

Mental health, a fundamental human right



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Every year October 10 is celebrated as the World Mental Health Day. The World Federation for Mental Health has announced the theme of mental health, a universal human right, for this year's observance of the Mental Health Day.

Yes! Mental health is a universal human right for all people. Everyone, regardless of whoever and wherever the person is and whatever the person's social-political background is, is entitled to attainment of the highest level of mental health. Mental health does not depend on an individual's everyday life alone. Various socio-political factors determine one's mental state. Taking into account these points, it is understood that mental health is not an individual responsibility alone but also the onus of the society and

government. Mental health is a matter of utmost importance in today's environment. We have, of late, been witnessing incidents of mental disorder caused by and resulting in social ills. In this context, we must have some clear perspectives of mental health.

What's actually mental health? It can be defined as one's mental state wherein the person's thoughts and emotions are useful to the person concerned and the society as well. Excessive thinking about oneself without caring for the society or thinking constantly about the society at the cost of one's own wellbeing can be branded as symptomatic of mental ill-health. When a person's feelings, thoughts, intellectual make-up and activities turn harmful to the person or the society, it can be billed as signs of mental disease.

Mental ill-health, mental illness?

Generally, one does not speak about mental ill-health as much as about physical ill-health because of the fear that mental issues can be mistaken for mental illness. Ill-health is one thing and disease another. We are prone to several forms of mental ill-health on account of the modern life's pressures and demands and our unbalanced and unstable food habits. But they are not mental illnesses. The mental ill-health must be addressed and redressed with proper assistance and with timely medical intervention in order to lead a peaceful life useful to one's self and others.

Why mental health is important

When one is physically healthy, it is good for the person concerned. But a good mental health is good for the entire society. Mental health issues have, of late, been on the increase. Particularly, children, teenagers and the elderly are the worst hit.

To stop this syndrome, it is essential to instantly act in case of mental issues, giving more importance to mental health.

The mind should be strong and healthy so that the body remains healthy. Studies have pointed out that ignoring mental issues and failing to take treatment will lead to diseases such as obesity, blood pressure, cardiac problems, intestinal diseases and memory-related issues. The studies have also revealed that depression and anxiety affect the clinical treatment of diabetes and kidney diseases.

Physical health increases one's life expectancy. But only the mental health will make the living days more meaningful. So, seen from various angles, mental health, no doubt, is significant and valuable.

Why mental diseases happen

We are, by and large, under the impression that mental diseases are caused by some shocking incidents in one's personal life. But that is a wrong conception. In fact, there are countless factors behind mental diseases.

Mental health issues can be triggered by some physical conditions such as genetic disorders, infections and so on, by some psychological factors such as personality traits, emotions, values, experiences and so on and by sociological factors such as social maladies, discriminations, poverty, economic inequality and new laws enacted by the government. Mostly severe mental diseases are caused by physical factors. But several day-to-day mental health problems are sparked by psycho-social factors.

Curable?

To begin with, we have to shed our general belief that mental disease spells only one thing which is not curable. As a matter of fact, mental disease has several types. Some are easily cured provided they are detected and treated in time. Some take a little longer to get cured. Very rarely some severe mental issues may need a life-long treatment which will lead to complete cure. But if the treatment is stopped half-way through, the mental disease may relapse.

The methods of treatment

The modern science of medicine has brought about several new changes in the mental ill-health treatment method. Now possibilities have arisen for fully curing even the severest of mental diseases.

There are two kinds of clinical treatment for mental ill-health. One is related to medicine and physical treatment. Another is purely psychological treatment. The treatment method varies,

depending on the nature and severity of mental disease. It is the psychiatrist who can determine the type of treatment for his patient. So, in case of mental health issues, it is better to consult a psychiatrist.

By the way, is it true that a mental ill-health patient gets addicted to the drugs that he/she takes? Certainly not. A treatment is given only spurred on by the necessity. There is no question of unnecessary treatment. Some mental diseases are curable in a few weeks. But some take long time to cure, making it necessary

to take drugs continuously for a long time. So, the intake of long-time medicine does not make one get addicted to medicine.

One must understand that the duration of clinical treatment is determined by the nature of mental diseases only.

Oct. 10 is the World Mental Health Day.

Translated by V. Mariappan