

Normalise Mental Health

Srikanth S.



Source: openclipart.org

JAYANT had always been a strong and resilient person, but nothing could have prepared him for the devastating loss of his best friend. They had grown up together and had been inseparable since childhood. When his friend died suddenly in a tragic accident, Jayant was devastated.

In the weeks and months that followed, Jayant struggled to come to terms with his grief. He felt lost and alone, and no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't shake the feeling of sadness and emptiness. He found it difficult to focus at work and lost interest in the things he used to enjoy. Jayant knew that he needed help, but he was afraid of being seen as weak or a burden to others.

One day, Jayant's boss noticed that something was off and asked if he was okay. Jayant broke down and told him about his struggles with grief and his difficulty in coping with the loss of his friend. Jayant's boss was understanding and offered to connect him with the company's employee assistance program.

Feeling a sense of relief and hope, Jayant decided to take advantage of the resources offered by the program. He began attending therapy sessions and learned coping strategies to help him manage his grief. He also found solace in talking to others who had experienced similar losses.

Slowly but surely, Jayant began to heal. He learned to accept the loss of his friend and found ways to honour and

remember him. He also learned the importance of taking care of his own mental health and seeking help when he needed it.

Jayant knew that he would always miss his friend, but he was grateful for the support and guidance he had received in his journey towards healing. He made a commitment to prioritise his mental health and never be afraid to ask for help.

"Why care! Let it go! Don't think too much about it! Move on! It's all for the better!" These are some phrases we use to normalise pain and grief. We think that if a person does not simply dwell on it, they would possibly just forget it. And we know that is not true. But yet, people say these words. The intention might be to make you feel better, sure, but the advice is unsound and unjust.

We, as a society, have to normalise grief and the grieving process. No matter the stature of the object of our grief, it could be a broken gift to a lost person, grief helps us to process our pain and begin to heal.

Today, we hear words like toxic-masculinity, which calls out the practice of telling males to behave in a certain way — no crying, no acknowledgement of weakness, no display of affection, no display of emotions, and such. Yes, this is a good thing to do. Let us also call out the practice of hidden grief. Asking people to let go of their grief makes them hide it. The grieving will not stop, it will just become hidden from you. Over a period of time, the person might heal, but not without damage.

It is about time that we as a society started to normalise the expression of grief and to destigmatise the seeking of help. Everyone needs help. We are dependent on random acts of kindness by many, many people. Which means, we should definitely allow people to ask for help. What does it matter if that help is for changing a flat tyre or for our mental health?

Not just grief, but anything that has an effect on our overall health, including mental health, must be dealt with swiftly with the help of professionals. There are several online resources available for mental health support for people in India. Some options include:

- **The National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS)** provides a range of mental health services, including online consultations, through its website and telemedicine platform.



National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences

राष्ट्रीय मानसिक स्वास्थ्य और स्नायु विज्ञान संस्थान

ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಮಾನಸಿಕ ಆರೋಗ್ಯ ಮತ್ತು ನರವಿಜ್ಞಾನ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆ

- **The Mpower Minds Foundation** is a non-profit organisation that provides mental health support and resources, including online counselling and therapy services.
- **The Manas Foundation** is a mental health organisation that provides a range of services, including online counselling and therapy, through its website and app.



- **The Indian Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health** is a professional organisation that provides resources and support for child and adolescent mental health, including a directory of mental health



professionals and information on various mental health conditions.

- **The Indian Psychiatry Society** is a professional organisation that provides resources and support for mental health professionals and individuals seeking mental health care.

There are several online tools and resources available for mental health support in India. Some options include:

- **Apps:** There are many mental health apps available that provide a range of features, such as self-assessment tools, relaxation techniques, and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) exercises. Some examples of popular mental health apps in India include Mpower, Happay, and Wysa.
- **Online counselling and therapy:** Many mental health professionals offer online counselling and therapy sessions through video conferencing platforms such as Skype or Zoom. This can be a convenient option for people who live in areas with limited access to mental health services, or for those who prefer the flexibility and convenience of online sessions.
- **Support groups:** There are many online support groups available for people with mental health conditions, or for those who are seeking support for stress, anxiety, or

other mental health concerns. These groups can provide a sense of community and support and can be a helpful resource for those who are seeking information and guidance.

- **Self-help resources:** There are many websites and blogs that provide self-help resources and information on mental health topics. These resources can be a helpful starting point for those who are seeking information and guidance on managing their mental health.

There also are a number of mental health helplines available in India that provide telephone and online support for people experiencing mental health issues. Some examples include:

- **National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) helpline:** Run by NIMHANS in Bangalore, provides support and information for people experiencing mental health issues. The helpline is available 24/7 and can be reached at 080-46110007.
- **Manasthali helpline:** Run by the Manasthali organisation, provides support and counselling for women and girls experiencing mental health issues. The helpline is available 24/7 and can be reached at 1800-200-3535.
- **Sneha Suicide Prevention Center:** Run by the Sneha organisation, provides support and counselling for people experiencing suicidal thoughts or in crisis. The helpline is available 24/7 and can be reached at 044-24640050.
- **AASRA:** Run by the AASRA organisation, provides support and counselling for people experiencing mental health issues and suicidal thoughts. The helpline is available 24/7 and can be reached at 91-22-27546669.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at +91-22-307-3451.

It is important to note, however, that these resources are provided for informational purposes only and are not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. If you are in crisis or experiencing a mental health emergency, please seek help immediately.

Remember how Jayant's experience taught him the importance of taking care of his mental health, and he made it a priority in his life. He learned to set boundaries and prioritise self-care, and as a result, he was able to perform to his best both personally and professionally. Jayant realised that mental health was just as important as physical health, and he was grateful to have learned this lesson before it was too late. It is not always easy to fight mental ill-health and triumph like Jayant, especially without help and care. Therefore, mental health needs should be normalised and promoted for everyone. It should not just be okay, but also be actively encouraged to seek mental health help. Please pass on the message, please normalise.

Dr Srikanth S., Scientist B, Unit of One Health, ICMR-Vector Control Research Centre, Puducherry-605006.
Email: dr.srikanthsrirama@gmail.com