

#HEALTH & FITNESS

Breaking the stigma associated to MENTAL ILLNESS



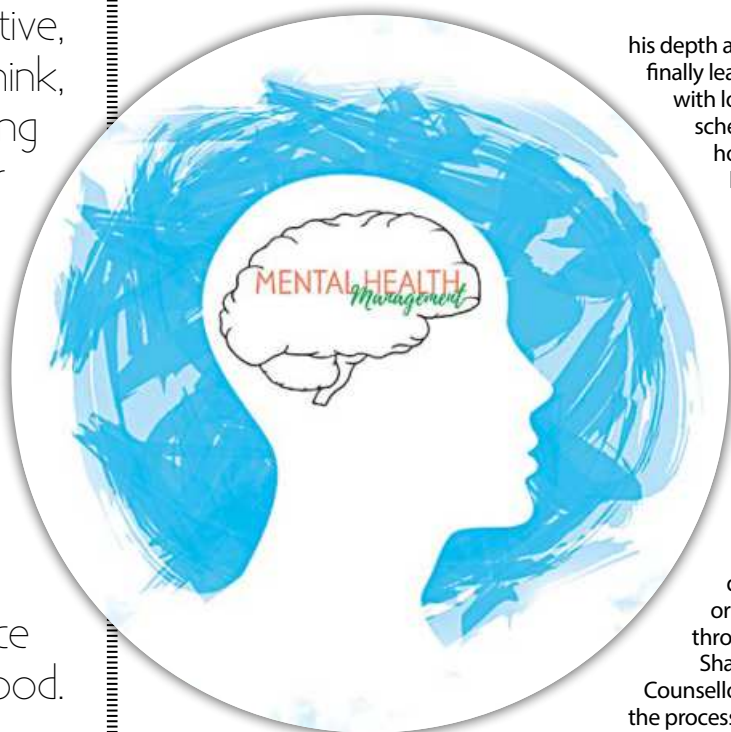
Mental health condition is an important aspect of our existence. It incorporates everything from our emotional state of being to our psychological and social well-being. Our mental health, positive or negative, affects how we think, make life changing decisions or even who we choose to be friends with. It is extremely important at every stage of our lives, from early childhood through adolescence to even adulthood.

There is no way, that we can skip maintenance of our psychiatric needs at any given point and still expect to live healthy and functioning lives.

“And this message needs to get through,” says Rehnuma- E-Jannat, Psychological Counsellor, PHWC (Psychological Health and Wellness Clinic).

Shabab Sabbir, a 28-year-old from Wari, Old Dhaka, is a graphics designer by day and student by night. His full-time schedule impedes him from spending quality time with friends or even family. Additionally, with the pandemic hovering over, his schedule somehow became shoddier than ever, and Sabbir was no longer living a normal life – a common complaint by loved ones.

He was not sleeping



properly or feeling any attraction towards his favourite meals. Most of the time he was found lying on the couch, fatigued, tensed and irritable. His parents became concerned, not knowing what to do, they consulted with neighbours first, who referred a specialist to the family.

Today, Sabbir is back on his feet, thanks to the well-wishers, directing his family to the right course of action. Having completed his MBA successfully, he is pursuing better work opportunities elsewhere, one that matches



his depth and competence. Sabbir has finally learned ways to spend quality time with loved ones, even amidst a hectic schedule, and has also taken up new hobbies, ones which he had been keen on adopting for long.

Was there any fairy-tale like enchantment involved...?

“Not at all,” Jannat reminds us, “Sabbir had been suffering from ‘untreated borderline depression’ for years, which got worse during the frenzied pandemic, but with consistent therapy he was thankfully able to get back on his feet, leading a healthy lifestyle once again.”

Jannat added on to say, “Most of the time the answer is very easy. All a person has to do is meet with a psychologist or a psychiatrist and talk their way through mental health obstructions.” Shamima Akter, Psychological

Counsellor, PHWC, further breaks down the process for us. “Mental health has been a long unaddressed issue in this part of the continent, ‘a topic’, which we do not feel free to discuss at all because of the associated stigma.

“People consulting mental health practitioners are termed derogatively as ‘pagol’ and their medics as ‘pagol er daktar.’ It’s so demeaning! We do not realise that physical and mental health actually go hand in hand, if one is not satisfactory, then the other is equally affected.”

According to both the psychologists, many patients who suffer from borderline mental dysfunctions could be easily treated with light

therapies such as consultation, and one-to-one sessions with the practitioners. Instead, the patients ‘prefer/choose’ to hide their conditions in fear of the associated stigma, making the condition worse.

“Mental health is as important as physical health, if we go to the doctor for fever or a cough, then we should also go to a therapist when we feel anxious or agitated. A consultant can deduce the real reasons behind our problems and help in overcoming the unwanted condition,” revealed Akter.

Finally, all being said, we assume that in the 21st century, people should be more empathetic towards people suffering from psychological distress, as they are to any other medical disorder, and should be ‘informed and educated’ enough to be able to direct the

HOW COMMON ARE MENTAL ILLNESSES?

- Mental illnesses are among the most common health conditions in Bangladesh.
- Nearly 17 percent of adults in Bangladesh are suffering from mental health issues.
- Amongst the above 92.3 percent do not seek any medical attention.
- Globally, more than 50 percent is diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lifetime.

PROBABLE CAUSES BEHIND MENTAL ILLNESS

A number of factors may contribute:

- Adverse life experiences, such as epidemic, pandemic, trauma or a history of abuse.
- Experiences related to other medical conditions, such as cancer or heart disease.
- Biological factors and use of alcohol or drugs
- Having feelings of loneliness or isolation

longsuffering, to a registered mental health clinic, if and when required.

**By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury
Creatives: TurnUp Pr**

Essentials:

*In case of any mental health conditions, please contact PHWC at the following address:
Flat 6/B, House 4, Road 23/A, Block B, Banani, Dhaka 1213*

Contact Number: 09609013000

<http://www.phwcbd.org>

Disclaimer: Names of patients have been changed in the article to maintain privacy.