

# A Self-Help Group Handbook for Caregivers of Persons with Mental Illness



By

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**Caregivers of Persons with Mental Illness**

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Photographs and Illustrations

Cover- **Tithi Das**  
Inside- **Sanisha Raut**

Printers

**Splendor Grafiks**  
298, Shaniwar Peth, Pune - 411030. M : 9850210034

Publishers

**Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health**  
C/o Anil Vaman Vartak  
A-14, Siddhant Apartment, 312, Shaniwar Peth,  
Opp. Ahilyadevi Highschool, Pune - 411030.  
Mob. : 9096827953, Whatsapp No. : 8010818689  
Email : eklavyafoundationmh@gmail.com  
Website : www.eklavyamh.org/  
Soc. Reg. No. : MAHA / 1246 / 2021 / PUNE  
Trust Reg. No. : F-57978/Pune  
80 G Exemption available

First English Edition - 2024  
MRP - **Rs. 50/-**

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## About the Authors :

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Dr. Vartak is the 'President' of the Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health, Pune. He is a PhD degree holder in Economics. Dr. Vartak retired from S.P. College, Pune, as the head of the Department of Economics. He runs Eklavya Self-help Group and has worked for over 27 years to raise awareness regarding mental illnesses, eradicate the stigma associated with mental disorders, and such initiatives.

### **Ms. Smita Godse -**

Ms. Smita Godse has obtained a Diploma in Counselling from the Centre for Youth Development and Activities (CYDA) and Tata Institute for Social Sciences (TISS). She has been actively volunteering for support groups for persons with Mental Illness and their families for more than 22 years. Presently, she is the 'Secretary' of the Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health, Pune.

- English Translation:- **Ms. Mohini Savedkar**
- Copy editing:- **Mr. Ganesh Rajan**

## Genesis and Purpose in Brief

Dear caregiver,

Self-help Group Meetings for persons with mental illness and their family members started taking place immediately after the formation of the Ekalavya Self-help Group in 1997. Regularly attending these meetings is important to reap the maximum benefit from such Self-help Groups. Ekalavya intends to start such groups throughout Maharashtra and other cities in India so that a maximum number of people benefit from them. As we proceeded, we learned many things, such as how to form a group, run it smoothly, and so on, which are shared in this handbook.

This handbook is meant for individuals/organizations desirous of forming a self-help group for family members/caregivers of persons with mental illness. It answers frequently asked questions raised by caregivers regarding how to start a self-help group and run it on an even keel.

The caregivers leave no stone unturned to help the patient. However, mostly, this struggle is single-handed and lonesome. To give them support and aid, forming a self-help group becomes essential. Therefore, our best regards to you in your attempt to create these much-needed self-help groups. We hope that this booklet serves its purpose of helping you in this direction. If you have any feedback and suggestions to offer, please feel free to convey them through the post or e-mail. This feedback will not only contribute to the mental health domain but also help enhance the usefulness of this handbook. Let us keep open communication channels to invigorate our crusade/movement against psychological disorders.

This handbook was originally written in Marathi by four authors namely Anil Vartak, Gurudatt Kundapurkar, Neelima Bapat, and Smita Godse. However, it was revised from time to time by the present authors. We are very much thankful to our other two seniors - Ms. Mohini Savedkar for the English translation of this booklet and Mr. Ganesh Rajan, our enthusiastic friend and Chennai self-help group coordinator for reading several drafts of this booklet and giving very useful suggestions.

- **Anil Vartak**  
- **Smita Godse**

## Preface/ Introduction

This booklet results from the experiences and knowledge of its four seasoned authors. It is compact but filled with practical tips which are highly useful. All its authors are knowledgeable, especially Dr. Vartak, who is also a person with lived experience.

At the outset, it is necessary to understand the concept of self-help. Whenever the word help is uttered, one feels that one person renders this help to another. But, self-help does not flow from one person to another in this fashion. In self-help, a person experiences a void that he tries to fill by himself using the information and support others share.

Regarding self-help, one must contemplate/ reflect on the following matters: What is the need? Are there any means to fulfill this need? Who is there to assist? What are the possible problems to be encountered? Are time, money, skills, and support available? What is the goal to be reached? And so on. Part of self-help comprises working on oneself on the questions mentioned above.

Mental disorders involve thought-process complications, and therefore, self-help assumes supreme significance. Working all by oneself can stunt the growth of the patient. If several mentally ill persons come together, one feels supported. Self-help groups make the patient and the caregiver realise they are not alone, and many are sailing in the same boat of mental disorder.

Self-help is of paramount importance in recuperating from a mental disorder. In these ailments, physical symptoms are not readily evident; therefore, these ailments are not detected at an early stage. Moreover, apathy, stigma, and taboos are associated with these disorders. For example, unlike Cancer, where a patient receives relatively more social support, a mentally ill person does not receive a similar quantum of help.

In our meetings, we use "Shubharthi" for the mentally ill and "Shubhankar" for the caregiver. You may come across these words in this booklet intermittently.

The booklet includes the following matters: It begins with a brief introduction of the Eklavya Foundation, its objectives, and its mode of functioning. The book stresses 'Saathi hath badhaana' (Let's extend a helping hand) policy and not "Ekla chaalo re' (I am a lone traveler).

The book also talks about the limitations of self-help groups. It provides clear guidelines regarding how to start a self-help group, the preparations required, etc. The points discussed, like how to gain help from others and reach the target audience, have come from the learnings of its authors, who are experts by experience.

The book also provides information regarding nitty-gritty like when and where to conduct a meeting, how to arrange seating, etc. Information is derived from personal experience and, hence, is highly practical.

The booklet discusses how the group coordinator should behave during the meeting. It also talks about the pros and cons of online sessions. It sheds light on how to run a group and how to see that it keeps functioning without any hurdles.

The book also emphasizes the necessity to run separate groups for caregivers. It also stresses the group coordinator's significant role in the group's functioning.

The booklet also underscores the need for self-help groups in managing psychological disorders.

The book is thus highly useful. I convey my best regards for the future journey of the Eklavya self-help group and the book.

**Dr. Ulhas Luktuke**

Psychiatrist, Pune.

## **The Necessity and Significance of the Booklet:**

This booklet informs the caregivers of mentally ill persons on how to form and run a self-help group. Such a group assists the mentally ill and their immediate family members and friends.

The group allows the caregivers to interact with other caregivers passing through similar situations. Through the group, they get to share their problems. This sharing bolsters their ability to face the situation.

The functioning of one self-help group differs from another. The groups should not be compared with one another. All groups lend support to the caregivers, and therein lies their efficacy. The prime objective of all groups is to facilitate the give-and-take/exchange of information and personal experiences. In the same vein, the main goal of the Eklavya group is to provide a platform for the caregivers and the mentally ill to share their experiences and reap numerous benefits through communication.

### **The Guiding Principles of Eklavya Self-help Group:**

- The chief aim of the Eklavya group is to support one another and to learn from one another. The group is not a substitute for medicines or medical health professionals.
- Trained volunteers run the group.
- The group does not provide/offer any medical aid. It does not prescribe medicines.
- It encourages the mentally ill and their caregivers to shoulder as much responsibility as possible.
- The group invites experts to guide and inform the caregivers and the mentally ill on matters related to mental health.
- The group's Advisory Committee consists of mental health professionals apart from veteran caregivers and

recovered patients.

- The expenses of the group meetings are borne out of donations received.
- The group believes in the policy 'United we stand/ Unity is strength'; therefore, whenever possible, it joins hands with other institutions related to mental illness.

### **What is meant by a self-help group?**

#### **How can it aid you?**

A self-help group is also known as a 'support group.' The major objective of these groups is to support their members and help them to adapt to and manage their mental disorders. This goal is reached through:

- Exchange of thoughts and experiences
- Understanding the ailment and the curative treatment
- Providing an opportunity for the caregivers to talk about the problems faced by them and reflecting on the means to overcome these problems
- Helping caregivers to listen to the problems faced by others in the same situation and how they tackled them
- Equipping caregivers with the necessary skills to handle and communicate with the mentally ill
- Making the caregivers realize that they can take the lead in helping the mentally ill person in numerous ways
- Helping one another to battle the ailment through the sharing of information
- Lending support to the caregivers from the families of other caregivers
- Encouraging the caregivers to look after their health

while taking care of the mentally ill person

- Making the caregivers understand that they are not alone

A self-help group thus provides an opportunity for the caregivers to voice their bottled-up emotions, problems encountered, opinions, and other information. The caregivers get a chance to take care of themselves so that they can take care of the mentally ill in a better way. They get satisfaction from unburdening themselves and letting others unburden. The major goal of a self-help group is to support one another through communication. Sometimes, the group members feel to start activities that are similar to a rehabilitation center or a campaign for advocacy initiatives. Still, such activities are altogether different and should be kept aside.

### **Limitations of the self-help group:**

- The group cannot address all the issues/problems faced by the members
- As said before, the group is not a replacement/substitute for mental health professionals
- Some of the members feel uneasy about sharing their concerns. Such members fail to derive full benefit from the group.

### **Forming a group (For the coordinator):**

While forming a new group, the following factors are to be taken into consideration:

- Do I have the time, energy, and enthusiasm to run a group?
- Do I feel the need to get assistance/help from others?
- While running a group, I will have to go the extra mile. Am I ready for that?
- Do I have the empathy, desire, and capacity to

understand the problems others face?

### **Seeking cooperation from others:**

- Do you know other caregivers who can contribute to the group's formation? Will they shoulder any responsibility?
- Can you get help from doctors, psychiatrists, mental health professionals, nurses, social workers, and other institutions? Will these persons and institutions provide any aid to the group? Will they disseminate information/deliver lectures regarding mental health?

### **The number of participants in the meeting:**

Initially, one should not bother about the number of people attending the meeting. It might not be possible for some members to participate in all the sessions. Sometimes, the number of participants reduces after the first meeting. Suppose the number of participants is too small, in that case, the group's coordinator should not get disheartened. The group coordinator will gain experience and confidence over time. The number will gradually increase. If the number of participants increases drastically, then two groups should be formed so that all the participants can contribute effectively to the meeting.

### **The time of the meeting:**

- The group's first meeting should unanimously decide how many times they should be conducted monthly. Generally, running at least two sessions in a month is necessary. Many groups convene these meetings regularly. If the day and time of the meeting are fixed, then the members do not need to tax their memory to remember the day and time.
- Whether the meeting should be held in the morning, noon, or evening should be left to the members' convenience.

- It is not possible to take into account the convenience of every member. However, suppose a member is unable to attend a particular meeting, in that case, s/he can gain telephonic information regarding the discussion held in the forum through the members who were present for the meeting. Therefore, all the members should ideally exchange one another's phone numbers.

### **Expenditure of the meeting:**

It needs to be seen that the meeting venue does not cost much. All the members should contribute to the expenses incurred for the meeting. However, this monetary contribution should be voluntary. The members should take turns to arrange for refreshment and tea.

### **Preparation for the first meeting of the group:**

Some spadework needs to be done before forming a group. While doing this preparatory work, the following factors are to be taken into account:

#### **The group's objectives**

At the outset, it is necessary to jot down the group's objectives. This jotting helps one to share one's goals with others effectively. After forming a group, one should crosscheck whether these objectives are fulfilled. These objectives should be easy to achieve, for instance:

- The group members should be able to support one another through the meetings.
- The caregivers should obtain fundamental information regarding mental disorders, treatments, various issues one faces due to mental disorders, skills to handle the patient, etc., through the meeting.

### **First Meeting:**

In the first meeting itself, the objectives of the group should be

specified/clarified:

- Who are the target audience of the group?
- How will the group function?/ What will be the mode of functioning of the group?
- What are the advantages and benefits of joining the group?
- Which matters will be discussed in the group meetings?
- Which rules are to be followed?
- At the outset, all new members should introduce themselves.
- The new members should be welcomed and encouraged to contribute to the discussion.
- A leaflet of the agenda of the meeting and minutes of the previous meeting can be circulated.

**Meeting arrangements:**

- Round table seating arrangement makes the members face one another and facilitates conversation.
- The place of the meeting should be quiet and with proper ventilation.

**The venue of the meeting:**

While finalizing the place of the meeting, the following things should be taken into account:

- The location should be convenient for all.
- The area should be spacious enough to accommodate all the participants.
- The place should be quiet, away from the hustle and bustle of the street, so that the members can communicate without difficulty.

- The place should preferably be on the ground floor; if not, the lift facility should be available.
- The place should have a restroom.
- The place should have almost nil or low rent.
- The first meeting can be conducted in the house of the coordinator/ member. Subsequent sessions can occur in a school /college/ community building.
- The meeting place should preferably be the same for all the meetings so that even if a member fails to attend one, they know the location of the next meeting and can participate.
- Conversation over tea helps the members communicate informally and understand one another. They get introduced to one another and exchange matters of mutual interest. Such exchanges build the rapport among the members. Such informal communication facilitates friendship and cooperation. Some members also get an opportunity to interact with group facilitators.
- Groups can also meet virtually with proper screening of participants

### **The basic meeting rules :**

In the initial stage of the group, the rules regarding its functioning should be specified to all the members. All the members should be informed that the chief objective of the group is sharing one's experiences without any inhibition or fear. The following things should be adhered to:

- Ideally, all should get an opportunity to speak.
- Controversial topics such as religion, politics, astrology, and so on should not be discussed.
- Criticism and advice should be avoided.
- Team spirit should be fostered.

- All the conversations in the group meeting should be kept confidential.
- A member's experiences should be listened to carefully without criticism or judgment.
- Discussions around drugs and doctors, etc., should be avoided in the meeting.
- Perfection should not be expected from a caregiver.
- All the members should be respected and treated equally.
- The uniqueness of each member should be taken into consideration. It must be understood that what one member considers right, the other might not.

### **The roles of the coordinator:**

Electing/selecting the group coordinator is the most crucial decision as he plays a pivotal role in the functioning and success of the group. The coordinator should be a confident and candid communicator. He should possess the following attributes/qualifications:

- He should encourage the members to participate actively in the group's functioning. He should see to it that everybody can contribute according to their ability.
- He should listen to others in a non-judgemental manner.
- He should follow the rules of the group.
- He should possess basic knowledge regarding psychological disorders, how they are treated and managed, etc.
- He should be able to run a group effectively
- He should be able to identify the support needs of the members.

- He should be able to identify the members whose needs cannot be fulfilled in the support group.
- He should not be a mental health professional.
- There will be one chief coordinator in the group and one assistant.

**The principles for the coordinator of a self-help group for caregivers:**

- The chief objective of the group is to facilitate conversation revolving around issues related to caregivers and the mentally ill so that they gain the necessary support, information, and skills.
- It takes time and effort for the members to trust the group.
- The coordinator needs to see that there is flow in the conversation of the meeting and that it does not deviate or stray from the topic.
- The coordinator should steer the meeting and speak only when necessary.
- The coordinator should see that each member can share their views.
- The language used during the conversation should be easy to follow/ understand/comprehend.
- The members should express their views freely without any inhibition.
- The coordinator should not criticize or comment negatively on the views expressed by any member.
- The coordinator should avoid expressing his personal opinion about any matter.
- The coordinator should keep the atmosphere of the

meeting positive and cordial.

- The coordinator should organize lectures by experts in the mental health field.
- The coordinator should build a rapport with the members of the group and their kin.
- The topics that cannot be discussed in the meeting should be privately broached with the concerned person before or after the meeting.
- Finances are required to make a group function without any hurdles. They should be arranged through the voluntary contribution of the members.
- Once a group is formed and functioning regularly, sponsors can be a source of finances.

### **How should a coordinator start a meeting?/ Breaking the ice:**

The coordinator should treat all the members from different backgrounds on an equal footing. S/he should welcome and treat all the members warmly so they do not feel nervous or uneasy and like a fish out of water. He should :

- inform the members about the objectives of the group.
- brief them about the rules that the group follows.
- motivate them to learn from each other's experiences.
- educate them about matters related to mental health and recent developments in the field
- inspire the members to share their personal experiences.
- Find out if members have additional information or contact numbers relevant to the group.

### **Initiating the conversation:**

The coordinator or the caregiver should break the ice by

broaching a relevant topic and asking the members to share their views/ feedback. The subject for the conversation should be of interest and need to all the members. For example, the coordinator can ask the members the following questions:

- Are you undergoing any distressing events?
- Are you facing any pressing issues that you want to share and know how others have coped with them in the past?
- Do you need information regarding any monetary, medical, or legal matters?
- From where do you seek support? From your family or society at large?
- How much and in what way has your life changed after battling the disorder?

All the preceding questions will help in initiating the conversation and will make the conversation multidimensional.

**The conversation can veer to the following matters:**

- The personal experiences of the caregivers
- Any topic related to mental health
- The success stories of the mentally ill
- Lectures delivered by experts in the mental health domain
- Lectures delivered by volunteers in the mental health domain, people involved in any social work, and persons with any other disability

The meeting minutes should be recorded as such documentation is useful in the future.

### **Recapitulation:**

At the fag-end of the meeting, the coordinator of the group or one of the members should summarize the important points discussed. The session should conclude with finalizing the date and time of the next meeting (if not a predetermined time and place).

### **To sustain the group/ Over-view and general survey of the group meeting :**

The coordinator should take frequent review/ stock of the group activities. The needs of the members keep evolving; therefore, the following matters should be taken into consideration:

- Are the meeting place, date, and time convenient to all the members?
- Do the members feel at ease during the meeting?
- Can the members voice their bottled-up emotions and feelings?
- Do the members derive benefits from the forum?
- Do the new members feel free to participate actively in the discussion and air their views?
- How can the group be strengthened and bolstered further?
- Which matters should be discussed in the sessions?
- Maximum how many members should be a part of the group?

### **Some of the topics to initiate discussion:**

- Which factors should be taken into account/ consideration while conversing with or behaving with the mentally ill?
- Which factors should be avoided while dealing with

mental illness?

- What is the importance of medication and therapy?
- How do you take care of the siblings of the mentally ill?
- Why and how the caregivers should take care of themselves?
- The narration of the experiences of the caregivers.
- How do we socially include the mentally ill and their caregivers?
- Conversation revolving around the problems faced by the caregivers.
- Ways to make the mentally ill self-sufficient.
- The marriage of the mentally ill
- Ways to promote the practice of self-help or self-care by the patient
- How do we motivate the mentally ill to care for their physical and emotional health?
- What is the importance of communication channels, and how do we keep them open between the mentally ill and their caregivers?
- Mental Healthcare Act 2017
- How to encourage the mentally ill person to contribute to the daily chores in the house?
- The benefits of the recovery method to the mentally ill
- What is active listening, and why should caregivers practice it?
- The economic independence of mentally ill persons after the demise of the caregivers

- Disability certificate for mentally ill and is it really necessary.
- The significance of a daily routine for the mentally ill and their caregivers
- The importance of exercise, yoga, relaxation and hobbies

**The principles to be followed by the members/ caregivers:**

- They should express their success stories, experiences, strengths, weaknesses, and threats freely.
- They should also thank other members for their support, even in trivial matters.
- They should not advise/preach to other members what to do. They should merely express their personal experiences and what helped them.
- Everybody should not be compelled to express their views. Sometimes, active listening also suffices.
- A member should not interrupt or butt in when another member expresses their views.
- The members should realise that other members wish to be listened to, understood, and respected by others.
- The opinions expressed in the group are personal. Therefore, the views with which participants agree should be accepted, and the ones with which they disagree should be discarded.
- Every member should get an opportunity to speak.
- The members share confidential matters in the group, so secrecy should be maintained.
- All the members should follow the instructions given by the group coordinator.
- The members should be punctual in attending the

meeting.

- The information obtained from books, magazines, newspapers and the like should be shared with other members.

### **Online meetings:**

During the Covid pandemic, online meetings became a necessity and a norm. It was realised that group meetings could be conducted online and offline. Each mode has its advantages and limitations. In an offline gathering, there is face-to-face communication. One sees the other person's body language, which facilitates conversation. In an offline meeting, focussing on communication is easy. However, it becomes difficult for members who live far away or in a different city to attend the meeting. Such members who stay out-of-station and like to participate in the group meeting cannot do so due to time and place constraints. But, in an online forum, such out-of-station members can also participate and derive benefits from the discussion in the meeting. But, there can be technical barriers like unstable internet networks in an online gathering. In short, each mode has its advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, meetings should ideally be conducted in a hybrid (offline and online) mode. Some other guidelines for online groups are:

- In the case of WhatsApp groups, non-related forwards should not be posted.
- Personal and festive greetings for members can be Direct Messages (DM), and posting in the group should be avoided.
- Members can use the WhatsApp group to inform that they will not be attending a particular session.

### **How do we spread the word regarding the group?**

Self-help groups are highly useful to caregivers, friends, and

family members of the mentally ill. Information about the self-help groups should be spread to reach these target audiences through the following means:

- Mental health professionals: The information regarding the group should be given to the patients and their caregivers through psychiatrists and counsellors. Mental health professionals can be requested to display posters and placards that provide information regarding the group in their clinics so that the information reaches the target audience.
- Information regarding the group can be freely disseminated through Radio Stations, Television the Internet and other media.
- Information can also be spread through local newspapers. However, whether they are charging for the same must be double-checked before doing so.
- Some temples have their own public address system and newsletters. Information can be spread through these, too.
- Posters can be displayed at clinics of psychiatrists / counselors, local hospitals, libraries, medical stores,



hotels, etc., for the group's publicity.

- Information can be disseminated through word of mouth whenever possible.
- Social media can also be used resourcefully for this purpose.
- Essential information like the meeting place and contact number should be provided.
- Most of the newcomers are afraid to share their information due to stigma. Hence, a website address should be provided to help people know about the group's functioning anonymously. The website should be continuously updated and regularly give the gist of support group discussions.

In brief, all available means should be utilised to spread the word.

**Points to be included in a press release when issued :**

The press note should include the day, date, time, and venue of the meeting apart from the person's name, address, mobile number, and e-mail address to be contacted for further information.

**For the Media :**

- Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health and its self-help group has been functional and active in Pune for 26 years.
- The Eklavya self-help group is run for the mentally ill and their caregivers.
- The group is run by the recovered patients, their caregivers, and volunteers in the mental health domain.
- Approximately 10 to 15 percent of people suffer from mental health issues

- Only 25 percent of them seek medical aid.
- According to the DALY (Disability Adjusted Life Years), psychological disorder is the second most serious.
- The major reasons behind not seeking treatment are stigma and ignorance regarding the disorder.
- Medication is necessary to control serious mental disorders.
- Self-help group provides a platform for the mentally ill and their caregivers to share their views.
- Communication in a self-help group helps the members vent their innermost feelings, inculcates hope and optimism, and helps them bounce back toward recovery.
- Self-help groups reduce stigma, provide information regarding illness, and instill skills in the caregivers to handle the mentally ill.
- The self-help group develops insight into the mentally ill and the caregivers to battle the illness successfully.
- The World Health Organization also emphasizes the efficacy and need for self-help groups and self-care. They can be used more often and effectively as they are inexpensive.
- For the last fifty years, self-help groups have been run worldwide.
- The media should highlight such groups in their news as they help sensitize the community and eradicate stigma towards mental disorders.

**For the medical professionals :**

- Self-help groups for caregivers are formed all over the world.
- The group members don't discuss matters about

diagnosis and medication.

- Psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors are invited to deliver expert lectures and guide the members.
- The advisory committee of Eklavya consists of mental health experts and others.
- The self-help group is complementary and not a replacement/substitute for medication and therapy.
- Trained volunteers run the Eklavya self-help groups.
- Eklavya Foundation is attached to various national and international organizations.
- The self-help group meeting aims to exchange information, offer support, and develop problem-solving skills among its members.

## **About Eklavya Self-help Group for the mentally ill and their caregivers:**

A self-help group is one in which people battling the same issue come together, discuss the matter, share experiences, and thereby gain solutions to their problems. It provides a platform to its members, answers their queries, broadens their horizons, and helps them gain insight into the conditions they face.

Eklavya Foundation runs separate self-help groups for the mentally ill and their caregivers. The ambiance of these groups is non-judgemental, which acts as a stress-buster. It is a place where there are ears that listen eagerly and hearts that empathize. Nobody is criticised or preached in the group discussions.

Through self-help group meetings, the members/ caregivers are provided insight into how to understand the patient, identify and handle the symptoms of the ailment, take self-care, beat stress, and so on. The sharing gives renewed hope to the members and helps them come out from the 'why me?' syndrome. It builds their capacity in the journey through the disorder.

In the group of the patients/Shubharthis, the patients use Dr. Abraham Low's recovery tools to tackle the symptoms. The tools help the mentally ill to decrease their uneasiness and equip them with the skills to battle their symptoms. This sharing boosts the confidence of the patients/Shubharthis and encourages them to use their willpower to combat the symptoms. The discussion motivates them to complete their skilling, undertake a job, and bring their life back on track. Thus, self-help groups have manifold benefits. They play a crucial role, from first aid to the patient's rehabilitation.

In India, mental illnesses abound in number but remain mostly neglected. People have little information, misinformation, and misconceptions about them apart from stigma and taboo. In this scenario, the mentally ill do not seek medical aid, aggravating their ailment.

Eklavya is a character from the epic Mahabharat. Eklavya learned archery all by himself as Dronacharya refused to train him in archery. Similarly, the mentally ill can train their minds for self-help. The foundation is named Eklavya, as it aims to encourage the mentally ill's willpower to help themselves and be self-sufficient.

Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health was established in September 2021. The foundation has seven individuals as its founder trustees. The foundation is also registered under the Society Act and Trust Act and eligible for benefit under section 80 G of the Income Tax Act.

### **Vision Statement:**

Create an informed, empowered, and enabled society by removing the stigma around mental illnesses.

### **Mission Statement:**

- To conduct programmes to raise awareness regarding mental illnesses in society at large
- To undertake activities to eradicate the stigma around mental disorders
- To establish and proliferate Self-help Groups to guide the mentally ill and their family members.

### **Realizing the mission statement:**

The organization aims to:

- Publish books and material that sensitize the

community regarding mental illnesses, raise awareness, eradicate stigma, and give information about self-help groups.

- Providing internships to students studying Psychology
- Network with persons and institutions working in the mental health domain.

The institution needs the help of students and trained individuals in psychiatry to realize these objectives. Your participation is therefore welcome. The donations are exempted under 80 G.

### **In Conclusion**

The groups supplement the medication and therapy offered by the psychiatrists. They teach necessary skills in the repertoire of the caregivers. They broaden the perspectives of the family members of the mentally ill by providing them with insight. Therefore, the objective of this booklet is to offer tips for the formation of many such self-help groups. We hope it serves its purpose.







## Various Publications by 'Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health'

1. **Eklavya News Letter** :- The quarterly Publication is bilingual (Marathi and English). It consists of variety of content, such as articles, poems, personal experiences shared by persons with mental illness and their caregivers, contributions from Eklavya volunteers, insights from mental health professionals. Additionally, it provides updates on ongoing events related to Eklavya's activities.
2. **24th May** :- Special Commemorative issue of newsletter in English on the occasion of World Schizophrenia Awareness Day.
3. Tried and tested methods for regaining mental health- Prof. Dr. Anil Vartak . Available in Marathi also.
4. **Bahar- Eklavya-** Collection of Poems by Eklavya Members expressing their journey towards mental health.
5. **Bahar- Maharashtra** - Collection of poems, from all over Maharashtra with mental illness, their caregivers and mental health professionals.
6. A Self-Help Support Group Handbook for caregivers of persons with mental illness in Marathi, Hindi & English
7. The flourishing institutional life in America (for persons with mental illness) by Prof. Dr. Anil Vartak. Available in English and Marathi
8. Phoenix : Booklet on success stories of persons with lived experience of mental illness (forthcoming)
9. FAQ Booklet (Forthcoming)
10. Compilation of articles published in Newspapers and videos of interviews are available on Eklavya's website.

## ‘एकलव्य फाउंडेशन फॉर मेंटल हेल्थ’ यांची विविध प्रकाशने

१. एकलव्य वार्तापत्र : हे द्वैमासिक, द्वैभाषिक असून यामध्ये मानसिक आजारी व्यक्ति, त्यांच्या कुटुंबीयांच्या तसेच एकलव्य स्वयंसेवकांच्या अनुभवांवर आधारित लेख, कविता, मानसिक आरोग्य क्षेत्रातील तज्ज्ञांचे मार्गदर्शनपर लेख, एकलव्य संस्थेतील घडामोडी अशा सर्व गोष्टींचे संकनल.
२. २४ मे :- जागतिक स्किझोफ्रेनिया जनजागृती दिनाचे औचित्य साधून इंग्रजीमध्ये असलेल्या एकलव्य विशेषांकाचे प्रकाशन.
३. मानसिक आजारातून सावरतांना :- प्रा. डॉ. अनिल वर्तक
४. बहर- एकलव्य :- ‘एकलव्य फाउंडेशन फॉर मेंटल हेल्थ’ या संस्थेतील सभासदांच्या मानसिक स्वस्थ्याकडे प्रवास करतानांच्या अनुभवावर आधारित कवितांचे संकलन.
५. बहर- महाराष्ट्र कवितासंग्रह- प्रामुख्याने महाराष्ट्रात राहत असलेल्या मानसिक आजारी व्यक्ती व त्यांचे कुटुंबीय, तसेच मानसिक, आरोग्य क्षेत्रातील तज्ज्ञांकडून स्वीकारलेल्या कवितांचे संकलन.
६. मानसिक आजारी व्यक्तीच्या कुटुंबीयांसाठी स्वमदत आधारगट मार्गदर्शिका
७. मानसिक आजारी व्यक्तीसाठी अमेरिकेतील समृद्ध संस्थाजीवन :- प्रा. डॉ. अनिल वर्तक
८. फिनिक्स :- मानसिक आजारातून सावरलेल्या व्यक्तींच्या यशोगाथा (आगामी)
९. मानसिक आजारांसंबंधी वारंवार विचारले जाणारे प्रश्न व उत्तरे (आगामी)
१०. वृत्तपत्रात प्रकाशित झालेल्या लेखांचे संकलन व मुलाखतींचे व्हिडिओ (मराठी व इंग्रजी) एकलव्यचक्षा वेबसाईटवर उपलब्ध आहे.

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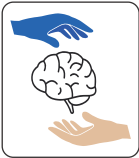
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## **Feedback from some caregivers participating in Eklavya Self-help Group:**

- Joining Eklavya's self-help group offered psychological support and encouragement to me. I received scientific information about mental disorders, which broadened my perspective. I have gained confidence that I can make my son's life meaningful.
- We, the family members of our daughter, were groping in darkness. We discovered new avenues after joining the group. These exchanges have reduced our anxiety, and the overall ambiance of the house has become positive.
- People used to suggest we lead a positive life and beat hopelessness. But we did not know the way out. Negativity had so firmly embraced us that we found getting out of it impossible. But the discussions in the group showed us a way to get out of the trap of negativity. Now, the words hopelessness and negativity do not exist in our dictionary.
- Joining a self-help group has banished our guilt. We have overcome irrational thoughts, and the family atmosphere has become more positive.



For More Information



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Soc. Regi. No.: MAHA / 1246 / 2021 / PUNE | Trust Regi. No.: F- 57978/Pune

Exemption under 80G Available

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