grief, chronic grief. Secondary losses grief is the emotional reaction to the subsequent losses that occur as a result of a death. Exaggerated grief leads to self-destructive behaviour, suicidal thoughts, drug abuse. Masked grief is when the person is unable to recognize that these symptoms or behaviours are connected to a loss. Chronic grief can be experienced through feelings of hopelessness. If left untreated, grief can become chronic and can develop into severe clinical depression, self-destructive habits, suicidal or self-harming thoughts and

even substance abuse. It can bring long lasting personality changes.

#### Effects of Grief:

In many cases of grief, it may affect the individual to the level of trauma. The person may also develop phobias about the death or loss of someone or something. Grief, if not overcome or accepted in short time can bring pessimistic, hopeless behaviours and personality changes. Fear causes more grief, helplessness and stress can even cause death of the individual. Grief in children may make them lose interest in things they once enjoyed, display abnormal behaviour with their peers, have sleep issues, develop eating disorders, etc.

#### Grief goes through various stages:

- Shock and denial. It is a common defence mechanism and helps numb the person to the intensity of the situation. People in shock deny the negative emotions, and instead hide them.
- Pain and guilt. The person may feel that the pain of the loss is unbearable and even feel guilty for so many things, such as for being alive and for not being able to save the one who died.

• Anger and bargaining. While the rational brain knows that the objective of anger isn't to blame, feelings in that moment are too intense to feel that. Anger may mask itself in feelings like bitterness or resentment.

• Depression. It's a period of separation and loneliness during which the person begins to process and reflect on the loss rationally. The person realises that the loss has left him feeling helpless and struggling with melancholy, negative emotions, memories, and anxiety about the future.

• The upward turn. At this point, the stages of grief like anger and pain diminish and the person begins to get into a more calm and relaxed state of mind.

• Reconstruction and working through. The person can begin to put his life back together and focus on normal work and future life.

• Acceptance and hope. This stage brings a very gradual acceptance of the new way of survival of life and a feeling of optimism in the future.

#### Strategies to overcome grief:

A person facing grief primarily needs trust and optimistic care about their future. Counselling and psychotherapy support helps the healing process.

**- Ms. M. Shalini**  
Psychologist, Coimbatore.





## GRIEF SPECIAL

# BEING IN HARMONY



## FROM GRIEF TO GRACE

Brief chair yoga, a suggested practice that allows transformation from "dealing" to "healing" with Grief.

All exercises to be repeated 10 times:

1. Be comfortable on your chair. Begin to get connected to your breath, taking a deep inhalation and exhalation.
2. Move your head side to side, keep breathing; and keep saying NO, to unwanted thoughts.
3. Make large circles with your torso clockwise, observe your breath, repeat anticlockwise.
4. Lift your hands up at hip level, palms facing your face. Bring them up to your face saying "WHY" and drop them down. Think why this loss happened,

and release it with "WHY".

5. Fists to your heart, inhale and throw out palms parallel to floor in front of you with "HAA" sound. Any pain inside, you are going to channel it, move it, blow it in powerful ways you inhale and push it out in front of you.

6. Doing bal-asan on chair and sukh-asan on chair are very helpful.

Above exercises use movement, breath, & sound to help transform pain into harmony, love and grace.

"If you don't fight for what you want, then don't cry for what you lost" - Lord Krishna in Bhagwat Gita.

-Deepa Aggarwal.

BAL ASANA



SUKH ASANA



# MY STORY

I'm a Psychologist under training. I have 2 sisters along with me and my mom. We were a happy family. When I was an adolescent during secondary education, my dad met with a major accident. He suffered severe brain injury- after years of treatment we transferred him to home care and treatment. We suffered financial hardships too. We were in grief for many years. The pain and loneliness was very stressful for four of us. One person, one of our relatives, was taking care of my dad's transportation business and the whole treatment was spoiled by him in hospital. He cheated our family business.

We don't know about this earlier. Years went on with home treatment, and father passed away in very pathetic condition. We were helpless, we felt very frustrated about our surroundings, and cheated by people around us. My mom stood up like a very bold person and she gave us support. I felt much frustrated and also felt much sad that I couldn't do anything for the cheater who ruined our family and happiness. Our grief was manifold- loss of father and loss of money and business.

I suffered a lot- in my personal life and my education. My sister stopped her education in 10th Std. So for financial support I started taking tuition for school students for very little fees per month. And I joined my college

for B.Sc Psychology. I had dreams for UPSC and was preparing for it. My peers, sisters were very supportive for my dream. At present, I am doing part time work and taking care of family. I got a good professor who supported me for career opportunities. He gave me encouragement and optimistic outlook. I'm concentrating on my studies and UPSC training. During this pandemic I'm supporting many voluntary activities for needy people. I like to help people in distress. My suffering has made me sensitive. My sister is studying higher secondary with mutual supports from me and my mom. Things are getting better and hopeful.

-Gokila K.

# SURVIVOR'S GUILT

## What is 'survivor's guilt'?

It is a guilt that develops in people who have survived a life-threatening situation, where in a dear one has succumbed. Some feel guilty because they survived while the others did not. Few feel guilty believing that they could have done more to save the lives and then there are others who feel guilty because someone else has died saving them. This pandemic has shown us all these.

One can experience survivor's guilt alone or it can be one of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

The symptoms can be physical, like loss of appetite, difficulty in sleeping, frequent headaches, nausea, stomach aches. There are certain psychological symptoms also-

like irritability, lack of motivation, mood swings etc. These can have serious effects on the person's life as well as on the lives of people who are around that particular person.

Now one might ask what causes the survivor's guilt?

Well! Primarily this occurs in people who have experienced some kind of trauma or tragic situation. But it also depends on one's personality - whether the person has low self-esteem, history of depression, lack of social support etc. Many of us have experienced this lack of support as everyone was scared for his or her own life.

To overcome this guilt, there are different methods like support group (group therapy)

or counselling (psychotherapy). Few people might need some medicinal treatment. Acceptance is important. Please need to remember they have not done anything wrong- these feelings are common.

They need to themselves whether there were certain things that were beyond control. They should allow themselves to grieve. Also, to acknowledge that they have lost a near & dear one. To act positive. Do simple things that might help someone who is grieving or having the same guilt. Most importantly, share - talk to your family, friends or even a trusted stranger from support groups. Care for mental health - yours as well as other's.

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





## District Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives: Summary Report. 13 May 2020 to 20 May 2021.

**33** PROJECTS  
DONE IN  
TOTAL

2 counselling helplines started by Rotary club of Nagpur, Rotary club of Jalgaon Midtown. One social counselling helpline for Covid by Rotary club of Deolali.

**WEBINAR OUTREACH**  
**2000** ROTARIANS  
**700** INTERACTORS  
**300** ROTARACTORS  
**1000** STUDENTS  
**250** TEACHERS  
**250** PARENTS

CLUBS  
ACTIVELY  
ENGAGED  
IN PROJECTS **22**

**550** ENTRIES For slogan writing & digital poster competition "Mind your Mind"

**90** ROTARIANS  
ACTIVELY  
PARTICIPATED

Launched monthly e-newsletter **MIND MATTERS** with international circulation.

**MAGAZINE OUTREACH**  
**10,000** ROTARIANS  
**50,000** NON ROTARIANS

Topics such as

"First Aid Depression, anxiety, stress, mental immunity, counselling skills, emotional wellness, cultivating positivity, happiness, women as caregivers, exam stress, good personality.



Rotary RID 3030 India Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives

DISTRICT ACTION GROUP ON MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES PRESENTS

**JOYFUL JULY**

VIDEO COMPETITION

Send us a video that fills your life with happiness  
**NO ENTRANCE FEE**

RULES  
VIDEO RATIO - 9:16  
FILE SIZE - 100MB OR LESS  
DURATION - 30 TO 60 SECONDS

send your videos on : <https://tinyurl.com/JoyfulJuly>

LAST DATE OF SUBMISSION : 31ST JULY (9.00 PM)

THREE REPLICATION, INSTALLATION AND VIEW PROTECT VIDEOS ARE NOT ALLOWED

FOR QUERIES/ASSISTANCE  
DR. AABHA PIMPRIKAR (PRESIDENT DACMH) - 9922025999  
DR. PRATIKSHA MAYEE (SECRETARY DACMH) - 8888803974



Your own thoughts create the world. The stronger and earnest your thoughts are, things will happen likewise and as per the laws of the world. Attachments and sorrow also grow because of your thoughts. To be free of it, be a witness to your thoughts and let things happen as it has to happen.



READERS MAY SEND QUERIES TO THE EDITOR ON [mindmatterseditor@gmail.com](mailto:mindmatterseditor@gmail.com)