

Depression and the mind

Wake up in the morning, get dressed, scarf down your breakfast, and get to work as fast as you can, only to rush back home hours later. Insert days of socialising here and there and that is what life has become.

Somewhere in the midst of all of this — love, loss, pain, and general disappointment, life changed a few times and a silent monster crept in; one that just quietly sat in the corner of my mind observing my every move, capitalising on the smallest amount of pain felt and growing stronger and darker every day. I did not realise how or when we became familiars, but we just did one day.

Mornings are not the same anymore. Every day the same fight is waged.

Do I want to face the world today or not? I am my weakest, at its mercy, wondering without a clue, when did this become my normal. This familiarity is always present, clinging, addictive, and toxic.

Weekends are worse. As it grows stronger and gains allies, my body and mind suffer more. Yet, I am still here, breathing, succumbing, and then again, not to these

monsters. Questioning whether this fight is for my own salvation, or for someone else? I'm not sure.

Its blows are chaotic, drowning, leaving me barely breathing, but never delivering the final one that could end it all. Retreating back into the darkest corners of my mind until tomorrow, again because suffering is a continuum.

No one knows, no one sees, so no one asks. Imprisoned by my own mind, how does one go about talking about this monster called depression, without having someone tell you to just go watch TV or something, and everything will be fine?

Dismissing it like it's just a temporary thing.

How can I explain this has been my reality for the last three years?

"Are you crazy?" / "You don't need therapy, that's for people with severe mental issues" / "You look fine and normal" / "What about your parents? Shouldn't you be thinking about their well-being and not such stupid things?" / "Is everything okay with your boyfriend/husband?" / "Did you get

into a fight with someone at home?"

I can't breathe, even when I try to show my sad face. All it ever does is create a shroud of more confusion and dejection. Tell me, when will this end and who will deliver me from this torment? I hide my sad face; I have trained myself to smile on the outside whilst everything within is absolutely ravaged by this monster.

I feel like self-harm and suicide are for the coward, for inflicting voluntary physical pain is less unbearable when I am already in the throes of melancholy. Or, perhaps just one more way to be noticed, for others to realise the severity of the plea when just talking doesn't work. But even talking about it tugs on those strings of guilt. I do not want to burden, or even be one, to someone.

Feeling constantly belittled and every bad thought confirmed; this monster becomes stronger, and I, progressively joyless. Will I ever be able to tell my truth? Rare and unfound are the conversations free of judgement and overwhelming shame. No one believes it can happen to me, you,

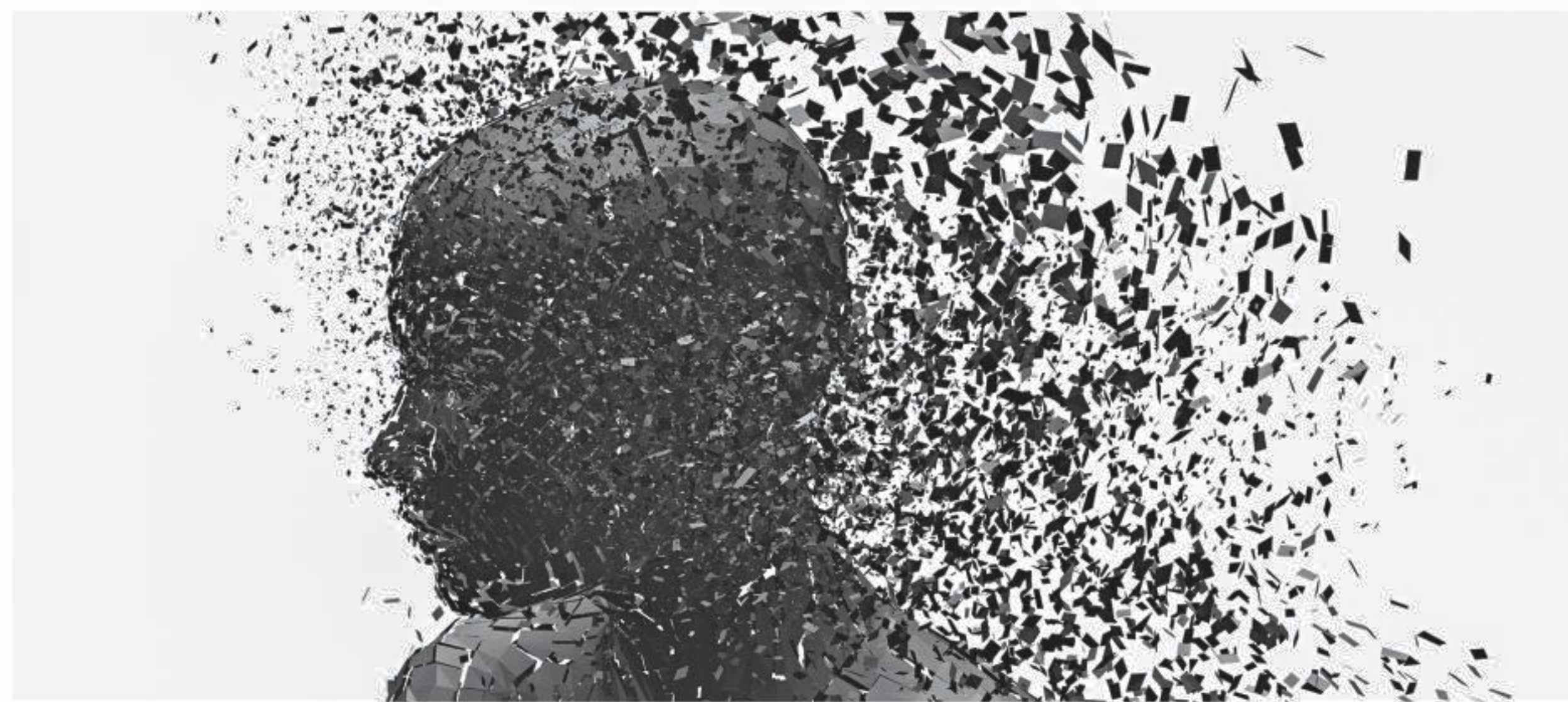
them or anyone.

But then, that one day something feels different.

A little peek of light, not a ray, that comes in the most unexpected of forms; a thought or memory of an individual; a companionship that doesn't necessarily have to be of the romantic kind. I sense support which takes time to realise but when it does, realisation dawns that it is unadulterated, no conditions applied, just there and only for me.

Everyday doesn't have to be the same anymore. One day at a time, I know now that little by little I can show my sad face. Someone will not reject or dismiss this monster. As it destroys through every corner of my mind, an inkling of hope lives. Enough for me to battle for. To be able to breathe, smile, laugh and also cry, but on my own accord. I need to survive and live because things won't get better tomorrow but they will, slowly.

By Supriti Sarkar
Photo: Collected



TIPS

Time tricks

You have a lot on your plate. You are so-busy. To that I say, like Shania Twain: "That don't impress me much." Because everyone these days has a hectic schedule and a million things to do and in a constant race against time. Nothing new!

Now, how you manage your time; how seamlessly you go through it in the office is what that matters. Here're some innovative time management hacks to apply.

Micro-scheduling to an extent

Is your things-to-do list not taking you far? Try micro-scheduling. This involves breaking down your to-do list by hours or even minutes! So, let's say, you will make international phone calls from 9.30am to 10.15am, and then you will update your Excel sheet from 10.20am to 10.50am, and so on.

Sounds daunting? Perhaps it is. As you can see, while micro-scheduling helps you take control of the working hours and keeps you on your toes through the day, extreme micro-scheduling it may also put stress on you or even unknowingly hamper the quality of work.

But learn to embrace micro-scheduling to an extent. Add breaks and flexibility to your plan – but not so much that you become complacent!

The Pomodoro technique

Simply put, the method breaks down your schedule into 25-minute laps. During a lap, you cannot entertain any distractions or take a break whilst you are striving to achieve a particular target. Then, take a small break. And then, start another 25-minute lap. Repeat. After about four laps, take a relatively longer break.

This technique helps in avoiding distractions, enhancing focus, and keeping you geared towards end-goals.

There are Pomodoro timers in the form of mobile phone applications and websites. Try them today!

The power of 'no'

Do not take on more than you can digest. Refusing someone or letting go of a potential opportunity may seem rude or even downright silly. And doing 'extra-work' may actually turn out to be fruitful. But at the same time, we ought to learn how to prioritise.

Let's not overcrowd your schedules with tasks best left out. You already have a lot on your plate, remember?

Apply the same thought when scheduling for a meeting. Will that half-hour meeting, which you will have to attend battling through one-hour traffic, actually worth it? Can't a small conference call do the trick?

This is not to say, of course, that a strict 'no' policy should be maintained all the time, but it is always wise to analyse what's important/urgent/relevant and what's not – and prioritise accordingly.

The myth of multitasking

Now we're getting into really murky waters. Yes, multitasking is a rather celebrated terminology. But several studies have pointed out problems of this practice as well.

Quality may fall. Errors may be made. Switching back and forth between tasks may cause time-loss between them as you

need to settle in.

In your office, with many tight deadlines and a demanding boss, multitasking may seem to be your answer. And we are not suggesting throwing the overall concept of multitasking in the bin.

But do take it with a pinch of salt. There is no point in making errors, living in an illusion that you are accomplishing a lot, or that you are undertaking many tasks together – only to revise and revisit them and devote additional time later.

Latent time killers

Do not underestimate the difficulty or the time required to complete a task. Emails can be a good example. Of course, it depends on the nature on your job, but generally speaking, shooting emails can actually take up quite a lot of time!

Be it coffee breaks, chats around the water-cooler, or the social media distractions – we all have our cross to bear. Identify yours and be mindful of that.

Try these simple tricks to manage time effectively and work efficiently – so that incomplete work can't bother you or steal your downtime at the end of the week.

By Zane
Photo: Collected

