

Information  
For Persons with  
Mental Illness  
And Their Caregivers



Recovery from mental illness is possible.  
What is required is acceptance,  
support, & encouragement from all others.

Anil Vartak (Ph.D.)

This booklet was created for the regional  
mental hospital, Yerwada and the district  
mental health programme, Satara



**Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health**

## Recent Awareness Programmes In Action



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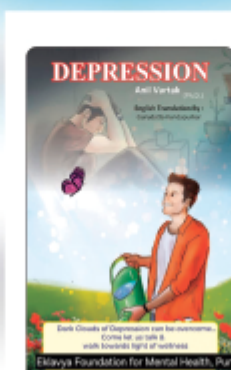
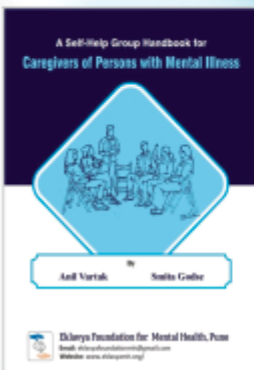
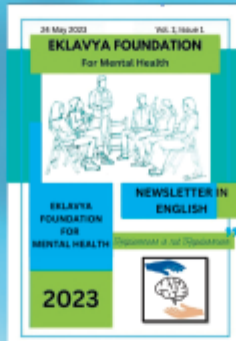
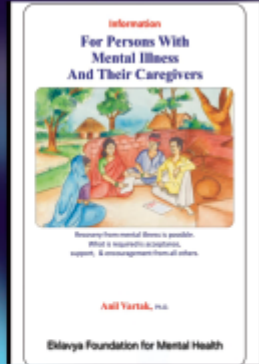
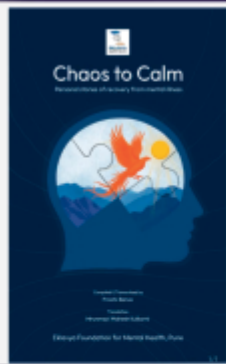
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Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health

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Anil Vartak has a Ph.D. degree in Mental Health Economics. He has been working in the mental health sector for the last 28 years. Drawing from his own experiences, he is a staunch advocate of self-help methods for recovery from mental illness. He is the Founder President of Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health, Pune

# Other Publications of Eklavya



**Let us not isolate, but give support  
...and help the patients recover!**



Yes, it is absolutely true that with the timely treatment and rehabilitation of the persons with mental illness, they indeed can live a life as normal & fulfilling as any one of us can.



**Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health, Pune  
Shaniwar Peth**

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## Acknowledgement

A large number of patients and caregivers access the services of various public mental hospitals. In Maharashtra, the regional government mental hospitals are in Pune, Thane, Ratnagiri and Nagpur. These four hospitals together have a capacity of 4000 beds. Additionally, 10-15000 patients avail themselves of the outpatient facilities of psychiatric care.

Even when the symptoms of mental illness are obvious, families take time to recognize them as manifestations of mental illness. Lack of education, prevailing societal misconceptions and superstitions, and limited access to professionals and their guidance affect both patients and their caregivers.

This booklet aims to reduce the plight of families by helping them develop an optimistic and rational approach. By using this booklet, patients, caregivers, family members, and others can help with the patient's rehabilitation.

While preparing the revised edition of this booklet, I received help from many people. My colleague from our own organization, Smita Godse, and Assistant Project Coordinator Ms. Rutuja Dixit, worked on this booklet intermittently and made efforts to improve its quality, and Mr. Amey Mehndale also contributed his efforts for this booklet. I am sincerely grateful to all of them.

**Prof. Anil Vartak**

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## Some Important Points

- Persons with mental illness do respond to treatment
- Mental illnesses are like physical illnesses
- Mental illnesses arise due to the chemical changes in the brain
- Mental illness can affect anyone
- Mental illnesses are not easily recognized because the symptoms may not appear as in physical illnesses
- In some cases of mental illnesses, the patients themselves may not notice the symptoms since their capacity to do so may be affected.

## Factors That Cause Mental Illnesses

- Biological: Chemical imbalance in the brain may cause mental illness.
- Mental and Emotional: Deficiencies in personality may cause mental illness.
- Familial and Social: Mental illness may emerge due to sudden or increasing familial and social stress

## Nature Of Mental Illness

Harmony in one's thoughts, emotions, and behavior is said to be the crucial factor for one's sound mental health. Any conflict among them may lead to mental illness. For an individual 16 to 25 years of age, it is a period of adult development. Symptoms of mental illness are most likely to manifest among persons in this age group. Out of the total population, 1% to 2% are afflicted by major mental illnesses and 5% to 6% by minor mental disorders. Since the onset of these illnesses happens in the crucial period of adulthood, one's productive life is most likely to be affected.

## Types of Mental Health Problems

Category	Disorders	Key Features
Common Mental Disorders	Depression, anxiety disorders (phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder), somatoform disorders	Is 'hidden', usually not recognized as a 'disorder'; Typically, present in primary care with medically unexplained symptoms (multiple aches and pains); sleep and appetite problems; strong association with social disadvantage (poverty, gender).
Severe Mental Disorders	Schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, brief psychosis, dementia	Recognized as a 'disorder' in most cultures, it runs a chronic course and is associated with severe disability; Strong association with genetic factors
Substance-use Disorders	Alcohol-use disorder, other substance-use disorders (opium, cannabis, cocaine, inhalants)	More common in men; Strong association with poverty; Rarely present in clinical settings, except in cases of secondary complications such as liver failure or injuries during the intoxicated stage.
Childhood Mental Disorders	Neuro-developmental disabilities such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorders, depression and anxiety disorders, conduct disorder	Long delays in recognition; farreaching consequences on individual development.

**Source : Patel (2003).**

## Symptoms Of Mental Illnesses Are as Follows

- Sleeplessness
- Constant worrying without reason
- Experiencing fear without any reason
- Feeling suspicious, being a loner
- Irritation, hearing whispers or sounds
- Talking to oneself, talking a lot, or talking loudly
- Losing sense of place and appropriate behavior
- Extreme sadness, feeling of hopelessness, constant crying
- Suicidal thoughts or attempts
- Consumption of addictive substances, losing control of oneself, causing others harm
- Change in behavior and personality due to Epilepsy
- Change in behavior due to accident and old age
- Having the same thoughts and/or repeating the same action involuntarily

The occurrence of mental illness should not be assumed based only on one or two symptoms. Based on the duration and intensity of the symptoms, mental health professionals diagnose mental illness.

## Medicines and other treatments

**Effective medicines** go a long way in improving the patient's health. They help in correcting the chemical imbalances in the brain. This helps the patient come back to his normal state again. Stopping medicines or changing their dosage without medical supervision can adversely affect the patient. So, ensure that there are no gaps, changes in dosage, or stoppage in medicines.

**Counselling** – Patients are given counselling to deal with his/her problems. Additionally, counselling is also available to relatives to help them understand the patient's problems and understand them better. Mental illness, in some ways, is like any other illness. By taking information on available medical help and counselling, caregivers can help the patient recover faster. Exercises such as yoga, various physical exercises, and meditation help in improving the physical and mental condition of the patient.

**Shock treatment** – It is an alternative treatment and is given in case of very serious, disturbed, potentially hazardous mental states that are not responsive to medicines. This treatment is given only by psychiatrists. This treatment is effective and safe. But there are temporary side effects. Hence, prior written permission is taken.

**Rehabilitation** – the main aim of rehabilitation is to help the patient resume his/her social, economic, and family life. Patients can rebuild psycho-social capacities and vocational skills by availing the services of rehabilitation centres. This will help build the confidence of the patient, along with income generation. Rehabilitation is important to reintegrate the patient into society from which he/she may have been separated.

Various professionals, such as psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, occupational therapists, mental health social workers, etc., work for the rehabilitation of the patients.

Rehabilitation facilities are not available in many places. In such a situation, rehabilitation can be done at home, in the village, etc. A rehabilitation plan can be drawn for the patient with the mental health professionals.

## **Do's While Dealing with The Patient**

- Accept the mental illness of your relative wholeheartedly
- Give your patient love and affection
- Try to imbibe the importance of personal hygiene, diet, exercise, and regularity in giving medicine to your relative
- Give him/her hope that symptoms of mental illness reduce after regular medication for the duration recommended by the treating doctor
- Brief him/her about the harmful effects of the abrupt stoppage of medication
- At the appropriate stage of treatment, encourage him/her to continue with day-to-day activities and career as prevailing before the emergence of symptoms
- Endorse the work he/she has done and reward it by appreciation & also in cash or in kind.
- Ensure that the patient is examined by the professional regularly.
- Consult hospital authorities if you find any change in his/her behaviour or nature
- Consult the mental health professional if you have any difficulty regarding the patient.

## **Don'ts While Dealing with The Patient**

- Do not ignore the symptoms of mental illness in your patient
- Do not fulfil unreasonable demands of your patient
- Do not ridicule the patient's illness and symptoms
- Do not isolate the patient from the family or society
- Do not plan the patient's marriage without consulting a professional
- As mental illness can be treated with medication, avoid taking the patient to traditional or spiritual healers, and even if taken, do not stop the medication.

- Do not allow patients to take medicines as per his/her whims but strictly as per the doctor's instructions
- Do not leave the patient alone when he/she is extremely depressed or has suicidal thoughts
- Do not make unreasonable demands of oneself or the patient
- Do not leave the patient untreated because mental illness is found in his/her family.
- Unless the patient is found in an acute symptomatic condition, do not encourage him/her to avoid the normal, routine activities that keep oneself occupied.

## **Mental Illness and Marriage**

Marriage is considered an important aspect of settling down in life in Indian society. Very often, it is thought that the person with a mental illness will recover after his/her marriage. However, it is mostly overlooked that the person also has to bear additional family responsibilities after marriage. Such additional responsibilities bring more stress, which may lead to the aggravation of the symptoms. Married life, on the contrary, can become a barrier to the expected level of rehabilitation.

Hence, please do not plan a marriage without consulting mental health professional. Please provide a full background about mental illness to the other family in case you decide to go ahead with the marriage. This will ensure a right and helpful response from both families should there be any problem arising out of the earlier mental health issues.

## Tips for Patients

- **Write your diary every day:** It is important to keep a note of activities done in a day or a list of to-do tasks. Likewise, it is also important to note down your mental state, reasons for mood changes, events that led to changes, and strategies that you found useful or thought to be useful. From the future point of view, it is extremely useful to note down the efforts that you make to bring about improvements.
- **Don't stop medication on your own.** Take medicines regularly. Chemicals in the medicines mix with our blood and influence our body and mind. They help to minimize symptoms of mental illness. Stopping medicines abruptly, without a doctor's knowledge, is most likely to cause a relapse.
- **Improvement is not dosage related.** Patients are used to measuring improvements in their health on the basis of the dose of the medicine. But improvement depends on the extent to what extent we can function. So let the doctors decide the dose, let us focus on what and how we do to improve our health.
- **Do not fear your heredity.** Like several other illnesses, genetics is one of the components of mental illness. But in the case of other health problems, such as diabetes, heart problems, etc., the role of genes is much stronger. Many patients have overcome symptoms of mental illness through their sheer determination, willpower, and persistence to improve.
- **At first, things improve in bits.** Recovery will be slow in the beginning. Do not expect dramatic improvements. Instead, set minor goals and focus on them. Try to complete them. If you find them difficult, set even smaller goals. It is possible to bring out big changes in the future through small steps taken one by one.
- **Keep yourself occupied.** No work is inferior. While recovering from mental illness, it does not matter what work you do. Do not compare your previous education and

profession with the work that you do now. Doing small tasks at hand brings back one's self-esteem, and they build the capacity to take on complex tasks in the future.

- **Others, too, have limitations.** While recovering from mental illness, one expects relatives and friends to be helpful and understanding all the time. Although this

expectation may be quite valid, it must be remembered that others, too, have their limitations, and they, too, suffer because of their concern and efforts for you.

- **Join a self-help group.** A self-help group is formed by persons facing similar problems to help overcome these with mutual support. One feels lighter through sharing, but it is also an opportunity to learn from each other's experiences.

- **Eat and Exercise well**

Regular exercise and a balanced diet are more important for those with mental illness than for others, as they provide the support needed for mental and emotional rebuilding. Improper eating patterns can bring sluggishness and restlessness, causing work to be interrupted by lethargy and distraction. Any kind of exercise-walking, gym, or yoga-can help divert a mind from brooding and naturally diminishes outbursts of emotion. By disciplining the body to maintain physical well-being, you bring the body and mind in line, crossing an important milestone in organizing your mental processes.

- **Let us show Gratitude for all that we have**

In the stressful stage of living, mental illness can make one believe that nothing good is happening, but it is prudent to remember that, along with failures, many positive things have also happened in one's life. Having loving parents and concerned siblings, getting helpful friends, and even having beautiful nature around us is a

matter of gratitude. Expressing gratitude about it, whether through a verbal or mental acknowledgement, helps bring stability and peace of mind by substituting negative feelings with positive ones. This ever-growing path of gratitude is a healthy ideology and an indivisible part of the exhilarating journey toward recovery.

#### • **Learn to Face Difficulties**

Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of ways of overcoming it. Deep and lasting changes come from the heart, requiring the courage to recognize the need for change and the skill to view failures with a balance of mind. If we break a large problem into parts and deal with each one by one, it becomes possible to surmount a mound of difficulties. Change will be gradual, and we must celebrate small changes without getting overexcited, as real improvement is slow but permanent. By adopting an attitude of equanimity and utilizing self-help techniques, we can convert the regret of failure into the joy of learning and never, ever succumb to failure.

### **Tips For Caregivers**

- Do not blame yourself for the patient's illness. It is a combination of several factors beyond your control.
- In order to help the patient recover from mental illness, seek more information from the professionals.
- Try to make the patient independent.
- Divide responsibilities among as many family members as possible, if not all of them.
- Do not neglect your own health and needs by only focusing on the patient's health.
- Take care of your routine, likings, hobbies, as this will help in your mental well-being which is also needed to help the patient.
- If you are excessively stressed or worried, please make it point

to also seek help of a mental health professional for yourself too.

- Do not waste the present in worrying about the future.
- Let us strengthen ourselves and increase our capacities to lead a happy and healthy life.

## The Recovery Method

Dr. Abraham Lowe, a neuro-psychiatrist, while working in Illinois, US, mental hospital, realised that patients recover once the treatment is initiated in the hospital. However, once discharged from the hospital, many of them develop symptoms due to stress and strain while living with the family and in the society. This leads to rehospitalisation of many of them. Dr. Low developed a specific self-help method- Recovery Method - in order to enable patients to cope up with such stress. Patients learn skills to manage small day to day events rather than big issues in one's life. Patients create a broader pattern of their future progress while managing such small events. This method is based on the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy in psychology.

## Some Important Tools From Recovery Method

These tools should be repeatedly recalled which help in controlling symptoms due to distressing events of day to day life.

- Maintaining inner peace is my supreme goal
- My internal peace is more important than my anger
- Setback is a part of life .I am an average person.
- I cannot control external but only my internal environment
- Illness is fate-appointed and not self-appointed
- We can break old habit patterns
- Fear feeds the symptoms and the symptoms feeds the fear
- Every act of self control leads to self respect
- Strive for peace, balance and order
- Lower your expectations and performance will rise

- Nervous symptoms are distressing but not dangerous
- Feelings are not facts
- Helplessness is not hopelessness
- People do things that irritate us, not to irritate us.
- Endorse for the effort and not for the outcome
- Excuse rather accuse
- We can't control the outer environment, but we can control our reaction to it.
- Try-fail, try-fail, try-succeed.
- Fearful anticipation is worse than the realisation.
- Commanding your muscles to move transforms the vicious cycle of helplessness into the vitalizing cycle of self-confidence.
- Don't measure good mental health by how you feel. It is how you function.
- Thoughts can be rejected, suppressed, or dropped.
- Take the total view.
- Do it in part-acts.

### **Process Of Rehabilitation Begins in The Immediate Environment of a Patient**

- Involve the patient in doing whatever work he/she can
- Doing some work helps to regain reduced psychological and physical skills
- Any work helps to increase the self-esteem of the patient.
- If the work at hand is complicated, divide it into smaller parts, e.g., cleaning of vegetables, throwing of garbage, assisting in cooking, or farm-related work.
- Do not avoid taking patients to family or social functions. Patients gain self-confidence and encouragement through such family and social reunions.

- Do not pamper your patient. Communicate quietly but in clear words your expectations from him/her
- Encourage patients to take his/her medicines
- Help your patient to overcome feelings of stigma.
- Do not restrict his/her activity due to feelings of stigma

## **Disability Certificate**

Persons having more than 40% disability (Physical or mental) are eligible to receive a 'Disability Certificate'. Such persons can take advantage of various schemes available for disabled persons, enabling them to function effectively in society. District hospitals provide such a certificate.

## **Face the Feeling of Stigma**

- There are many misconceptions and superstitions in society about mental illness. Because of this, people with mental illness and their families are often looked down upon.
- However, like other physical illnesses, mental illnesses are also medical conditions. They can occur due to chemical changes in the brain.
- People may use derogatory words, make hurtful comments, or even treat patients and their families in a discriminatory manner.
- Patients and their families should seek the basic scientific information related to mental illness.
- If feelings of stigma arise, patients and their family members should not blame themselves or each other.
- Patients should not become lethargic as a result of stigma but they should continue doing small activities that are

manageable for them. These small steps can bring joy and provide the energy needed to face stigma.

- To cope with stigma, patients and families can seek guidance from mental health professionals, Volunteers from Eklavya Foundation, and other mental health organizations.
- It is also helpful to stay connected with other patients and families who are undergoing treatment. Through sharing experiences with each other, people often realize the emptiness and irrationality of stigma, which can reduce its intensity.
- It may also help to talk with elders in the village or community who can provide support. This helps reduce stress and may help in discovering possible solutions.

### **Welfare Benefits for Persons with Mental Illness**

- Persons who have disability of 40 % or more (physical or mental) are entitled to receive various government concessions/benefits meant for the Disabled Persons. A person with a mental illness is entitled to receive 75 % concession in the State Transport travel and 50 % concession for the accompanying person. A certificate confirming treatment for mental illness is necessary, which can be obtained from the regional mental hospital or civil hospital.
- Availability of insurance cover under the GOI's Swavlambhan and Niramaya schemes.
- In government-aided educational institutes, 3 % reservation in seats.
- Provision of a loan for self-employment
- Scholarships for Higher Education
- Unemployment benefit

## About Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health

The Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health was established in September 2021 by a group of dedicated and passionate volunteers with more than 20 years of experience in the field of mental health. The main objectives of this organization are to create awareness, form self-help groups, and eradicate the stigma surrounding mental illnesses. Indian society is riddled with ignorance, misunderstanding, and stigma towards mental health issues. Due to this, many patients are deprived of or have delayed access to professional treatments. Moreover, patients and family members have to face a double burden... Coping with mental health symptoms as well as coping with the negative attitudes of society. Hence, the objective of this organization is to focus on and address these issues in society by creating awareness, forming self-help groups, and reducing stigma towards mental illness. This newborn organization has taken several innovative steps to achieve its objectives. The organization currently runs separate support groups for patients and caregivers. In the patient group recovery method, of the Recovery International, USA, is used. Several of Eklavya Foundation's innovative programs are receiving very enthusiastic responses from patients, their families, students, and the general public.



