



Mental Health and Self-Healing

For Prelims: [National Medical Commission](#), [Tobacco](#), [National Council of Educational Research and Training](#), [Human Immunodeficiency Virus](#), [NIMHANS](#), [Mental health](#), [Kiran Helpline](#), [Manodarpan](#), [Mental Health](#), [National Medical Commission](#), [WHO](#), [National Mental Health Survey](#), [National Crime Records Bureau \(NCRB\)](#), [National Mental Health Policy](#), [National Mental Health Programme](#), [National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences \(NIMHANS\)](#), [Kiran Helpline](#), [Mental HealthCare Act 2017](#).

For Mains: [Mental Healthcare in India](#), [Issues Associated with Mental Health](#), [Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders in India](#)

Why in News?

The [Economic Survey 2023-24](#), for the first time, highlighted the significance of mental health in personal and national development.

- In India's rapidly evolving environment, mental health issues such as **stress**, **anxiety**, and [depression](#) are becoming more widespread.

What is Mental Health?

- **About:** According to the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual can **cope with the stresses** of daily life, continue to be productive, and **contribute to the community**.
 - The first Director-General of WHO emphasized mental health's significance by stating, **"Without mental health, there can be no true physical health."**
- **Mental Disorders:** Mental disorders are **conditions that disrupt emotions**, thinking, behavior, and interactions.
 - These conditions include [depression](#), [anxiety](#), [schizophrenia](#), and [bipolar disorder](#). Symptoms may manifest as **emotional distress**, **cognitive dysfunction** (poor concentration, negative thoughts), and behavioral changes (social withdrawal, aggression, self-harm tendencies).
- **Types:**

Disorder	Characteristics
Anxiety Disorders	Excessive fear and worry , related behavioral disturbances
Depression	Persistent feelings of sadness , hopelessness, lack of interest or pleasure
Bipolar Disorder	Alternating periods of depression and mania . Manic episodes: elevated mood,

	increased energy, talkativeness, racing thoughts, impulsive behavior.
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	Persistent reliving of trauma (flashbacks, nightmares), heightened arousal, after exposure to a traumatic event
Schizophrenia	Distorted thinking, perceptions , and emotions; disconnect from reality
Eating Disorders	Abnormal eating , preoccupation with food, body weight/shape concerns (e.g., anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa)
Disruptive Behaviour & Dissocial Disorders	Persistent behavior problems, defiant/disobedient behaviors, violating rights of others/societal norms
Neurodevelopmental Disorders	Behavioral and cognitive disorders arising during development; difficulties in intellectual, motor , language, or social functions (e.g., intellectual development, autism spectrum disorder, ADHD)

Why Tackling Mental Health is Important?

▪ Importance of Mental Health:

- **Essential for Well-Being:** Mental health is crucial for a balanced life, helping individuals **realize their potential and cope with daily challenges**.
- **Economic Impact:** [Mental health disorders](#) lead to **productivity losses, absenteeism, increased healthcare costs, and disability**. Poor mental health affects economic growth and workforce efficiency.
- **Poverty-Mental Health Link:** Financial instability, lack of [social mobility](#), and **stressful living conditions** increase the risk of mental health disorders.
- **Urbanization & Migration:** Disruptions in [social cohesion](#) and traditional support systems due to **rapid urbanization and migration** contribute to heightened psychological stress.
- **High Return on Investment:** Scaling up treatment for **depression and anxiety** yields a **benefit-to-cost ratio of up to 5.7:1 globally and 6.5 times in India**.

▪ India's Mental Health Landscape:

- **Rising Mental Health Concerns Globally:** WHO (2021) estimates that **1 in 7 adolescents (10-19 years old) worldwide** suffer from a mental disorder. A [UNICEF](#) study (2021) reported that **19% of youth (15-24 years) in 21 countries** experience depression or a lack of interest in daily activities.
- **High Prevalence of Mental Disorders:** The [National Mental Health Survey \(NMHS\) 2015-16](#) reported that **10.6% of Indian adults** suffer from mental disorders.
 - The [Covid-19](#) pandemic caused a **27.6% rise in major depressive disorders** and a **25.6% increase in anxiety disorders** globally.
- **Urban-Rural Divide:** Mental health issues are more prevalent in [urban metro areas \(13.5%\)](#) compared to [rural areas \(6.9%\)](#) and [urban non-metro regions \(4.3%\)](#).
- **Depressive Disorders:** India is facing a serious mental health crisis, with an estimated 56 million people suffering from depression and 38 million from anxiety disorders, according to a report by the [World Health Organisation](#).
 - India has the dubious distinction of having the highest number of suicides in the world. According to a [National Crime Records Bureau \(NCRB\)](#) report, 1.71 lakh people died by suicide in 2022 in India.
- **India's Adolescent Mental Health Crisis:** [NCERT's survey](#) highlighted that **11% of students feel anxious, 14% experience extreme emotions, and 43% face mood swings**. Studies and exam pressure were cited as major triggers.

What is the Role of Self-Healing in Mental Health?

▪ About:

- **Self-healing** refers to an individual's ability to harness their mind and emotions to aid in physical and mental recovery.
- It involves **positive thinking**, **emotional balance**, and **structured practices** like affirmations, **mindfulness**, and cognitive restructuring to foster resilience.
- Self-healing techniques emphasize **mental strength**, **emotional stability**, and the **mind-body connection** in overall well-being.
- **Modern research and integrative medicine** recognize self-healing as a vital component of **healthcare**, particularly in managing chronic illnesses like **cancer**, where mental distress can influence treatment outcomes and pain perception.
- By adopting **spiritual biology principles** and **cognitive healing techniques**, individuals can cultivate inner strength and improve their overall health.

▪ Key Aspects of Self-Healing in Mental Health:

- **Mind-Body Connection:** Thoughts, emotions, and beliefs influence biological processes such as **immune function**, **hormonal balance**, and **nervous system activity**.
- **Positive Thinking:** Avoiding **self-criticism** and **negative self-talk** prevents the worsening of mental health conditions.
- **Holistic Healing Techniques:** Practices such as **yoga**, **meditative breathing**, **guided visualization**, and **gratitude journaling** help reduce anxiety and enhance emotional resilience.
- **Cognitive and Emotional Stability:** Affirmations, mindfulness, and cognitive restructuring improve **mental clarity** and **stress management**.
- **Integration into Healthcare:** Encouraging the inclusion of **spiritual biology** and **psychological well-being** in medical care, particularly for patients with chronic illnesses, to enhance recovery.
- **Emotional Support for Terminal Illnesses:** Assisting individuals facing **existential crises**, **grief**, and **anxiety** through counseling and holistic interventions.

What are the Initiatives Taken for Mental Health in India?

▪ National Initiatives:

- [National Mental Health Policy \(2014\)](#)
- [National Youth Policy \(2014\)](#)
- [National Education Policy \(2020\)](#)
- [Ayushman Bharat - PMJAY: 22 mental disorders covered](#)
- [National Mental Health Programme \(NMHP\)](#)
- [Mental Healthcare Act 2017](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences \(NIMHANS\)](#)
- [National Tele Mental Health Programme](#)
- [NIMHANS and iGOT-Diksha Collaboration](#)
- [Ayushman Bharat - HWC Scheme](#)
- [Kiran Helpline](#)
- [Manodarpan](#)
- [MANAS Mobile App](#)

▪ State Initiative:

- Meghalaya's **State Mental Health Policy**
- Delhi's **Happiness Curriculum**
- Kerala's **'Our Responsibility to Children'**

What are the Challenges Associated with Mental Health?

- **Policy Neglect and Low Budget Allocation:** India's mental health policy suffers from **low priority**, **inadequate funding** (Rs. 1,000 crore vs. Rs. 93,000 crore needed), and a **focus on tertiary care** over community access, especially in rural areas.
- **Inadequate Mental Health Infrastructure & Human Resource Shortage:** India faces a **severe mental health gap** with only 0.75 psychiatrists per 100,000 people (WHO recommends

3), inadequate facilities, and 83% untreated cases (NMHS).

- **High Treatment Costs & Economic Burden:** Mental healthcare **remains financially inaccessible**, pushing 20% of Indian households into **poverty** due to high costs and lack of insurance coverage.
- **Implementation Gaps in Mental Health Policies & Laws:** Despite the **National Mental Health Policy (2014)** and **Mental Health Care Act (2017)**, poor resources, unclear timelines, weak monitoring, and **lack of a central regulator** hinder effective implementation.
- **Urban-Rural Divide & Limited Access to Services:** Mental health services are urban-centric, with rural areas lacking access; initiatives like **Tele-MANAS** aim to help but face **digital literacy** and **infrastructure** challenges.

Way Forward

- **Increase Funding & Expand Mental Health Infrastructure:** A higher allocation of the **health budget** to mental health services is essential, given the significant mental health burden in India. Expanding **community health centers, emergency care units, mobile health clinics, and telemedicine services** can improve accessibility, particularly in underserved and rural areas.
- **Improve Implementation of National Mental Health Policies & Acts:** Ensuring the **effective execution of the National Mental Health Policy** by integrating mental health services into general healthcare is crucial. Establishing **robust data collection systems** can help assess mental health trends, inform policy decisions, and allocate resources more effectively.
- **Training & Capacity Building for Mental Health Professionals:** There is a significant shortage of mental health professionals in India. Increasing the number of **psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and community health professionals** through **educational incentives and specialized training programs** will improve service delivery. Training **primary care doctors and community health workers** can facilitate **early detection and intervention** at the grassroots level.
- **Learning from India's HIV-AIDS Strategy:** India's successful strategies in combating **HIV-AIDS**—including **evidence-based interventions, community participation, and multi-stakeholder collaboration**—offer valuable lessons for mental healthcare. Implementing similar approaches can enhance accessibility and impact.
- **Collaboration & Public-Private Partnerships:** Strengthening collaborations with **NGOs, private healthcare providers, and community organizations** can expand mental health outreach, particularly for marginalized communities. Successful models like **Banyan (Tamil Nadu), Sangath (Goa), and the Centre for Mental Health Law and Policy (Pune)** provide scalable solutions that can be implemented nationwide.
- **Integrating Self-Healing, Yoga & Traditional Wellness in Mental Health Care:** Yoga, meditation, and breathing exercises are effective in managing stress, anxiety, and depression.
 - **Active yoga, such as power yoga**, can help individuals regulate aggression and calm the nervous system, while **gratitude meditation** fosters positive thought patterns and emotional resilience. **Restorative yoga and deep breathing exercises** aid in reducing stress hormone levels and improving overall mood.
 - **Group yoga** sessions enhance social support and promote shared healing experiences. Many mental health start-ups and integrative medicine centers are now including **yoga experts in cancer care programs**, ensuring safe and modified practices for patients undergoing chemotherapy or radiation therapy.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Mains

Q. In order to enhance the prospects of social development, sound and adequate health care policies are needed particularly in the fields of geriatric and maternal health care. Discuss. **(2020)**

Q. Appropriate local community-level healthcare intervention is a prerequisite to achieve 'Health for All' in India. Explain. **(2018)**

