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we mag

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WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH EDITION

PERSPECTIVE 04

Demystifying
Women's Healthcare

RUPALI SINGH TEWARI

WE FEATURE 11

Schizophrenic to
Psychologist - My Journey

WITH PRIYA BHARGAVA

NUTRITION 19

Healthy Eating Tips
For Women

JOLLY VIN

FROM THE FIELD 26

Dedicated To The
Cause - A Conversation

WITH STUTI KUMAR

IDEAS 31

4 Simple Strategies For
Women To Deal With
Depression

KARISHMA DESAI

MEDIUM 07

Do You Give Away
Your Power?

LUSHOO KAPOOR

YOUR VOICE 16

A 'Normal' Day In A
Woman's Life

SMARIKA DALAL

INSIGHT 22

The Importance of
Women's Mental Health

AKILA KUMARAN

ON THE COVER 30

Mental Opulence

MAMTA SHARMA

REFLECTION 35

We Don't Have To Be
Superwomen!

GEETA RAMAKRISHNAN



WE MAG

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DEMYSTIFYING WOMEN'S HEALTHCARE

Words | Rupali Singh Tewari

A WHO report on Women, Ageing and Health – A Framework For Action 2007, states that ageing men and women share basic concerns of shelter, food, access to health services, dignity, independence and freedom from abuse.

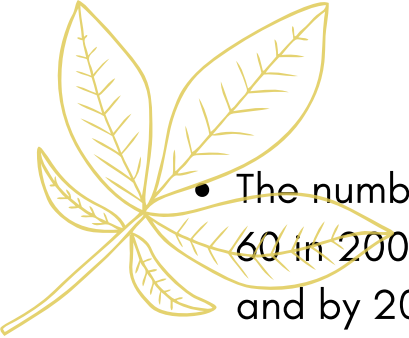


Below are some of the interesting findings from the report

- When judged in terms of the likelihood of being poor, vulnerable and lacking in access to affordable healthcare, older women merit special attention. Older women refer to women aged 50+. Privileged women remain free from health concerns until into 70's and 80's.

Women who endure a lifetime of poverty, malnutrition and heavy labour, chronologically young though functionally old, age by 40.

- Ageing influences biological and social construct, physiological changes- bone density; visual acuity, socio-economical alterations – living arrangements; income; access to healthcare.

- 
- The number of women aged 60 in 2000 was 336 million and by 2050 will rise just over a billion.
 - The fastest-growing group among women is 80+. Worldwide there are 189 women for every 100 men. By age of 100, the gap reaches 385 women for every 100 men.
 - While most ageing women remain healthy and independent, the 'very-old' require chronic care and help with day-to-day activities.

Factors increasing women's vulnerability to poor health in older age

- Gender discrimination for access to food and care.
- Restrictions on education
- Childbirth without adequate healthcare support
- Caregiving as mothering, grandmothering, for spouse and older parents that restricts working for income and employee-based pension.

- Domestic violence- at childhood, in marriage and as elder abuse.
- Widowhood resulting in loss of income and social isolation.
- Cultural traditions, attitudes restricting older women access to health care.

Ageing accompanies mental and physical changes

- Skeletal- Bones become thinner and brittle- osteoporosis. Low bone mass raising the risk of broken bones and vertebrae.
- Heart- Arteries becoming stiffer- arteriosclerosis, leading to high BP, a build-up of plaque in arteries of heart- coronary heart disease.
- Brain- Forgetfulness, difficulty in processing new information, multitasking- dementia.
- Digestion- Digestive tract issues, constipation owing to stress, lack of fibre and fluids, physical activity.
- Senses- Hearing loss, dull



- 
- vision, fading of taste, sense of smell and an overall reduction in sense of touch, pain, pressure and vibration.
- Dental- Teeth and gums wear leading to cavities, cracks to the outer surface of the tooth.
 - Skin wrinkles making you prone to skin cancer.
 - Sexual activity reduces, menopause, drop in oestrogen levels.
- 

"These changes are a natural part of ageing and shouldn't slow you down necessarily. There's a lot one CAN do to keep one's body healthy AND active. So stay healthy!"

Do's for women

- 
- Stay physically active for a healthy body and mind.
 - Stay socially active with friends, family, community.
 - Follow a healthy balanced diet.
 - Schedule check-ups and follow.
 - Take medications as directed by the doctor along with periodic medication review.
 - Limit alcohol consumption.
 - Quit smoking, lower risk of cancer, heart disease.
 - Get a night of good sleep.
 - Practice dental hygiene to manage chronic inflammatory conditions like diabetes and heart disease.



Rupali Singh Tewari, EKAA-trained hypnotherapist, certified sound healer, clinical psychologist, special educator, certified career counsellor. Founder – Budding Boughs



Do you Give Away Your Power?

Artist | Lushoo Kapoor

'Power' is a topic that has always intrigued me – beyond traditional definitions and connotations; I see power as energy, an inner motivation – to express oneself, let our best selves shine through, and have an impact on the world.

Power unfolds in the big and small behaviors we display – how we present ourselves, speak our mind, engage in debate, maintain composure in the face of conflict, etc.



It is important to know that what underpins these behaviors is our belief system – about our capabilities, qualities, and how we conceptualize our place in the world.

Some of our beliefs don't serve us well, they make us feel less 'powerful', and it is these very beliefs that need to be examined.

The info-graphic titled "Do you give away your power" is meant to be a 'thought-starter', to provoke you to think of the behaviors that diminish your experience of power in interpersonal situations.

It invites you to reflect on your beliefs as well as your self-talk that impacts your response to situations.

Apologizing too
much, too often...

Shying away from
stating what you expect
from others...

Internalizing feedback
too fast, without
filtering...

Feeling pressured
to respond
finding silence
uncomfortable...

Over-explaining
your thoughts &
actions...

Giving in... out
of a concern for
being disliked...

Seeking validation from
others to move forward...

Not expressing yourself,
out of the fear of
sounding incorrect...

Do you give away
your Power?

Amber
2021

The first step is always self-awareness – gaining a deeper understanding of ourselves, our worldviews, and how we show up. This should be an ongoing process, an investment we make in ourselves.

"Apologize less, don't over-explain and speak-up"

The next step is deciding what beliefs and elements of self-talk need 'reframing', replacement with a more enabling, empowering internal narrative.

In my personal experience, what also helps is taking the plunge and making conscious behavioral shifts, for example, experiment with apologizing less, refrain from over-explaining yourself and take the risk of speaking up, even if you know your opinion won't be the most 'popular' one.

The experience itself will open up new insights – it will give you a flavor of what happens when we hold on to our power. It will also deepen your understanding of the self-beliefs that are holding you back.

You will find yourself making gradual but sure-footed shifts towards greater self-confidence and empowerment.



Lushoo Kapoor, Industrial/
Organizational psychologist,
leadership development
consultant and coach



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A portrait of Priya Bhargava, a woman with dark hair, smiling, wearing a yellow ruffled top. The image is partially obscured by a yellow brushstroke graphic.

WE FEATURE

Schizophrenic to Psychologist – My Journey

Priya Bhargava, Miss Wheelchair India 2015 winner, Ambassador of Miss Wheelchair World in India, Ambassador of Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecological Society of India, TEDx and Motivational Speaker; is a role model not only to the persons with disabilities but also to others as well.

Besides, she is an educationist, fine artist and a freelance writer. She has demonstrated tremendous determination and spirit to lead a very courageous life, combating multiple health issues and social challenges. From creative pursuits like painting, art and crafts, writing poems and

short stories to participating in a beauty pageant, modelling, teaching, guiding, counselling and motivating the children of socially weaker sections are the activities close to her heart. She is also a YouTuber also, where she uploads lessons on Maths, Science (10+2) level, Psychology (Masters level), Arts, Crafts and on 'Life Skills'.

Priya Bhargava has demonstrated different facets of her skills to overcome challenges of life, which she is teaching others too; as how to face the challenges and overcome the difficulties of life to become successful and useful citizens of the Nation.

WE MAG caught up with her to know more about the challenges she has faced and how she is overcoming them and inspiring others.

WE: How did your journey as a mental health advocate begin?

PB: It all started with my illness. I have an incurable unpredictable autoimmune disease called SLE (Systemic Lupus Erythematosus) in short 'Lupus'. This disease can affect any of the vital organs including kidneys, heart, lungs, skin, even the spine and brain. Depression is also a part of it. At the age of 19, I was diagnosed with Lupus while I was pursuing physiotherapy as my graduation. Within a year of diagnosis, it attacked not only my skin but my nervous system too. First, I went into a clinical depression called schizophrenia and then I got bedridden. That made me discontinue my dream career.

Later on, with little recovery, I completed graduation and post-

graduation in computer applications. But my desire to understand the human mind was always there. Since depression is an on and off problem in most illnesses including lupus, I wanted to understand it. So, I pursued a Masters in Psychology and became a practising psychologist.

WE: What challenges do you face from society?

PB: Some people are always there in our society who judge you either in the form of critic on your work or make insensitive comments. I have faced such things as bullying in college to comments from one of my dad's colleagues about my illness and dark future. I didn't have any answer at that time because I wasn't in a state of stable mind where I could decide anything. My relatives had disowned me, I was kept inside one room during a wedding because I had become disabled and was considered inauspicious. My maternal aunt asked my mother to take me somewhere

else from their house as they thought my disease was contagious. Instead, I was on immunosuppressive drugs and I was prone to infections, not them. Unfortunately, people speak without giving a second thought.



WE: How do you think your story is helping people who are facing mental health issues?

PB: Honestly, I don't know how people would like to take my story. I just want to share my story and

how my sufferings are making me stronger. I want to say that mental illness is a phase, it is not you, it doesn't define you. You are much more than what you think you are. I have started live sessions every Sunday on my YouTube Channel, to help people understand life better, not only their own but others' too. I want to sensitise people about mental health.

WE: What are your plans for the future?

PB: I wish to open my own Counselling Centre where I would like to create an environment which will motivate people to find purpose in their life.



WE: What is your message – to mental health advocates and those dealing with mental health issues?

PB: As I have already said, Mental Illness is a phase, it doesn't define you. You have immense power to create new you every moment. You need to learn, unlearn and relearn. We need to understand

the fact that mental illness creates havoc not only in the life of the sufferer but also that of the family members. Together we can change the mindset of people about mental illness. We need to open up on this because nowadays most sufferers are from 10-30 age groups.

LET'S WAKE UP!



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A Normal Day In A Woman's Life

Words | Smarika Dalal

Cultures have more differences than they have similarities. Cultures rarely see common struggles. If there could be one exception to this rule, it would be women's mental health. Since times immemorial, women, in every culture, have faced magnanimous challenges – one that goes beyond the capacity of a normal human being to bear and fight.

Many would disagree and others would justify with how the times have changed. But, has it? For women, time never changed. By the time I finish this article, I do not have a clue of how many rapes, assaults, cases of violence against women, cases of bullying and overt (and covert) discriminatory comments would have taken place around the world. Let us take a look at everything that takes a toll on her mental health. A normal day in a woman's life would look like this:



As I reach the door, my husband casually mentions how my cleavage is showing and he won't allow that. My mother-in-law barges in and asks me to be home early because I need to spend quality time with my baby daughter. As she leaves the room, she simply says that had I given birth to a boy it would have been so much better since I would not have to take next chance of conceiving another baby in hope of a boy child. As I reach the gate after getting dressed "properly" and comforting my crying daughter, the lady next door smiles at me and says, "Take care of your health love, you are gaining pounds".



I start my car and amidst the heavy traffic I see a few men passing lewd remarks on my driving skills because they think that female drivers who are cautious, careful, rule abiding must be amateur and unskilled. I get to my office and suddenly my phone rings. It is my husband. Must be something really important. I hope my daughter is fine. She was crying too much this morning when I left. I take the call and the voice on the other side is that of my husband. He sounds angry. "You made sandwich and pancakes for breakfast. Dad and Mom don't like it. You should have cooked something else for them. What will they eat now?" Before I can say a word, he hangs the phone. I have been guilt-tripped most of my life. But that is fine. I am used to it now.

As I reach my table, a “fun” colleague passes a funny remark on how I am too active for my age. I am 32. He is 45. But yes, he is “funny”. I try to look interested and alert at all times. I get a message that my boss wants to see me. I forgot; it is appraisal time. As I enter his office, he gets straight to the point. “Roy (male colleague) deserves better appraisal than you do. He is present whenever we need him.” I agree. He mentions that spending more time in office is important for appraisal and also, I look like someone who will leave the job because I have a family to tend and that should be my priority. None of this was stated explicitly, but was expressed perfectly.

I am about to leave office when my “fun” colleague asks me to stay longer. Looking at my face, he apologizes quickly and suggests me not to get too emotional. Yes. Perfect. Thanks. As soon as I reach home, mother-in-law starts screaming, “I asked you to come

home early. You never seem to listen”. She hands over my girl to me and then instructs me to come to the kitchen to help her. My husband is also back. His mother asks him to rest as he must be exhausted. I change. Go back to the kitchen. Cook. Serve. Tend to my little one. Eat. Do the dishes.

I cannot bare open my wounds because that would make a modern woman weak. I wait in silence. Wait for a miracle – when a woman’s normal day would be considered at least as “not normal” by a man; when a man will understand how different are the worlds that we live in even though, objectively, everything is the same.



Smarika Dalal, Psychologist, deeply in love with colors, interior décor enthusiast

Healthy Eating Tips for Women

Words | Jolly Vin

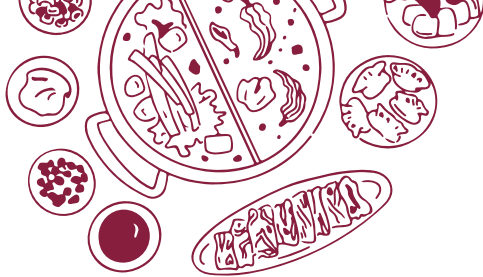
Mental health is related to our emotional, psychological and physiological wellbeing. It is directly connected with our lifestyle and the food we eat.

The food we provide to our body plays a very important role to balance our state of mind / mental health. As we all know our gut and mind are interconnected. So to achieve the best mental health a few key rules are:

- 15 minutes each of meditation & yoga and 40 to 30 minutes of walking and workout
- For the best detox add Ayurveda regimens like oil pulling, massage on cold days, ubtan (scrub) on hot days and Nasya in everyday routine.

^{eat}
Healthy





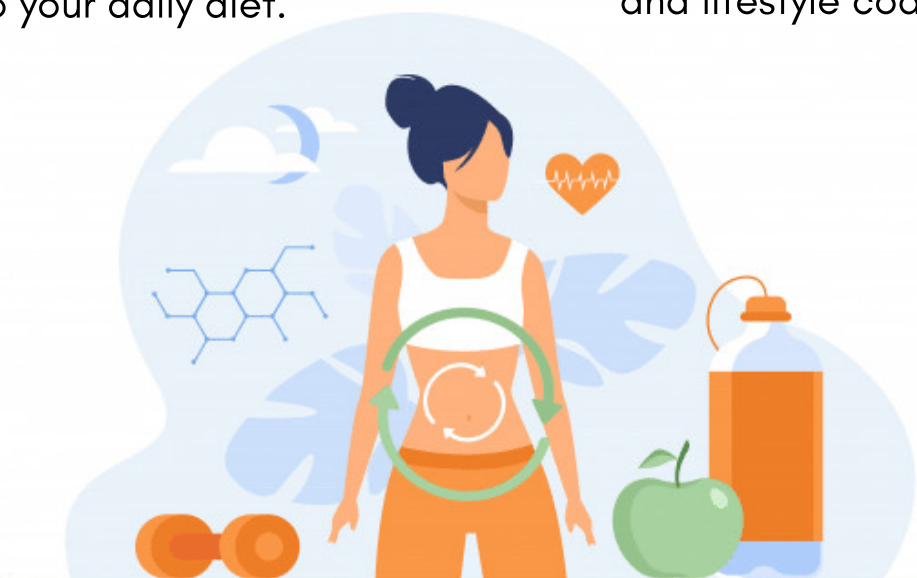
- Chew your food for at least 25 to 30 minutes to achieve good metabolism.
- Expose yourself in the sunlight for 10 minutes every day. Maintain vitamin D levels which are most essential to our body.
- If you are suffering from Vata, Pitta or Kapha, it shows that you have digestive issues. Stress also lowers the stomach acid. Increase your stomach acid by taking apple cider vinegar or dry ginger powder to improve the absorption of nutrients.
- Add prebiotic and probiotic food to your daily diet.

- Add good fats in form of seeds, dry fruits, and A2 dairy products in your diet.
- During the menstrual period increase iron and vitamin C intake which help to reduce pain and heavy blood flow.
- Limit the intake of 3 whites – sugar, salt and refined food.

By following these basic key rules you can improve physical health and mental health as well.



Jolly Vin, Founder – 'Holistic Nutrition By Jolly', nutrition author and lifestyle coach



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The Importance of Women's Mental Health

Words | Akila Kumaran

In recent years, there has been increasing acknowledgement of the important role, mental health plays in achieving global development goals, as illustrated by the inclusion of mental health in the Sustainable Development Goals. Depression is one of the leading causes of disability. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15-29 years old.

Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the common stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community - World Health Organization (WHO).

Gender And Mental Health

Gender is a critical determinant of mental health and mental illness. The patterns of psychological distress and psychiatric disorder among women are different from those seen among men. Differences between genders have been reported in the age of onset of symptoms, clinical features, and frequency of psychotic symptoms, course, social adjustment, and long-term outcome of severe mental disorders.

Women And Mental Health

A woman needs to feel like she is a priority and fully supported. She does not want to feel like a second priority behind work,

hobbies and other interests. Setting aside quality time to spend with her will make her feel cherished, rather than just wanting to spend time with her when you have nothing better to do.

According to John Gray, six emotional needs of women include:

1. Caring / safety
2. Understanding
3. Respect
4. Devotion / to be cherished
5. Validation
6. Reassurance / affirmation

Factors that affect women's mental health

- More women than men are the main carer for their children and they may care for other dependent relatives too – intensive caring can affect emotional health, physical health, social activities and finances

- Women often juggle multiple roles – they may be mothers, partners and carers as well as doing paid work and running a household
- Women are over-represented in low income, low-status jobs – often part-time – and are more likely to live in poverty than men
- Poverty, working mainly in the home on housework and concerns about personal safety can make women particularly isolated
- Physical and sexual abuse of girls and women can have a long-term impact on their mental health, especially if no support has been received around past abuses.

Mental disorders can affect women and men differently. There are also certain types of disorders that are unique to women. For example, some women may experience symptoms of mental

disorders at times of hormone change, such as perinatal depression, premenstrual dysphoric disorder, and perimenopause-related depression. Each year, 1 in 5 women has a mental health problem such as depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, or an eating disorder. More than twice as many women as men have been diagnosed with anxiety. Women are almost twice as likely as men to experience depression.

Each year, 1 in 5 women has a mental health problem

Warning signs of poor mental health among women

- Persistent sadness or feelings of hopelessness
- Misuse of alcohol and/or drugs
- Dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Appetite and/or weight changes
- Decreased energy or fatigue
- Excessive fear
- Seeing or hearing things that are not there
- Extremely high and low moods
- Aches, headaches, or digestive problems without a clear cause
- Irritability
- Social withdrawal
- Suicidal thoughts



Promoting health along the continuum of pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal care is crucial



Six suggestions to improve their mental health

1. Get at least 15 minutes of sunshine per day, which is shown to boost vitamin D and elevate your mood.
2. Spend half an hour in nature whenever you can.
3. Take a short trip with friends and family members, exploring what's in your local area
4. Unplug from devices.
5. Practice forgiveness, share your laughs and love
6. Good nutrition

Each stage of being a female should be a positive experience, ensuring women and their babies reach their full potential for health and well-being. Promoting health along the whole continuum of pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal care is also crucial. This includes good nutrition, detecting and preventing diseases, ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health and supporting women who may be experiencing intimate partner violence, this will help to improve women's mental health.

Akila Kumaran, Mental health professional



Dedicated To The Cause - A Conversation With Stuti Kumar



WE: Tell us a bit about yourself.

SK: I'm Stuti Kumar, a consultant psychologist by profession, residing in Pune, Maharashtra. I have completed my Master's in clinical psychology from Pune University along with a diploma in counselling psychology affiliated with ICPEM. I am the founder and managing director of Emotional Well-Being Mental Health Services (EWBMHS). I am the Advisory Board Member for emotional Health Industry Association (EHIA), California, USA, a member of the British Council for Complementary Therapies (BCCT), and a member of the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP).

WE: How did your journey towards being a psychologist begin?

SK: It all started when I took up psychology as a subject in my 12th standard since then I had a curiosity to learn about it more and understand the behavioural cues as to why humans react the way they do! So my journey began with a Bachelor's in psychology, till Masters and so on. It has been 7 years now since I am learning in the field.

WE: Tell us more about the work that you do.

SK: As a mental health professional, I cater to various consulting needs like online telephonic sessions, relationship

"During the pandemic, our emotional wellbeing helpline offered free counselling sessions to almost 100+clients"

counselling, child counselling, career counselling, stress management sessions, workshops and seminars etc. I am the founder and managing director of Emotional Well Being Mental Health Services where during the pandemic we started an emotional wellbeing helpline that offered free counselling sessions on the call through the pandemic to almost 100+ clients. Now we're an organization that has various mental health services and corporate behavioural training, workshops, etc. I also work as a full-time educational counsellor, a child psychologist in a reputed pre-school in Pune.





WE: What challenges do you face in this profession?

SK: The first and foremost challenge which I think every mental health professional faces is the stigma which is so highly present in the field, the taboo and phobia that revolves around a psychologist in every aspect be it explaining to family or clients. Having to convince and explain to everyone that having a mental health disorder does not mean that you are 'mad' and how common misconceptions are always a hurdle to move forward in the domain.

WE: How do you think your initiative is helping people who are facing mental health issues?

SK: It is heart touching as to how many people me and my team at EWBMHS have helped during the pandemic with the sole purpose of just helping people with their struggles and day to day issues. This I feel has really made a difference somewhere. With a rise in suicidal cases at that point, it was like being in the field meant having a duty to reach people and help. This is what I believe always will be my aim and goal for my practice.



WE: What are your messages to mental health advocates and those dealing with mental health issues?

SK: My sole message to anyone dealing with mental health issues is to just take one day at a time and hold on. It may seem impossible right now but better days are yet to come. And most importantly, you are not alone in this. For all those lovely souls advocating about mental health, you all are very crucial to beating the stigma out...keep the amazing work going!

WE: What are your plans for the future?

SK: I am a very ambitious person with a lot of future goals. The ultimate goal is to contribute my best to create mental health awareness as much as I can. And definitely open a centre where anyone and everyone can avail any kind of mental health services under one roof. Along with all this, I have plans to pursue a PhD soon as well.



MENTAL OPULENCE



Artist | Mamta Sharma

"Remember your strength to transform. You are the sorceress who can alchemize any energy or emotion. We have the power to create any life we want to live. We can transform any feeling, any trauma, and any scar into fuel for our future. It all starts by going within and traveling to the deepest layers of our being."



Mamta Sharma, Founder - 'LeFargen Arts'; career, hiring, and talent advisor, and a pet parent

4 Simple Strategies For Women To Deal With Depression

Words | Karishma Desai

Over the years, a lot of studies and research data have established that women tend to have more mental health problems than men. In India itself, the rate of depressive episodes for men is 1.9% while the same for women is 3.2%.

Women are also at a greater risk of suicide than men. In this day and age, when the female gender has progressed so much in each area of life and industry, why should we let ourselves suffer in the area of our mental health? Women are proven multitaskers and while managing these multiple roles, they might become vulnerable to feeling depressed or having a perpetual low mood.

Here are some strategies which can help women when they are feeling depressed, to cope with their emotional problems in a better manner.

1. Taking small steps to do what makes your mood better

It is quite normal to feel overwhelmed when you have so many responsibilities at home, at work or with children. Amid all this, women sometimes tend to feel out of the mood and a constant low mood all the time. They might also be feeling not motivated at all to do anything. Daily tasks might seem difficult to do and the things which you previously enjoyed, might also not interest you anymore. In this case,

it is advised by psychologists, that you start small, and push yourself to do one activity that you liked on a daily basis. You can progressively increase the time of this activity and see the change in your mood after doing it.

You can also take some time out, and practice mindfulness meditation daily. It is advised to take some time out for yourself amidst the busy schedule, and pay attention to your emotional needs.

2. Share your story with other women

Women have so many responsibilities on their head and so many people to look after, which might stop them from sharing their vulnerabilities with their family, from the fear of their family becoming weaker because of seeing them like this.

In this case, you can share your problems or feelings with other women. Discussing the problems with other people who might be

struggling with the same situations as you, will make you realize that you are not the only one going through this. This realization gives a lot of strength and motivation to a person to fight the problem.

"Sharing will make you realize that you are not the only one going through this"

3. Changing your perception

Changing the way you look at your problem or yourself, makes a lot of difference. Many women tend to blame themselves for something bad that might have happened to their family, they feel responsible for that and curse themselves for it. They are often conditioned to think in this manner. In this case, they should try to change their perception from looking at the one thing that went wrong, and focusing on the other things that have gone right in their family's life because of them.

They should not blame themselves, rather try to realize that they are doing their best and they should not beat themselves up for this one mistake. Trying to see all that is going good in your life, or the things which you have done best increases your self-esteem and changes your thought process towards yourself. This contributes in a big way to lead you out of depression.

4. Feel sorry for the situation but not for yourself

Women might sometimes fall into depression because of a major incident that might have happened in their life. It is very sad that incidents like these happen at work or even in homes with women, where women are still not considered equal to men and not respected enough in some places.

It is valid for you to feel treated unfairly and feel sad about it. But women should always keep in mind that they do not see themselves as the victim in that

situation, rather someone who was able to survive that situation and come out of it. It changes the way you look at yourself and it also changes the story that you want to tell about yourself to others. This gives you a lot of strength to fight with the problem, or cope with it in a better manner.

Lastly, we should always remember that it is not easy to be a woman. We juggle a lot of roles, expectations and responsibilities every day. And it might make us feel weak sometimes. But we have the strength required to get back up from that and heal ourselves like we always do.



Karishma Desai, Counsellor-in-training (MA in Lifespan Counselling) at Xaviers Mumbai



**“WOMEN HAVE TO TAKE THE TIME TO FOCUS ON OUR MENTAL HEALTH—
TAKE TIME FOR SELF, FOR THE SPIRITUAL, WITHOUT FEELING GUILTY OR
SELFISH, THE WORLD WILL SEE YOU THE WAY YOU SEE YOU, AND TREAT
YOU THE WAY YOU TREAT YOURSELF.”**

We Don't Have To Be Superwomen!

Words | Geeta Ramakrishnan

Today's world is filled with competition and stress and whether one likes it or not, I believe women work twice as hard as men in many aspects of life, be it professional or personal. Women wear multiple hats, and juggling them successfully is an acquired skill. We are daughters, mothers, professionals, managers, homemakers, dreamers, achievers. We want to be seen as strong and confident in all that we do and that comes with a cost.

It often costs us our self-esteem. Soon, resentment and stress become an accepted way of life. We need to learn to step back, pause and introspect. We need to give ourselves the time and much earned validation to feel confident, which usually takes a beating as we navigate through these multiple roles in life.



Women are conditioned to behave in a certain way

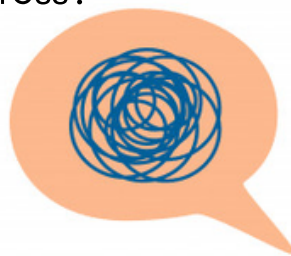
We seem to think that some things are a way of life for us. We have been conditioned over generations with an image of how women should be. When we were young, our mothers unconsciously fed us that our image should be of someone who does not argue, fight or talk too loud.

We grow up accepting a lot of 'inequality' and have to work hard and fight against such 'norms'. Although men are different from women, both men and women are important as we bring our own unique attributes to this world, our society and our family. We can be emotionally stronger, are more focused, and better managers than men, with greater attention to details. It helps us to be more aware and focus on our uniqueness and derive our strength from it rather than complaining or resenting it.

Is the concept of 'superwoman' a myth?

Are we on a quest to be the 'ideal' women? How can we be seen as achievers and how can we dream big? Does multitasking overwhelm us instead of boosting effectiveness?

It may be harder for us to climb the corporate ladder perhaps. Can we change the male-dominated trend in this world by being aggressive or complaining? Maybe we are devoting more time to our family, our children, much more than our spouse perhaps. Are we giving any time or value for ourselves? Are we putting ourselves under constant stress?



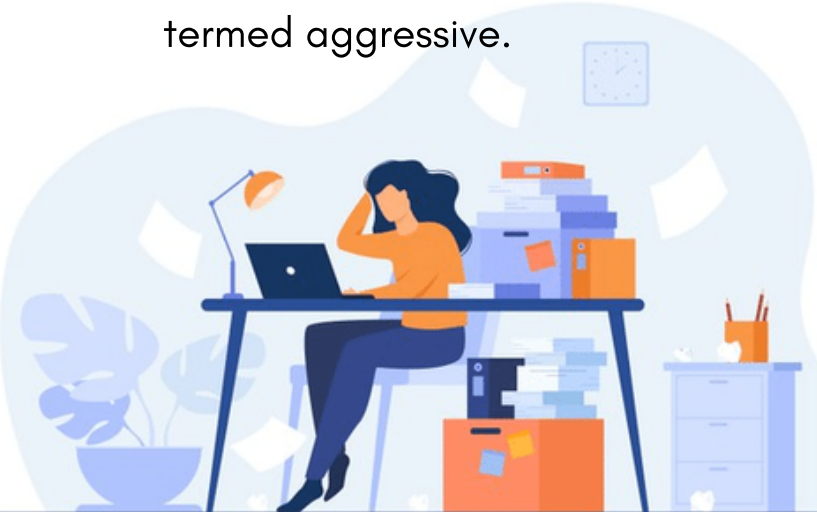
Women stop pushing yourselves too hard!

As a woman, a wife, a mother, a working woman, we constantly struggle to give our best to the different roles we play in life. We often think we can handle the children better and allow the strain of child-rearing to rest more on our shoulders. We often do not expect, let alone ask for help in household responsibilities. To be seen as equally efficient in the office we take in more work, more working hours perhaps. If there is physical or emotional abuse, we sometimes accept it due to a lack of a better option. If we choose to fight we can be termed aggressive.

We are under constant stress

While smoking and drinking socially may not be harmful, as an escape from stress, it can be short-lived, increasing addictive dependency. We cope with stress by procrastination, denial or ignoring the problem at hand, playing the blame game: My maid is always late and irresponsible; my office staff never gives the report on time, why can't my children be more responsible... The list is endless.

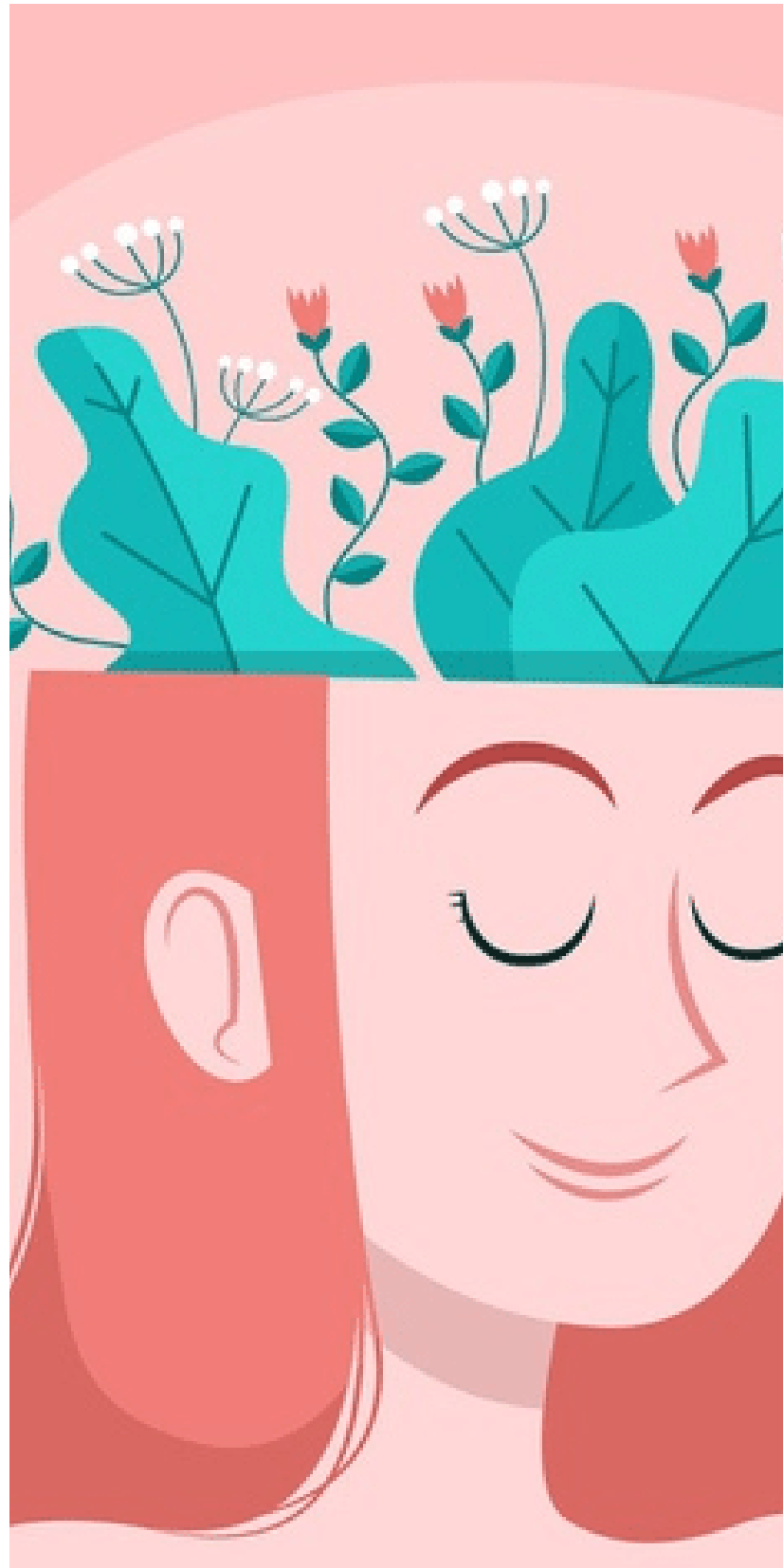
We often go into denial mode. Our body needs rest when the symptoms are shouting out otherwise. It could be the aches and pains which doctors have no remedy for, it could be some gene issues or just that niggling headache. How many times are we in denial when there is physical or emotional abuse? We might want to ignore and wish the problem away, as we have no time or energy to deal with them.



now. Yes, it takes courage. It takes courage to say 'No'. Yes, there is fear. But everything we want is often possible if we defeat our fears.

When we recognize the problems and pitfalls, we want to change. But, most of us do not know how to change. Often all it takes is for us to physically take the step back and take a deep breath. Sounds so easy, yet it is powerfully effective. These few seconds are enough to allow our brain to move from its default 24/7 'stress' mode to a 'creative' window. All the solutions are within us, right there in the creative side of our brain. This stepping back and observing ourselves is a good first step.

"It takes courage to say 'No'"



Breathe and let it go: Finding the balance

If we, as women want to give our best in all the multiple roles, we first need to give ourselves 'me time and space'. If we don't pace ourselves, take a pause, validate ourselves, how can we add value to others, be it in our personal or professional life?

Take time out for coffee-breaks with friends, a movie perhaps. It is a good platform to share, even bitch a little and laugh our heads off. Learn to let-go, to forgive. Forgiveness is only complete when we forgive and forget. It lets the big burden off our shoulder. Empathy helps one look at issues from another perspective, while not necessarily agreeing with it. Try to understand a colleague's issue, sometimes beyond work. It will lead to healthy conversations, even if it is a difficult one.

Looking for and focusing on even the smallest positive aspect in our

spouse, our children, and appreciating them is a great step forward to building that solid trust. All these steps help us to define our boundary better and making it easier to say 'No'. It also helps us become assertive and confident. It boosts our self-esteem, image and self-worth.

The more we exercise these mindful practices, the more we will access our creative brain and find that perfect balance. It helps us stay away from resentment and stress thereby leading us to happiness. It allows us to blossom into strong, confident women with abundant energy. And when we share our happiness and nurture others, we also unleash success in whatever we do.



Geeta Ramakrishnan, Founder
'Coaching With Geeta' and author
'The Game of Change'

