

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY SPECIAL



“CELEBRATING MENTAL HEALTH ON INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY”.

DAGMHI 3030, in collaboration with three other DAGMHI Chapters from India, for the first time, organised an international virtual seminar on mental health. The response was tremendous from the Rotary Clubs worldwide, beyond our expectations. Approximately 550 participants enjoyed the event. We wanted to record and share the experiences of the young panellists from India and Bangladesh who spoke with courage and conviction of the mental health challenges. Normalising the conversations helps break the stigma around mental health. This month we dedicate the newsletter to the young voices across the globe. -EDITOR

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY -12 AUGUST 2023- A BRIEF REPORT.

The Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives (RAGMHI) and 4 Chapters of the District Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives (DAGMHI)- lead chapter DAGMHI 3030, organised an event on the occasion of “International Youth Day” on 12th August, 2023. The event was conducted virtually, which ensured the widespread participation of youngsters across the globe.

Bob Anthony, Chair of the Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives (RAGMHI) gave his opening remarks on the topic. Mr. Anirudha Roychowdhury, Rotary International Director, was the chief guest for the event. He highlighted the importance of youth mental health and appreciated the efforts taken. He released a short video sent by Mr. Gordon McInally, President, Rotary International, especially for the occasion.

Mike Veny, the celebrated motivational speaker and a RAGMHI member shared his experiences and empowered the participants on “Breaking the Stigma”. This was followed by a panel discussion moderated by Ms. Rita Aggarwal, Psychologist and Director/Chair of Chapters- Asia RAGMHI. It was a team of 7 young panellists- Ms. Sara Pimprikar, Mr. Parth Pannase, Ms. Jarin Prova, Mr. Sachin Purohit, Ms. Avantika, Ms. Sambhavi and Ms. Madhura Bhagat. Ms. Jarin Prova participated from Bangladesh and the rest were from different parts of India. They all shared their experiences about the challenges of mental health, the youth initiatives in colleges, and their recovery process.

Karthika Venkatesan, Principal Technical Officer at C-DAC Bangalore, India, introduced MANAS, the pioneering digital app by the Government of India, a beacon of support for mental health. Everybody was amazed by the concept and idea behind the app and extended their best wishes to her for the same. The session concluded with a vote of thanks by DRR Parna Deb Roy RID3240. Towards the end, the house was opened for the participants from across the world to share their challenges. Youth from Nigeria, Ghana, Mexico, The Philippines & Miami spoke about the situation in their country. The event turned out to be a terrific success due to the collective efforts. The social media team -Khushi Agarwal, Rtn.Rtr. Nikunj Bajoria RID 3250, DRR Rahul Acharya RID3181 and Rtr. Rahul Mohite RID 3170 worked hard for social media promotions. Dr. Aabha Pimprikar (President, DAGMHI 3030 India) and Mr. Binoy Momaya (Secretary DAGMHI 3170 India) co-hosted the session.

RI President Gordon McInally, Year 2023-24

RI President Gordon McInally recorded a video specially for the ‘Celebrating Mental Health’ program and he addressed the youth on account of International Youth Day i.e. 12th August 2023. We express our gratitude by sharing the transcript of the video.-EDITOR



“Good morning, good afternoon and good evening everyone- as we would like to say in virtual meetings these days, due to time zones. I'm so happy that you've taken time today, which also happens to be International Youth Day, to discuss a topic of great importance to me- promoting mental health and wellness.

Young people today are facing challenges that no previous generation encountered and I am so inspired by the way Interactors, Rotary Youth Exchange participants and Rotaractors have not only taken on the cause of mental health but have become wonderful role models for people of all the generations.

When I speak around the Rotary world about the growing mental health crisis, some people in the older generations have a hard time grasping exactly what I mean. But young people get it immediately! You know the challenges, because you live them daily! You know what it's like to grow amid a pandemic. To be constantly bombarded with expectations, do not know how to find your place in a world that's changing too quickly for anyone. Rotary gives us this incredible opportunity to face despair with action- and in the process, create hope. In Rotary, we just don't describe problems, we seek solutions. Your energy and your commitment bring us a sense of optimism and that's why I look forward to listening to you and hearing your ideas about how we can break down the stigma surrounding mental health and how you can inspire people of your parents' and grandparents' generation to take up this cause as well. Your participation means the world to me. Thank you, thank you so much for your leadership!”

IYD EVENT FEEDBACKS

“Very enlightening event it has been. Each young panelist had expressed their thoughts so eloquently, it's a revelation for all of us.”

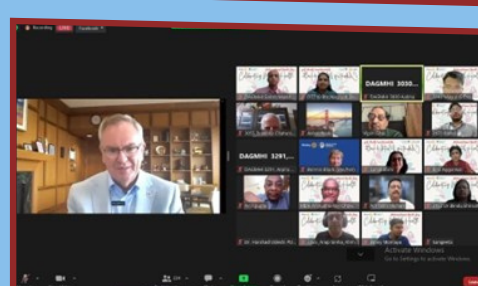
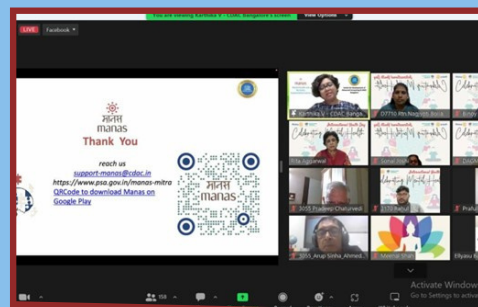


RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury

“I'm so inspired by the way Interactors, Rotary Youth Exchange participants and Rotaractors have not only taken on the cause of mental health but have become wonderful role models for people of all the generations.”

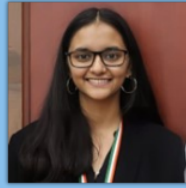


RI President Gordon McInally, year 2023-24



“PEER SUPPORT GROUPS- EMBRACING MENTAL HEALTH”

Some common mental health disorders that I have seen are anger issues, eating disorders, cyberbullying and miscommunication. Mental health is a very stigmatized topic and people often shy away from talking about it, which leads to communication gaps between parents and their children. A child might be going through something and trying really hard to open about the same, seeking help, but the minute the child's issues are disregarded by it being named just a phase or so, the child stops opening up. Lack of understanding by the parents also leads to children feeling that they are not being heard, their opinions, thoughts and feelings are not being respected, which makes them feel angry and the child might develop anger issues which are then triggered even by the smallest of incidents.



One of the major ill effects of social media that I have seen are, eating disorders and cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can affect a child a lot, be it academic or social aspect.

I think one of the solutions to this is **peer support groups**. Who better than a peer to understand what you are going through, talk to, share with?

If we set up peer support groups on school and college levels, we will be able to open up and feel safe about opening up and feel safe, we can empathize with each other on a greater level. The peer support group students can also identify other students facing issues and reach out to help them.

Rotary Club of Nashik North, RID 3030 India recently introduced an **online platform SHIELD - to educate, protect, support and guide young adults** who are facing emotional turmoil which has not only affected them academically but also scarred their natural thoughts, actions and basic ability to believe in oneself as well as the society as a whole.

Besides peers, students can also **find an adult they trust and feel comfortable with, and open up to them. It can be a senior student/colleague, a teacher, a relative, and in some cases, even a parent.**

It is important that we open up and speak about the things that bother us.

Let us normalize the talk about mental health, break the stigma to help, support and nurture each other.

**Sara Pimprikar, 17 years,
First year BPT student, Chennai, India
Member of DAGMHI 3030 India**

“THE LETTER-BOX OF OUR MIND: A SOLUTION FOR NAVIGATING THE PATH TO BREAK SILENCE”

In today's world, youth people are suffering the most in terms of their mental health- anxiety, depression and social isolation being the major issues. Depression and anxiety are common mental disorders. However, not everybody can cope up with social isolation, the lack of social contacts and having few people to interact with.



Some can live alone and not feel lonely and some can feel lonely even while being with other people.

The youth generation must first be self-aware to ensure better mental health. Activities that can be done for this, include-

- Doing things that are enjoyable
- Learning new skills for tough times
- Creating connections with people
- Getting enough sleep and eating well
- Cutting back on alcohol and other drugs
- Attending various mental health related seminars
- Associating with various mental health organizations

When I was a first-year student, one of our seniors died of suicide. He was a very active man. We never imagined that we would have to witness this tragic situation. After that, I started something new in my locality for the welfare of mental health- we created a letterbox named "*Moner Baksho*" (মনের বাক্স), "*Moner Baksho*" is a Bengali word, that means the **box of our mind. Our University students give their letters in the box, a psychologist takes them and conducts sessions according to the problem.**

A five-year sustainable project has also been undertaken by Rotary International District 3281, Bangladesh. 64 seminars will be organized in schools and colleges of Bangladesh. Both have been operationalized and a helpline number will be launched after the seminar is over, where Rotaractors will do counseling in a primary way.

I would like to inform the world on behalf of Bangladesh that we cannot solve this problem completely at this moment, but let us all take an oath to show people the way to solve the problem, because we dream of complete mental well-being.

**Rtr. Jarin Rashine Prova, 21 years,
2nd Year, Print-Making,
Director, Club service committee
Rotaract Club of Khulna University D-
3281, Bangladesh.**

“OVERCOMING ADVERSITY: A JOURNEY TO MENTAL WELLNESS”

Today, I wish to share a **transformative chapter of my life**, an incident that reshaped me as an individual and profoundly affected my mental health. I found myself in a long-term relationship that spanned four to five years. At the outset, I was convinced that this relationship would lead to marriage. Our families were acquainted and initial impressions were positive. However, as time passed, subtle shifts began to manifest. I noticed several red flags but attempted to dismiss them, believing that no one is flawless and relationships require compromise. Gradually, these red flags grew too conspicuous to ignore. I found myself enduring both mental and physical abuse. The person I loved had transformed into someone unrecognisable, dictating my attitude and behaviour. It escalated to the point where I was physically choked. This behaviour extended to his family, particularly his mother, who also subjected me to verbal abuse.



For a significant period, I suffered in silence, confiding in neither friends nor family. However, as the situation spiralled out of control, I had no choice but to share my ordeal with my loved ones.

Their advice was clear: if I believed this relationship was toxic, I needed to sever ties.

Yet, taking such a step, despite the love I had once felt, demanded immense courage and strength. Numerous counselling sessions and therapies were instrumental in my healing process. It was time-consuming, but ultimately led me to a happier phase of life, where I could focus on my career and pursue my passions.

In retrospect, I want to emphasize the critical role of communication in relationships. My experience has taught me that open dialogue is the key to addressing issues. If a relationship becomes abnormal or unhealthy, seeking help and support is essential. Mental health is fragile, and we must prioritize it. Only through communication and support can we overcome adversity and pave the way for a brighter future.

**Madhura Bhagat,
participant in the Global Grant Project
known as “Wellness in a Box.”
Nagpur, India.**

“CTC: CIRCLE TIME CLUB- CHOOSING REAL OVER REEL!”

A major part in the life of youth is dedicated to college, which shapes them inside out, making them ready to face the real world. From dealing with academics and peers to family & finances, they learn to be independent. With the increasing usage of technology in daily life and increasing time on social media makes one more prone to anxiety and depression. That brings me to talk about an initiative that can help foster connections and set boundaries.



So, I and two of my peers Vaaridhi Surti and Pranvi Bhansali co-founded the idea of "A Circle Time Club" (CTC), to get away from the chaos and talk with real people in green spaces. During Circle Time, we gather in a circle and engage ourselves in various activities designed to foster connection, empathy and personal growth. From ice breakers to deep feelings and shared laughs, we conclude our session with some meditation to relax our minds. We share our thoughts, stories and experiences and listen attentively to one another. It's a safe and non-judgmental environment where we can express ourselves freely and authentically, making it a getaway from our hectic lives and looking out to the world with a new perspective.

In our recent circle time session, the topic of discussion was "An event in your life that changed something within you". We heard sad stories and some fun moments & with that closed wounds with new memories. We concluded by observing silence to rethink and organize their learning of the session.

With every session, one will feel cheerful like a journey through a memory lane and grow stronger for the future in terms of real life connections rather than reel life we live in.

**Parth Pannase, 19 years,
Student, MBBS, IGGMC,
Nagpur, Maharashtra, India**

“How I Moved On”



My father passed away when I was 7 years old. That led to many issues in my joint family, which got converted to a nuclear family. The whole family was against my mother. This impacted the environment of our home. It started to affect my studies, health and sleep. I started feeling useless about my life.



I could not trust a single person. I used to overthink a lot and negative thoughts started controlling my mind, seeing my mother broken and helpless.

Initially I was not aware about counselling but one of my friends motivated me to visit the counsellor. We have a school counsellor in our school, under the Global Grant project on mental health, by The Rotary Club. I had a total of 7 sessions and was able to see positive changes in me, slowly and steadily.

I am now able to study, eat and sleep better and manage stress well. Students of my age who are usually in 9th or 10th standard, face many problems in different aspects of life- they struggle with time management and finding the right way to study throughout the year. Secondly, a lot of us experience anxiety since we need to decide a career line for ourselves to pursue ahead. Along with this, I feel the phase we are going through where we are not kids but not adults either causes stress at times.

Everyone should go through the process of counselling at least once in their life, to work on themselves and be a better person!

**Sambhavi Uikey, 10th standard,
CDS School, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India.**

“STORY OF A BUTTERFLY”

This is a story about a butterfly as she spurs out of her cocoon. Well, what's the story you may ask? A girl confined within the body of a boy, as she progresses through her journey of life, struggling within her own mind and body, unable to say what she feels, locked out in a mental prison but eventually a ray of hope comes and she can finally flutter her beautiful wings.

As I was growing up, I was told to act like a man and talk like a man just to realise that I was not a man. It was painful to be who you aren't, to hate the skin you wore, to be disgusted at your own reflection.

Somehow, I coped, years went by. I fell into depression, a serious dark phase of my life and it was just too much for a 16 year old child. It went on and on endlessly. No one to express myself to, no one to love me the way I needed. It was a battle of a lonely warrior with herself and societal expectations.

I fought till the end and I still am. The battle never ends but it's easier now, with transitioning be it medical or social. I feel much more of myself. I am finally free.

So if you see a cocoon trying their best to be a butterfly, reach out to them, and tell them that you are loved and safe. You are as human as everybody.

Avantika, 22 years, Maharashtra, India

“MENTAL HEALTH IN GHANA”

I have been looking for a platform to learn and possibly share what I have witnessed around issues of mental health. I got to understand that mental health is a universal concern for everyone. Mental health disorders do not discriminate, it can affect anyone, if you don't handle your mental health well.



Mental health issues in the Upper west region are on the surge as 700 more mental disorders are linked to the abuse of drugs and alcohol. This is consistent with the assertion that the upper west region records the highest consumption of alcoholic beverages in Northern Ghana. Bahas Foundation is one organization that has championed awareness creation by organizing events to mark mental health days celebrated worldwide. The foundation has cared for those already on the street by providing hygiene services to them which include bathing and changing their clothes from time to time. These are done on a voluntary basis, there is no official support from the Government of Ghana.

The Rotary club of Wa is committed to supporting the mental health effort to create awareness and conduct clinical counseling for the general public on their mental state. As Club president, I will lead my club to celebrate this year's mental health through radio talk show on how to take care of our mental health to prevent mental disorders. The role of various institutions will be explained to the public and encouraged them to seek early support to avoid it getting to advance stage that will require clinical therapy.

**Alhassan Inusah Agambire
Rotarian President 2023-2024
Rotary club of Wa, District 9104**

MANAS: DIGITAL WELL-BEING APP

MANAS (Mental Health Normalcy Augmentation System) is a one-stop solution for mental wellness. MANAS integrates the mental health and wellness efforts of various government ministries, and scientifically validated indigenous tools with gamified interfaces developed and researched by various national bodies and research institutions.



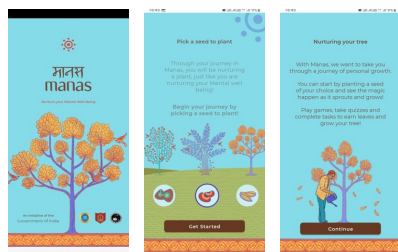
The mental wellness contents are scientific, evidence-based digital tools in the Indian context to promote mental health through information, self-measure, self-practices, and low-intensity self-help interventions. The MANAS platform is a content aggregator that is generic by its underlying nature but has incorporated wellness reinforcers in the MANAS app. The reward system in the app tracks the user activities and shows one's growth throughout the app. The platform ensures the anonymity and privacy of the data collected through the app. Indigenous development of content materials that are relevant to the Indian scenario can be added. MANAS APP is a state-of-the-art solution in the Mental Wellness domain currently comprising the content on the age group of 15-35 years, an interactive user-friendly interface for self-evaluation of their mental state, personalized dissipation of wellness contents to improve their mental well-being. **MANAS App was evaluated as a user & closed group trail by NIMHANS, Bengaluru, AFMC Pune, and other nodal agencies for wide acceptance, and rolled out for MUHS Maharashtra and CIP Jharkhand.**

MANAS ensures connectivity to Rurban population of India through its 3 pillars

1. MANAS Platform - MANAS App and Dashboard for Usage Statistics
2. MANAS Mitra Webinars
3. ManMeet - Community connect program

MANAS, an initiative of the Office of Principal Scientific Advisor, Government of India is envisaged to develop indigenous national mental wellbeing platform for all Indian citizens. MANAS was developed by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing, Bengaluru (C-DAC Bengaluru) with the domain expertise from National Institute of Mental health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) Bengaluru, Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC) Pune. MANAS provides a comprehensive, scalable, and national digital wellness platform and a citizen app to augment the mental well-being of Indian citizens. The platform is being developed as a comprehensive digital and scalable solution for mental well-being to host wellness content, and workflow management, with plug-and-play architecture, enriched with data security & privacy, hosted on the NIC cloud platform as containers to accelerate the seamless delivery of backend services. Being adaptable to the diversity of India was an important goal of the platform. The platform is expandable to Social, Economic, Happiness Index, SDGS overall confidence abilities and supports mental health initiatives of the Govt. of India.

The MANAS platform in its entirety can help to promote wellness across all sectors of India. With growing market of affordable Smartphones in India and digital adaptation during pandemic. Mobiles are a new medium of disseminating information to the public and MANAS is an indigenous platform developed for Indian needs and is a faster medium to take the wellness materials across India. MANAS app is a bi-lingual app (English and Hindi). It is available in google playstore in India with over 22000 downloads.



-Karthika Venkatesan
Principal Technical Officer
C-DAC Bangalore

"MENTAL HEALTH SCENARIO IN MEXICO"

In my country and district we are trying to create and strengthen action groups in mental health.



In my country there is still a lot that needs improvement in mental health issues, specifically in childhood and adolescence where the suicide rates are high and patients suffering anxiety and depression are currently a serious problem.

In **Mexico** according to the National Institute of Geography and Statistics INEGI (for its acronym in Spanish), suicide in people ages 15 to 29 has increased in recent years. The rate of suicides from 2015 to 2021 has gone up from 8.1 to 10.4 percent.

The entities or **states with the highest suicide rates** in people between the ages of 15 and 29 are: **Chihuahua (my state)**, Yucatán and Campeche, with 26.4, 23.5 and 18.8 suicides per 100,000 young people. That's why I said, there is a lot of homework to do. I have an experience of 17 years in professional psychology. I work in the health area of the Government, in a program of domestic and gender violence for more than 16 years, with young people in the prevention of addictions, suicide and other issues.

Finally at the end I felt full of energy and motivation for this issue, so much so that in my club we got a meeting with the health authority of my state to propose a work plan where in coordination with them, we also seek to develop an app for young people, visit them in schools and also talk and train parents. in our city, state and at the district level. I really liked the virtual seminar on International Youth Day on 12th August organized by you.

-Daniel Beltrán, Therapist Psychologist,
RC San Felipe of the city of Chihuahua,
Northern Mexico of District 4110.

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