

October 10th Was World Mental Health Day

What does that mean?

It is an international day for global mental health education, awareness, and advocacy against social stigma.

When did it start?

It was first celebrated in 1992 at the initiative of the World Federation for Mental Health, a global mental health organization with members and contacts in more than 150 countries.

Why do we need it?

Good question. Let's ask this question to ourselves.

This year on World Mental Health Day, let's think about more than just the prevalence and statistics of mental illness.

It's now well known that we are just as susceptible, if not more, to mental illness as we are to physical illness. Taking care of our mental health is as crucial as taking care of our physical health.

We know as a culture and society we were not raised or socialized to understand mental health, mental illness, and how to take care of our mental well-being. This is unlike physical illness/ailment where we learnt from an early age, when we were physically unwell we would get immediate care, positive attention and it was normalized to take time off to receive care and recover. However, we did not get that same compassion, understanding nor attention when we had trouble with our mental well-being. In fact, we often received negative attention, or neutral to no attention at all. Mental health issues were often seen as abnormal, taboo, hence those who faced mental health issues, were often alienated.

As a result, our society as whole is ill equipped in understanding mental illness. We have a tough time to take care of it for ourselves and to help others who struggle.

The COVID -19 pandemic brought to surface the strong deep and hidden undercurrent of our neglected mental health needs. Historically our mental health has always been overlooked and hanging by a thread. The pandemic shone a light to the mental health struggles that were present and further confounded them due to the devastating social, political, and economic effect of the pandemic. The time is now to start thinking and learning about mental illnesses, mental health, and wellbeing. The time is now to regularly integrate and bring to the forefront of our lives. It is about time that we learn how to maintain and prioritize our mental health as we do with our physical health. It is imperative that we learn the skills to manage and cope with life when we are not feeling well mentally without feeling shame.

How to begin to learn the skills to manage and cope with staying mentally well and dealing with mental illness?

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Although we do not have a fully systemized and well-funded society to:

- a) Incorporate educating, socializing, and normalizing the skills to manage our mental health
- b) Know when to seek the help we need
- c) How to identify and openly share when we are struggling

However, we have made large strides. A positive side effect is social media as a key tool in awareness, education, and as an agent for change. Furthermore, the pandemic has catapulted the imminent need for mental health awareness and has shone a light as to why we need to pay as much attention to mental health as we do to physical health.

Every moment is the right moment to start now

Let's not lose this momentum now..

Allocate time daily to:

Please take a moment to self-reflect on:

- a) How are you doing?
- b) What do you need for your mental health wellbeing?
- c) What will you be doing to take care of your mental health today?"

look around you, make an intention to reach out to loved ones regularly, specifically, for mental health and wellness. Ask them:

- a) How are you doing?
- b) What are your challenges in coping with current stressors?
- c) What will help you?

Let's think of ways that we can help each other, let's change the way we talk about mental health, and let's normalize it.

We are all in this together. Every year we have world mental health day, let's make this one count. Call a friend, plan to help yourself and others with their mental health and wellness.

For more information and resources go to

[World Mental Health Day 2021 \(who.int\)](#)

WHO: The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on people's mental health. Some groups, including health and other frontline workers, students, people living alone, and those with pre-existing mental health conditions, have been particularly affected. And services for mental, neurological and substance use disorders have been significantly disrupted.

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Yet there is cause for optimism. During the World Health Assembly in May 2021, governments from around the world recognized the need to scale up quality mental health services at all levels. And some countries have found new ways of providing mental health care to their populations.

Regards,
MHNIG Executive Team