



Wellbeing begins in Our MINDS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER ON PSYCHIATRY FOR DOCTORS & MEDICAL STUDENTS



EDITORIAL

This being the last edition of the outgoing MINDS editorial team, it was apt to dedicate it to the celebration of women! Each of the articles have been contributed by women in the psychiatry arena and allied branches. In a way, this is an appreciation to all the wonderful people, men above all, self-assured and conspicuous behind the success of all their women. Cheers!

In the world of psychiatry, it is both a challenge and in some ways an opportunity for women psychiatrists to make their mark. Women psychiatrists in India, small though the number may be, have made a fair deal of contribution in various aspects of psychiatric care, education and research.

It has been heartening to see more and more young women doctors specialize in psychiatry. My heart has actually skipped a beat, when, on a couple of occasions in recent years, there has been an equal and even reversed ratio of young women and men admitted to the MD Psychiatry course at NIMHANS. More women taking up psychiatry appears to be a global trend, with about 40-45% of resident trainees in high income countries being women. However, in India, overall, it appears that only about one in five to ten residents are women, and sparse studies suggest that in higher positions, there are fewer women represented. This is particularly true of professional bodies and policy.

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Your suggestions are important to us, kindly send them to us at : editor.mind@gmail.com

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What are some of the particular challenges for women? While the commonly ascribed reasons are family and children, these responsibilities being still largely gender-driven in most societies, I will never forget the back-handed compliment from a colleague saying, “You presented like a man”. Sometimes, gender-based expectations can work as a disadvantage and it can become a bit of an effort to emphasize that success at work is competency-based and not gender-determined. However, gender can provide its own advantages in terms of empathy, multi-tasking and the ability to see alternative perspectives. Perhaps a balance of the Yin and Yang is something for all psychiatrists to aspire for.

While there may be relatively fewer women in leadership positions, to me, it is heartening to see more and more women not just in the clinical space, but also in other spheres of influence, including public engagement in mental health. Influencing change and improving lives is finally what matters and my tribute to all the women psychiatrists engaged thus.

Any tribute to women psychiatrists in India would be incomplete without a eulogy to Dr Sarada Menon, the first woman psychiatrist of independent India. A graduate of the Madras Medical College and NIMHANS, she was one among the first batch of psychiatry students at the All India Institute of Mental Health (presently NIMHANS). Her contributions to psychiatry are immense. They include being the first woman superintendent of the IMH, Kilapuk; initiation of outpatient services and a variety of special clinics at the IMH; expanding training facilities; starting an industrial therapy centre, being the founder of SCARF, among many other achievements. She was awarded the Padma Bhushan, the Avvaiyar Award, the state Best Doctor Award among the many accolades. But what really stands out for me is that to date, close to becoming a centenarian, she continues to provide patient consultation as a caring and compassionate psychiatrist, participates in online programs and continues to mentor subsequent generations of psychiatrists with the same passion and enthusiasm. She continues to be a great inspiration to all psychiatrists, particularly women psychiatrists.

There are many others from whom there are very valuable lessons to learn...but that must wait for another day!



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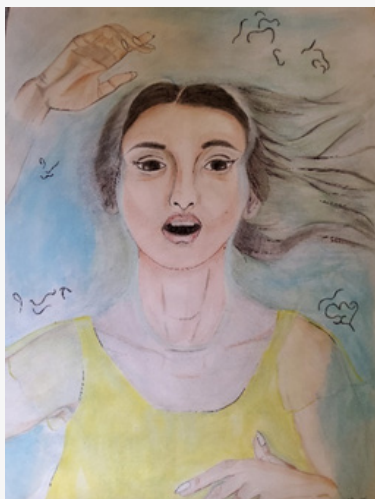


DOWN THE MEMORY LANE

THE CHRYSALIS

The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.

-Carl R. Rogers



Illustrated by Dr. Yamini D

I was 8. She was my first friend in the new school and I was a nervous third grader trying to brave through the change of situations. We had a fight. To my utter shock, she took a sharp pencil and started hurting herself. I watched as the pencil left dark red marks all over her forearm. I felt so helpless and I didn't know how to make her stop. I felt guilty that I was responsible for what she was doing to herself.

I was 10. I was carrying my 8-month-old sister when all of a sudden she jumped out of my arms and to the floor. The rest of the scene is a blur in my memory, though I remember that the impact had injured her head slightly. I remember how angry my dad looked when he grabbed me by my wrist, dragged me out of the door and left me out of our home. I remember how my mom pleaded with him to let me go as she tried to console my wailing baby sister. I remember guilt flooding my head, asking me to do something that will neutralise the event. I curled near a wall and bit my nails until there was nothing left to bite and angrily tugged at the skin of my fingertip until it bled. Was it enough pain? I couldn't say.

I was 14. I talked back when my mom told me something that wasn't very agreeable to me. I spoke so rudely that my mom got hurt. Her voice trembled when she declared that she would never dare speak to her own mother in such a disrespectful tone. She was about to cry. I had made my mother sad. It had to be set right. I didn't know how to apologise. Something in me said, I had to punish myself instead, for the mistake I had done. I was angry with myself. I banged my head on the wall until the rage and guilt passed.

i was 19. I was in a toxic relationship where I was the clingy, dependant, insecure girlfriend and he was the manipulative boyfriend so full of lies. He would keep mentioning about a beautiful girl in his class that he liked and I would end up crying, feeling possessive and ignored. Then the gas lighting would begin that I was wrong to doubt his love for me and I would get overridden with guilt. One day, as the blaming game reached its peak, I decided I must suffer pain because I had made the mistake of doubting his pure love for me. I took a long steel rod, heated it and made sure it left a mark on my body. I thought, every time I see the scar, it would remind me to not doubt his love again. The same day, I consumed half a bottle of cough syrup and went to sleep, thinking it would help me not feel the pain in my mind. When my friends passed this information to him, he had asked, "Didn't she die?!"



I was 21. I had had a difficult break up and was trying to move on. It was also the period when I became more aware and conscious about myself, the impulses, the thoughts behind the impulses and the consequences of the impulses. Like a rider trying to get hold of the reins of the horse that is running wild, I tried to control my mind, rather than go by its whims.

I was 24. I got married to a wonderful human who made me feel secure and safe. I could be myself with him. He had accepted me the way I am, inclusive of everything. I knew, I now can finally trust someone fully to let him see even the darkest corners of my mind. Whenever we would have an argument or even a trivial fight, the impulse would return, asking me to harm myself. Was it a cheap trick my brain had learnt as a means to get attention or was it a neutraliser for the guilt, I couldn't fathom. But now I knew it wasn't healthy for the relationship I am nurturing with myself and with my husband. I was a mother to a baby girl. I wanted to be strong for her.

I told my husband about the impulses of self-harm and cautioned him to just be near and keep a watch even as we argued. He agreed. In situations when he was not available, I would start messaging a close friend soon after the impulse starts. As my head keeps ringing, "Go harm yourself. Mind is hurting,so should the body. Punish yourself for the mistake you did", I would ask a friend to talk something random until the impulse passed, and I am blessed to have friends who oblige, whatever the time of the day.

I was 28. I hadn't harmed myself in 9 years, successfully distracting myself every time the impulse came to pass. But I also felt bad about having these kinds of thoughts in the first place. I wondered if I was normal.

COVID brought with it, a new opportunity. Many clinical psychologists opened their doors to offer free counselling. I decided to give it a try and seek help. I couldn't muster the courage to say the first hello. The weight that I had been carrying all these years dragged my confidence down.

One day, with a little nudge from friends, I called a psychologist. I don't even know why she decided to listen to me that day for three long hours, without even getting a consultation fee. She listened. She listened without judgment. She told me how thoughts were like waves, how they will keep returning with more force, the more I try to suppress it. She asked me to just watch the thoughts as they emerge, without engaging it, and then let it pass. She asked me to have pre-programmed responses that I can employ during moments of crisis. I felt a wave of release. It was ok to have such impulses. It may be a flaw in the mind, but it's okay. Something need not be perfect for it to be beautiful. I began to accept myself wholly.

I still continue to have self-harming thoughts occasionally: whenever I feel responsible for a mistake, whenever I feel bad that someone got hurt because of my actions. But now I know what to do. I acknowledge the impulse and let it pass. I know I may not have the control over my thoughts, but I have a control over my responses to it.

It is a long and difficult process. But I am taking one step at a time. With acceptance, has come a profound love for myself and for life.

The next time I feel the pressure to go hurt myself, I know I am strong enough to say, "Sssshhhh...I love myself so much that I ain't gonna do it." I can either break from the pressure or metamorphose and grow wings to fly. I think I have made my choice.

-Abhaya (pen name)



INVITED ARTICLE

COMING OUT PROCESS: LGBTQ COMMUNITY

“You don’t fall in love with the gender, you fall in love with the person “

June is celebrating as a pride month, in which one accepts and celebrated in favour of LGBTQ community. Gender is of the mind while sex is of the body. Gender is between ears and sex is between legs.

Coming out is the process through which you explore, define, and share your sexual orientation and/or gender identity with the people around you. It is a very long and difficult struggle since in our society, many people assume that everyone is heterosexual.

Crucial role of mental health expert is to facilitate coming out process.

6th Dec 2018 - Sec 377: homosexuality was decriminalised

The following are some benefits, risks, fears, and possible outcomes a “closeted” individual may be thinking about. Thinking of these benefits, risks, fears, and possible outcomes assists in preparing the individual for possible reactions.

Benefits

- Ability to live one’s life honestly, as an integrated whole and avoiding a double-life.
- Building self-esteem through empowerment and greater self-awareness.
- Developing closer, more genuine relationships with friends and family.
- Alleviating the stress and fear of hiding one’s identity and being “found out.”
- Connecting with others who identity as LGBTQI.
- Being part of a community and culture with others with whom you have something in common.
- Helping to dispel myths and stereotypes by speaking about one’s own experience and educating others.
- Being a role model to others

fears of coming out

- Rejection – Loss of relationships
- Gossip
- Harassment
- Abuse
- Being thrown out of family / home
- Loss of financial support
- Loss of job
- Physical violence
- Permanently changed relationships
- Rejection from communities / groups
- Discrimination



Reasons LGBTQI individuals May Want to Come Out to Friends and Relatives

- End the “hiding game”
- Feel closer to those people
- Be able to feel and be “whole” around them
- Feeling of integrity
- To make a statement that “gay is ok”

Reflections Before Coming Out

The coming out process is different for each person and in each situation. The following are some suggestions that one may want to evaluate for themselves before demarking the decision to ‘come out’ can be an intensely emotional and stressful situation.

<p>Stage 1: Identity Awareness</p>	<p>The individual is aware of being “different.”</p>
<p>Stage 2: Identity Comparison</p>	<p>The individual compares their feelings and emotions to those they identify as heterosexual.</p>
<p>Stage 3: Identity Tolerance</p>	<p>The individual tolerates their identity as being non-heterosexual.</p>
<p>Stage 4: Identity Acceptance</p>	<p>The individual accepts their new identity and begins to become active in the “LGBTQ community.”</p>
<p>Stage 5: Identity Pride</p>	<p>The individual becomes proud of their identity and becomes fully immersed in “LGBTQ culture.” they identify as heterosexual.</p>
<p>Stage 6: Identity Synthesis</p>	<p>The individual fully accepts their identity and synthesizes their former “heterosexual life” and their new identity.</p>



Mental Health: Influencing Factors

- Constantly concealing your true sexual or gender identity can cause chronic stress, leading to mental health issues.
- Internalized homophobia associated with eating disorders, high-risk sexual activity, substance abuse, suicide (Savin -Williams 1994; DiPlacido 1998)
- Because of society's prejudice and risks of harassment, gay bashing, rejection of family, losing one's job
- Involving in sexual behaviour in remote places to avoid public exposure and embarrassment.
- human contact via anonymous sex as sexual release is a self-medication to defend
- against loneliness, depression, low self-esteem & anxiety

Parents and families can:

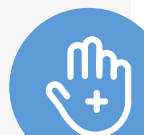
- Play an important role advocating for safe spaces where their child can explore interests without judgment or stereotypes.
- Support diverse friendships and social involvement without focusing on expectations around gender.
- Provide exposure to people working and enjoying activities outside of conventional gender expectations.
- Check regularly with your children about their interests, friend groups, romantic attractions, and any bullying or teasing that may be taking place

Even if you are having trouble understanding your child's identity or feelings, not withdrawing from your role as a parent is probably one of the most important ways to help a child continue to feel a sense of being cared for and accepted. Many parents do need their own supports to help them understand and cope with their own difficult emotions and concerns.



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Transcultural Psychiatry

BECOMING SELF-AWARE



Bhagavat Gita is claimed to be a psychology text. While many of us may agree, we may not know how it is so. There may even be a slight doubt - Bhagavat Gita is over 5000 years old, how is it possible that it can ever address my modern-day problems?

Here is an example of the depth of understanding of the human mind in the Gita.

ध्यायतो विषयान्मुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते।
सङ्गात् संजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते॥2.62॥
dhyāyatō viṣayān pumisaḥ saṅgastēṣūpajāyatē |
saṅgāt sañjāyatē kāmaḥ kāmāt krōdhō'bhijāyatē || 2.62 ||

For a person who is constantly thinking of the sense objects, a fondness for them arises. From fondness, desire is born. From desire, anger comes.

This verse is famous because it analyses the pathology of development of anger, which further leads to the temporary loss of rationality. In later verses, there are several techniques on how to overcome this problem. The meaning of the verse is quite straightforward – the more you dwell on an object, the more you become attached to it. With attachment comes the strong desire to possess it.

It seems almost too obvious, isn't it? You may feel, "Yeah, I knew that."

Some of us are superficially aware of this little connection. But how many of us are aware of its application in day-to-day life? How many of us are aware of how we are being exploited by it?

Here is a less-explored corollary of the understanding of this verse. A number of large corporates these days have adopted this simple but cardinal rule in their marketing and advertising strategies.

The corporates have understood that repeated exposure to an object creates an obsession with that object (which is exactly what the verse says).



For example, if I am repeatedly shown photos of say, a pair of nice shoes or a cosmetic product, over time my mind is convinced that I need that product. Then, against my better judgement, I buy it. Irrespective of whether I need it or not. This is targeted marketing. We have all experienced it. How many times have you googled something and for the next 3 days you are bombarded with ads for that product?

Recently I switched on my FireTV to watch a movie. The first image on my TV was not a trailer or a poster for a TV show or movie, but an advertisement for a burger chain! By the time I had scrolled past it a few times, deciding which movie to watch, I was almost tempted to order a burger!

Here's a small experiment for you: Observe how repeated viewings of the same ad eventually persuades you to say, "Ah, okay, let me get it!". Try to count how many ads it takes for you to give in.

These corporates hire expert psychologists from top colleges to study human psychology and predict patterns of behaviour. All to get you hooked to whatever they are selling and to propagate consumerism.

The reason I bring all this to your attention is not to discourage you from buying objects. Certainly, buy what you need and what you enjoy. The point of all this is only to become more aware of yourself and also become aware of how one can be easily influenced if attentiveness is not cultivated.

If the big corporates spend big bucks studying your psychology to get what they want, you should at least spend some minutes a day becoming aware of your own mind to get what you want. The only way we can ever outgrow the clutches of manipulation is through self-awareness.

As a society and a nation, we can only grow when we become independent thinkers. So let us develop strong minds through the practice of mindfulness and the study of psychology – either modern or ancient.



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XX BRAIN IS UNIQUE!

Beyond the missing 5 ounces of female brain “Gina Rippon” leading voice against bad Neuro-sexism says – Hunt for proof of women’s inferiority has more recently elided into hunt for proof of male female complementarity.


Female brain has tremendous unique aptitude - outstanding verbal agility, ability to connect deeper friendship and love psychic capacity to read faces, tone of voice for emotions, state of mind ability to diffuse conflict, nurturing the young ones. These are talents women are hardwired with those men frankly are not says neuro scientist “Lise Elliott”.

Women outperform Men on tests requiring recognition of emotions or relationships as evidenced by large Ventral prefrontal cortex, straight gyrus.

Women friendships are deeply enigmatic, not just “I help you and you help me”. It's beyond back scratching relationships of men; with evolutionary traits of greater communication over agency traits of men. Now that it's a known fact that XX Brain is different from XY with superior memory verbal abilities and multitasking.

Though we find it content to speculate and debate over such cognitive abilities, when it comes to mental health the difference is baffling! International epidemiological data indicates rates of 20 to 40% higher psychological disorders in women than men.

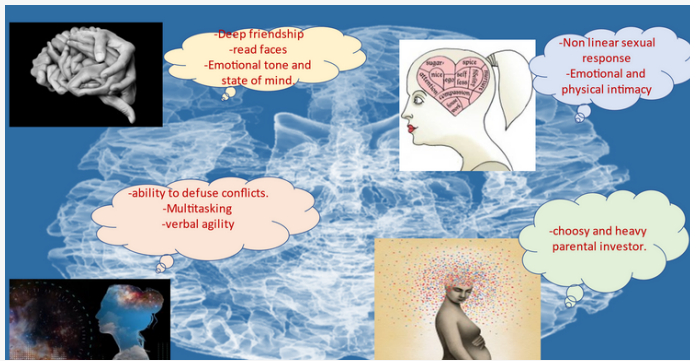


 National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences
 राष्ट्रीय मानसिक स्वास्थ्य और स्नायु विज्ञान संस्थान
 ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಮಾನಸಿಕ ಆರೋಗ್ಯ ಮತ್ತು ನರವಿಜ್ಞಾನ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆ

“THE XX BRAIN IS UNIQUE”

Dr Harshitha. H.A
 Junior Resident.





Wonder pills don't improve her libido

Birds do it, bees do it, and men do it any time! But women will only do it if candles are scented just right!

- spontaneous desire on part of women is not always starting point for sexual activity as compared to phallogentric linear model
- physical emotional satisfactions are important.

Mothers matter most!
Fathers do not lack competence yet they do them less.

- Social scientist patriarchy, constricted gender roles, maternal guilt, hostile career structure of men.
- Evolutionary biologist- parental responsiveness, hormonal theory

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

COME AS YOU ARE
The Science of Female Sexuality
BY DR. ROSEMARY BASSON, MD
A MASTER CLASS ON THE SCIENCE OF SEX

Oh Sex, she's too complex!

American sexual medicine specialist Rosemary Basson in 2005, gave but changing evidence-based model for female sexual response emphasizing on both physical emotional satisfaction and differed from phallo-centric linear model. So, understanding this unique sexual brain of women will make things straight for men and not buying wonder pills for her.

She is also unique in her parenting; high investor in parenting as compared to her other half. There is no perfect way to be a good mother, each situation is unique with different challenges and different children. Ultimately mother matters most!

Apart from being different from the other sex, are we not each unique? Are we not all women? There's no real contradiction between these two questions, of course the answer is yes to both!

You are unique experiment of sexual selection; you have never happened before and never again! This is because genetic factors, temperament, life experiences playing a unique role in uniqueness.

Darwin proposed that female choices might be the driving force for sexual selection, (If you believe it might be because she was better at keeping herself alive, surviving birth, manoeuvring through danger, monitoring safety of a young ones.

If there is no variance in women's reproductive success, then one woman is interchangeable with another. So, each woman is different from one another provide fodder for competition and selection – Thus, I conclude XX is unique across gender and within gender!



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She won the First-place prize in the Blitz competition at the 4th National symposium, Women mental health speciality section and Perinatal psychiatry task force, IPS on 13th Dec 2020



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