



BALANCE IS THE KEY
TO WELLNESS

EDITION 6



Whitecoats

A PUBLICATION OF MAHDI HEALTH INITIATIVE

Dear Readers,

As we embark on this latest edition of Whitecoat Magazine, I am thrilled to introduce a curated collection of articles and features centered around the theme **"Wellness Wheel"**. An illustrated model founded on the profound notion that **'Balance is the key to wellness.'** In an ever-evolving world, the essence of our well-being lies in maintaining equilibrium across the diverse facets of our lives. It is a powerful tool and guide encouraging self-awareness and self-exploration. At its core, it propels us toward the pursuit of an optimal self, fostering a harmonious interplay of mind, body, and spirit. This edition is crafted to serve as your compass and as a practical guide for self-awareness and optimal living.

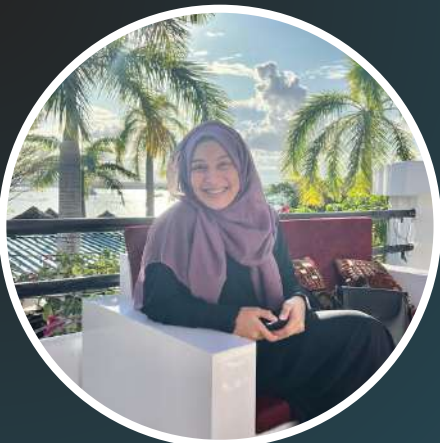
A big thank you to our sponsors for making this edition possible, your support aligns seamlessly with our commitment to promoting health and wellness. Special mention to our writers who have poured their passion and expertise into each page, Asanteni Sana for undertaking this journey with us.

Lastly, extending my heartfelt gratitude to the editorial and design team for their hard work and creativity, your collective effort brings the 'Wellness Wheel' to life within the pages of this magazine. It's been a pleasure working with you all.

Thank you to all the readers for your continued support, we hope look forward to hearing your thoughts on this edition. Happy reading!

Wishing you joy, health, and fulfillment,
Fatema Lakha.

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Mahdi Health Initiative is a group of Shia Ithna-Asheri health professionals. It was established in 2016 with the aim to create a platform where Health Professionals can interact with each other to grow and develop professionally simultaneously creating an impact on the health outcome of the community and the general public of Tanzania.



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THE YEARLY OVERVIEW IN PUBLIC HEALTH

DR. SABIRA HUSSEIN MANJI

The public health awareness sector under the MHI aims to protect and improve the health of people and communities. This is achieved by promoting healthy lifestyles and providing education and skills to assist the community in their day-to-day life.

In 2023, the public health component of MHI organized multiple events to target and achieve the above-mentioned objectives.

Below are a few examples of them.

1

TALK SHOW ON CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE.

In honor of World Kidney Day, we had the opportunity to host a live talk show under the theme 'Kidney Health for All – preparing for the unexpected and supporting the vulnerable' dedicated to answering common questions on kidney health led by Nephrologist, Dr. Mazhar Amirali.

Given the high magnitude of the prevalence of kidney disease in the general community at large, this platform provided the answers to common questions such as the symptoms, causes, and risk factors for kidney disease. It also stressed the importance of early screening to prevent complications and late diagnosis.

The live stream was made possible with the collaboration of the Central Medical Board of the KSIJ and the video has been uploaded to the KSIJ YouTube channel.

2

AUTISM SESSION – 'THE TRAFFIC JAM IN MY HEAD'

A one-day session focusing on exploring the world of autism with Professor Karim Manji, Dr. Zohraida Karim (Educator), and Dr. Mukta Singh (Occupational therapist) where common myths were exposed and facts were displayed.

The event was conducted at Chilly and Spice Hall with a turnout of about 70 attendees from various backgrounds, including parents, teachers, and physiotherapists.

This session involved insightful addresses by each of the speakers on various aspects of autism which were its causes, diagnosis, behavioral therapy as well as schooling which was covered in the session. Towards the end of the event, a parent with a child on the spectrum briefly shared his experience which invoked sentiments in many and shed light on a new way to view Autism. We were delighted to have achieved and promoted awareness as well as early diagnosis of autism.

FIRST AID TRAINING

This aspect involves training the general population on basic first aid skills. It equips the general community with skills to be able to tackle an emergency in a setting where medical aid may be/is distant or unavailable.

This year, the MHI team had the honor of training the staff and professionals at the Marziya-Manor Orphanage.

The event commenced with an introductory lecture followed by a hands-on experience with mannequins. The topics covered in this training included approaching an unresponsive person, checking for signs of life, performing high-quality chest compressions (CPR), managing seizures, burns, trauma, and bleeding as well as dealing with asthma exacerbations and allergic reactions.

If you are interested in knowing more or if you want to have MHI facilitate these trainings, reach out to us through any of our social platforms below or any MHI core team member and we shall be happy to assist; the MHI team is always ready to provide these trainings to those interested.

All in all, it has been a rewarding year to be able to cover very important public health concerns in the community.

Thank you to the entire Core Team for their relentless support and teamwork, to many more achievements. **Together we can make the community better!**

Follow us on our social media platforms and stay tuned for more exciting and interesting sessions in the upcoming year.





Central Medical Board (CMB) in Pictures – 2023



Championing mental wellness through impactful quarterly self-care programs, each tailored to uplift diverse groups in our community under Care Space. An example, the Mental Health Day painting session.



Ebrahim Haji Charitable Health Centre inaugurated its four-bedded Critical Care Unit (CCU) in October 2023. Equipment was generously donated by The Sanita Merali Trust (UK).



Canteen Services now available at the Health Centre for all patients and staff. Meals for all Inpatients are tailored according to their needs by a nutritionist.



Bringing smiles to over 35 street children and orphans at our weekly Bibi Sakina children's clinic. Free treatments are provided by a team of voluntary Pediatricians and doctors.



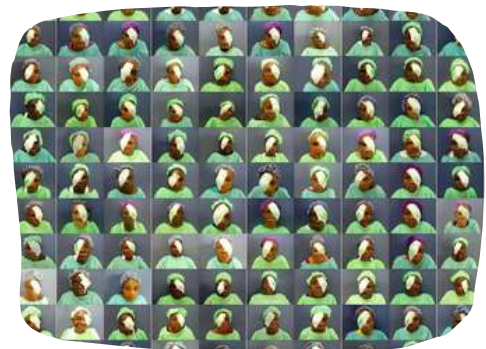
Over 1000 units of blood donated in 2023 in collaboration with Damu Salama (Tanzania) and Who is Hussain DSM.



Major overhaul of Ebrahim Haji Health Centre – both infrastructure and customer care.



Abul Fadhl Orthopedic surgeries and clinics continues to address bone related trauma for the less fortunate.



100s regain their sight every month for free under the KSI Charitable Eye Centre (KSICEC).



Empowering Minds, Transforming Practices

RAIDAH GANJI

A YEAR OF SUCCESSFUL CONTINUOUS MEDICAL EDUCATION (CME) INITIATIVES AT MHI

In the relentless pursuit of advancing medical education, the MHI proudly reflects on a year filled with creative and impactful Continuous Medical Education (CME) initiatives. Our collective teamwork and dedication promoted a culture of ongoing learning enriching the knowledge and skills of current and future healthcare professionals for both MHI members and non-MHI members.

The year's accomplishments echo through the transformative initiatives that we hosted but also raised the bar for future educational undertakings. A total of 3 major CME events were held in the year 2023 hosting renowned leaders and top rated in their field of profession.

1

“CHEST X-RAY MADE SIMPLE” – A RADIOLOGICAL ODYSSEY.

The first event of the year was a chest x-ray interpretation workshop conducted on 4th March 2023. Spread-headed by distinguished luminaries including Prof. Ahmed Jusabani, Dr. Pilly V Ally, Dr. Sibtain Moledina, and Dr. Kimberely Craven; this three-hour workshop became a cornerstone in the journey of 50 participants towards mastery in interpreting chest radiology.

The unique flow and style of the workshop have been advantageous in the CME event. The symphony of expertise conducted in the workshop not only illuminated the intricacies of chest X-ray interpretation but also explored the art of clinical correlation and wholesome management of the patient. The interplay between theory and real-world applications offered participants a unique vantage point, enabling them to navigate the complexities of chest radiography with confidence.

As we bask in the success of this event, it is evident that MHI's commitment to providing a platform for in-depth learning has borne fruit.

2

“ECG MADE EASY” – NAVIGATING THE HEART'S MELODY.

Following the success of the Chest X-ray workshop, MHI ventured into the intricate realm of electrocardiography with the “ECG made easy” workshop conducted on 19th April 2023. A four-hour in-depth exploration led by Dr. Hussin Wajih, Dr. Yash H Dubal, and Dr. Esmail Sangey, this event was not merely a discourse on heart rhythms but a comprehensive journey into decoding the language of the heart.

The workshop dissected the nuances of heart blocks, elucidated cardiac changes induced by electrolyte imbalances, and demystified the subtleties of myocardial infarction, by placing a spotlight on the electrocardiogram. MHI aimed to empower healthcare professionals with a refined diagnostic understanding of cardiac health.

3

EXPLORATION OF DERMATOLOGICAL PATHOLOGIES

Venturing into an uncharted territory, MHI embarked on a long-term project focused on skin manifestations of common pathologies on dark skin. This visionary initiative brought together a multidisciplinary team of current and future healthcare professionals.

The ongoing project addresses a critical gap in medical literature and practice. By creating a pictorial pamphlet, MHI aims to contribute to a more inclusive and diverse representation of dermatological conditions.

As we celebrate the achievements of the past year, we look forward to expanding our horizons, embracing new challenges, and pioneering initiatives that will redefine the landscape of medical education. In conclusion, as we stride into the future, inspired by the successes of the past, we reaffirm our dedication to fostering a culture of continuous medical learning within the healthcare disciplines.

Finding Happiness 😊

DR. MURTAZA HAMEER (MBBS, ECFMG CERTIFIED, PGDE)

When defining health, The World Health Organization mentions the component of mental well-being in addition to physical well-being and the absence of disease. While there are several aspects to being well psychologically, one sure aspect is the concept of happiness. What is happiness? What does it consist of? Is it something sustainable for us in the long run of our lives? These are valid and interesting questions.

Now for many when asked what would make them happy, perhaps the answer may be having enough money. The motivational speaker Les Brown was right when he said, ***"Money may not be everything but it sure is up there on the list with oxygen!"***

In a capitalistic world, we need money to survive as well as thrive. But is it a main determinant of one's state of happiness? We all know of very wealthy celebrities who have the kind of money most of us will never see in our lives and yet they are miserable and at times even end their own lives. So, it is clear that having money does not guarantee happiness.

The Canadian psychologist Dr. Jordan Peterson cites one of the 12 rules for life: pursue what is meaningful and not what is expedient. When we do things that are meaningful to us, that gives purpose to our existence and that will invariably lead to satisfaction and happiness. But are there more principles we can adhere to as we work our way towards happiness?

I was listening to a podcast in which the business school professor Dr. Srikumar Rao was touching on aspects of happiness. That led me to listen to a couple of his talks on YouTube. In one of the talks, he mentions that we as human beings are hardwired for happiness. Happiness is our natural state of being. He says that individual suffering happens when events that occur in our lives bringing about unpleasant experiences are labelled and fixated by us as being 'bad'. Of course, he does not deny that suffering exists but highlights that our attitudes in response to suffering have a huge part to play in making us either happy or miserable.

I'd like to summarize three key points from his talk (which I highly recommend the reader to check out):

1. Accept whatever reality gives you, both the pleasant and the unpleasant. Don't fight it. Unpleasant experiences happening to us are not in our control but how we choose to respond to those experiences, is. See reality with a positive outlook and look for the beauty in nature and existence.
2. When unpleasant things happen to you, instead of obsessing and regretting over why bad things have happened to you, remind yourself of all the times the good has occurred in your life. Remind yourself of all that you are grateful for thereby cultivating daily gratitude in your life. Dr. Rao says that we tend to focus on the 4 to 5 bad things that have occurred to us but forget the 40 and 50 good things that have happened to us.

3. Focus on the process, not the outcome. We can't control the outcome of things. But if we focus on the process, perfecting our methods and skills, then the expected outcome will naturally follow. If it does not, then we can take a step back, see where we went wrong and where to improve, and work on things further. And if things ultimately don't work out, we can accept that, and move on to other endeavors that we deem worthwhile of our pursuit.

All in all, Dr. Rao is reminding us of the principles of acceptance, gratitude, and perfecting the process. If we can work on these, on a consistent and regular basis, then we will cultivate a state of peace in our minds and souls as we continue our productivity in the things we do. This peace will surely lead us to be happy despite whatever life may throw at us.

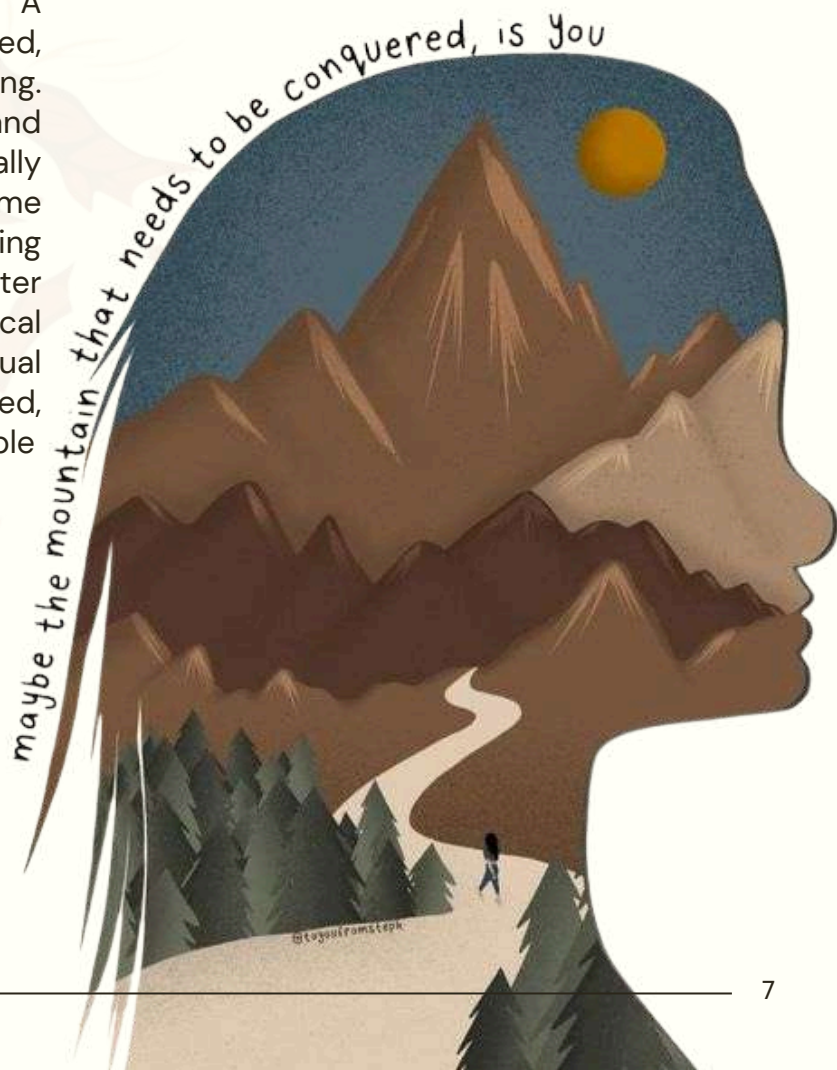
While addressing happiness, it's important to take note of what is known as 'burnout'. A burn out is synonymous with mental fatigue. A person who experiences a burnout feels tired, sad, having no desire or drive to do anything. He or she can have emotional breakdowns and not feel any joy in their lives. This usually happens due to overworking for a long time without breaks or holidays in between or going through a very rough emotional rollercoaster ride in a personal relationship. It is not physical tiredness but rather mental and spiritual exhaustion. If burnout is not addressed, chances of being happy are almost impossible and that can lead to depression.

The late Dr. Stephen Covey, in his *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, mentions the 7th habit of sharpening the saw. To sharpen the saw involves taking care of one's body, mind, heart and spirit. Taking care of the body would involve playing a sport or exercising, and getting enough sleep; to take care of the mind can involve

reading an intellectually stimulating book or learning a new skill or writing; addressing the heart would involve adding joy and love to those people in your personal life (what Dr. Covey calls depositing in the emotional bank accounts of those around us); and taking care of the spirit would involve spiritual practices like prayer and meditation as well reading inspirational works of literature.

Learning to sharpen our saws will help us rejuvenate ourselves and help us avoid the burnout process. Its importance cannot be emphasized enough.

Ultimately, the journey of finding happiness is part of the larger journey of knowing oneself and one's own Being. And knowing one's own Being, for me, is no different than knowing what many of us call God.



Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child

A PANEL DISCUSSION

The Editorial Team took on a journey to explore and gain insight into various aspects of Emotional Intelligence through a discussion with three panelists; a childhood educator, and parents of children below and above 5 years old.

Below is a compilation of their responses addressing the important aspects around EQ.

1. Many people understand Emotional Intelligence (EQ) as empathy for others and oneself. What do you think of when you think of EQ?

Emotionally intelligent individuals are empathetic, able to share others' emotions and build trust. They are self-aware, able to understand their strengths, weaknesses, and values, and develop the skill of self-regulation and impulse management. EQ also helps in adapting to different situations, improving social skills and maintaining professional and personal relationships. It's about having grit and a positive mindset so that you can motivate yourself, be aware of others' feelings and be empathic to them, it's about knowing how to relieve stress within yourself.

2. Do you think children with higher emotional intelligence build more positive relationships in their life?

An emotionally intelligent child will be able to recognize and sense what the other person is looking for and feeling. People with emotional intelligence begin to connect on a deeper level and are more likely to transcend beyond the strict surface. They are able to empathize with others, understand and respond to their needs in a respectful and compassionate manner therefore creating a greater sense of trust and connections in relationships with their peers, family members and other important people in their lives

3. How do you deal with a child's strong/intense emotions?

Emotional intelligence is a crucial skill that requires practice and patience, especially when dealing with strong emotions in children. Elders often advise letting children cry out during meltdowns, believing they are attention-seeking. However, it is crucial to acknowledge their emotions and make them feel safe. If they feel threatened or shut down, their emotions will grow larger, leading to frustration. Meeting with them with compassion, understanding, and acknowledging their emotions can help make the tantrum stop.

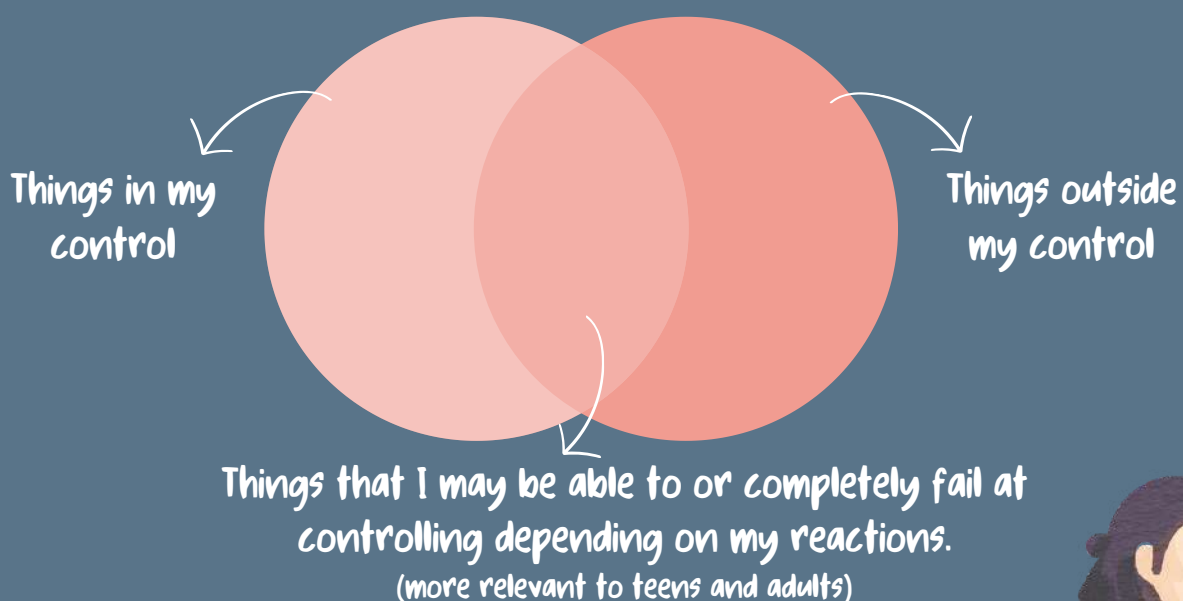
3. How do you deal with a child's strong/intense emotions? (Cont.)

Parents should work on their own emotional intelligence first by accepting their own feelings and learning to deal with them. Self-talk and self-reflection are essential, as children's emotions are not a reflection of their actions or attempts to be bad. Punishing children for their feelings does not build emotional intelligence, as it causes shame for feelings and in turn, labeling feelings for the child and explaining appropriate behavior is essential. The emotions could be an extension of what they are feeling or a profound sense of helplessness in parents' incapacity to put things right and in some cases, silence may be beneficial since it allows the child more time to process, express, and become more in touch with labeling how they are feeling.

Ask the child to describe their emotions; this allows the him/her to understand what they are feeling. We must understand that the rational half of their brain has shut down during his meltdown/tantrum just like it would happen to us when we are going through one. Listening to children's rants and being present without showing anger can help calm them down. A hug is useful, but not always necessary. In such situations, coaching and discussing ways to calm down can be helpful. Stories can also be helpful, as they help with pre-preparation and discussing scenarios and success strategies.

When children are in a good mood, reminding them in a fun way can trigger their memory. For example, "**Remember no hurting**" or "**Let's not make the left angel busy**" can help trigger their memory. By having enough conversations when children are in a good mood, emotional intelligence becomes second nature.

Another technique that may be beneficial is asking them to identify what is under their control and beyond their control. This works wonders with adults too, it is like drawing a Venn diagram in your head and dividing it into 3 sections:



4. How do you think childhood distress translates into distress as an adult?

Parents often expect a new chapter filled with sleepless nights, diapers, and baby toys, but many are unaware of the inner turmoil and challenges that can arise when they become parents. These challenges often stem from childhood wounds, which can resurface when entering a new chapter and hence, there is a need for parents to address their own childhood trauma first to enable themselves to build a positive future. We should not blame our parents or teachers for our problems, as they were doing the best they could with their resources. Instead, we should accept these situations as learning experiences and use them as a tool to create a better life.

When raising a child, there is a role of emotional wellness in a child's emotional literacy. If we are always negatively looking at the world, giving up easily, and reactive, it's difficult to teach our children emotional intelligence. Childhood trauma and distress can damage a child's stability and self-worth, reducing self-worth. This can also affect an adult's feelings of shame, guilt, alienation, difficulty controlling emotions, heightened anxiety, despair, and wrath. The unresolved childhood trauma can intertwine with the new chapter, causing a resurgence of unresolved childhood trauma and distress, affecting their ability to relate to others and manage emotions.

5. How much of a role do you think your emotional wellness plays in a child's emotional literacy?

Research indicates that human connection is crucial for a child's development, as it allows them to learn sounds, numbers, and share. This exposure to caring relationships is essential for their future academic success and healthy growth. As parents, it is essential to understand the responsibility of being caregivers, as their formative years significantly impact a child's development. Providing children with the correct support in their early years can lead to better results later in life and help establish strong social and emotional qualities.

Emotional health is essential for a child's emotional resilience and children who grow up in an emotionally healthy environment, they are more likely to develop emotional literacy skills as they tend to be more comfortable expressing and managing their emotions. They are capable of tackling problems and others' emotions on a daily basis and better manage stress as they are aware of their strength and weaknesses.

6. When a child is unhappy, is your instinct to try to fix it or to let the child express how they are feeling first?

As a mother, it's natural to want to fix a child's upset, but this can lead to worse situations as fixing the issue is not always the solution. Adults often complain because they want to be heard, not because they want a solution.

6. When a child is unhappy, is your instinct to try to fix it or to let the child express how they are feeling first? (Cont.)

The goal should be for the child to solve the problem independently, rather than relying on parents' fixation. Understanding the child's feelings is more important than providing a new toy or treat. Parents should strive to be their child's coach, not a referee.

To help them, it's important to let them talk about the problem together, think of solutions, and ask for help. Sometimes, they may even ask for help themselves. Talking about the problem can help them feel better, even if the problem hasn't gone away. This powerful approach helps them deal with negative situations, learn to live with hardship, and empower them to solve their own problems. When they deal with a situation in a "wrong way", they build confidence and life experience. Even when things get worse, they learn to deal with different situations in a database for the future.

7. What are some practical ways that you try to train a child's emotional intelligence?

EQ is a skill that requires patience and time to develop. Some strategies to help toddlers express their emotions include listening to them, having conversations, reading books, and spending time with them. On busy days, they can play with their favorite toys or animals and role-play, teaching them how to express emotions. Practicing empathy within the home is essential, as it allows children to recognize their emotions and understand their feelings. It is important to let them know that it is okay to have emotions and model how to manage them.

Boys however need to recognize their emotions and understand their feelings, as society often assumes that boys don't cry or feel the same way as girls. However, embracing and recognizing their emotions can help them understand their feelings and better cope with societal expectations. By incorporating these strategies, parents can help their toddlers develop a better understanding of their emotions and develop empathy.

A few practical ways include:

- **Creating a Thinking Corner in Home or Classroom** – You can have the child go over to the thinking corner away from the noise and reactions of others, and think of how they are feeling and what they are feeling. Also, encourage the use of the five **RULER** skills: **Recognizing how they are feeling**, **Understanding what they are feeling**, **Labeling (what best describes how they are feeling)**, **Expressing how they are feeling** – here they are encouraged to do effectively, and **Regulating** – How do I manage the way I am feeling?
- Use blocks, manipulatives, or outdoor walks to provide time away from distressing situations.
- **Read aloud** – Picking a book that may have the Emotion you want to talk about and asking open-ended questions about the story are one of my favorite ways. Even when a story does not talk about emotions in the text children love labeling the expressions on the faces of the characters they see.



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MENTAL HEALTH: TREATING SYMPTOMS OR THE REAL CAUSE?

SHEIKH ALI RAJANI

Humans can often get carried away with treating symptoms instead of the real cause. A very common example is a headache, we are so accustomed to just trying to get rid of the pain that we are going through, we often neglect the fact that there is a cause behind the pain. There is something going wrong that's causing the pain. Just trying to get rid of the pain will at best give you a few hours of relief. After which, the pain will come rushing back, often with a vengeance. Why? Because we didn't address the problem, we just covered it up.

Take the example of a person who sees moisture in their ceiling, but rather than trying to find out the cause, works on just repairing their ceiling. The repair may restore the ceiling to its original state, but it certainly won't stop the damage from happening again. If the roof really has a leak, it only requires a rainy day for the ceiling to go back to how it was, and guess what, this time the damage is probably going to be worse.

Our mental health often has the same story, we want to get rid of the worry, the stress, the anxiety, the feeling that's come about and is bothering us, but don't pay attention to the fact that it has a real cause and source. We now find ourselves at the same crossroads that the person with the headache and the one with the moisture in their ceiling did; ignore the cause and treat the symptoms or get to the cause and try to deal with it.

MENTAL WELLBEING: A COMMON GOAL

We all want to achieve mental well-being, every human ever did and will do. To achieve this important goal we can try to put on a fake smile and believe that I'm really happy and that my life is fulfilling. We can speak about our life in a way that everyone feels that we live 'the life' but deep down, we don't really feel that way, deep down we feel empty. It's obvious to any human being that life isn't easy. There are times when you wish you could just run away and leave all of your worries and stress behind. The problem is that often our lives really aren't fulfilling, they lack that purpose that would give one energy to put up with the difficulties of life. I'm treating the symptoms and ignoring my inner calling for purpose in life. The symptom over here being the smile and the cause, an inner void.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ON THE RELATION BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

Many independent research projects have been carried out by psychiatrists, neuroscientists, and medical researchers to analyze the effect of spirituality on mental health. One famous study carried out by Bonelli and Koenig in 2013 named 'Mental Disorders, Religion, and Spirituality 1990 to 2010: A Systematic Evidence-Based Review' carried out an evidence-based review of all the scientific research carried out in the period of 1990 to 2010. The study concluded that 'In conclusion, hundreds of studies have been published over the last 20 years that have reported connections between religion/spirituality and mental health, and nearly four dozen of those have been published in high-quality journals in psychiatry and neurology, the majority finding positive associations between religious involvement and better mental health.'

A more recent study by Vitorino published in Nature's 'Scientific Reports' journal, analyzed whether spirituality alongside religiousness had more of a positive effect on mental health or spirituality on its own. The conclusion was that 'Participants with high spirituality and high religiousness (S/R) had better outcomes as compared to those with low spirituality and low religiousness (s/r) and compared to those with high spirituality and low religiousness (S/r).'

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY AND HOW CAN IT HELP US WITH MENTAL HEALTH?

Spirituality – simply put – means giving meaning to life, or better yet, discovering the real meaning in life. Rather than creating false meaning for our lives, if we really discover the deeper meaning in life we would be solving the issue and not just covering up the symptoms.

In recent times a big shift in attention towards spirituality can be noted; one of the possible reasons is that today's human more than ever feels a void inside them and sees that a lot of what they are chasing after in life, doesn't fill that void. American journalist and author of '**Letters from a self-made Merchant to his son**' George Horace says about money,

“**'MONEY NEVER MADE A MAN HAPPY YET, NOR WILL IT. THE MORE A MAN HAS, THE MORE HE WANTS. INSTEAD OF FILLING A VACUUM, IT MAKES ONE.'**

Humans have come to realize that money, fame, power, etc. do pull us towards themselves but really don't fulfill us. Marilyn Monroe, one of the most famous people in recent times says about fame 'Fame doesn't fulfill you. It warms you a bit, but that warmth is temporary.'

So people that reached these supposed 'life goals', tell us that they didn't achieve that meaning and inner satisfaction that they were actually looking for in the goals, they tell us to search elsewhere. But, where? CS Lewis, the world-renowned, once atheist, British author talking about human success says, 'The reason why it can never succeed is this. God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on gasoline, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself.' The best place to get this answer is from our own creator.

DIVINE RELIGIONS BROUGHT THIS MESSAGE TO HUMANS IN A CLEAR MANNER

Time and again, religion shows the human being that they have not been created without a purpose. Many references to living a life of purpose are mentioned in the New and Old Testament of the Bible. For example, the book of Proverbs mentions,

'One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.' (11:24)

and in another instance,

'Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.' (11:28)

The Holy Qur'an points out this reality beautifully,

'Whosoever turns away from my remembrance will have a constrained and restricted life.' (20:124)

This isn't a punishment set by God for ignoring his remembrance, this is the existential consequence of distance from God.

The Qur'an also teaches us the real way to attain tranquillity and satisfaction, the goal of all humans,

'Be sure that only through the remembrance of God do the hearts rest and attain tranquillity.' (13:28)

The remembrance of God doesn't mean to recite his name with prayer beads in your hand, rather it means to live a Godly life, a life of value and righteousness, following the guidance of God in all of the different fields of our lives.

This is not to say that such a person will not go through mental health challenges. They – as all other people – do go through tough times and challenges, but they have something to lean upon and turn back to at these times. Like a boat in a storm that needs to hold its position, throwing the anchor won't stop the waves or the wind, but it certainly will hold the ship in place. They turn back to their purpose and are able to fight through the storm to achieve it.

CONCLUSION

One of the causes of mental health issues is a feeling of a void in our lives. Religion teaches us that the only real way to fill this void is to become Godly, to live a life that is fully in accordance with God's instructions for us.

It is upon us to address this need and inner yearning in order to achieve a sense of fulfillment in our lives.



NOURISHING THE BODY & SOUL

EXPLORING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF QUR'ANIC FOODS IN HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

ZAINAB RATTANSI-LALJI

(CERTIFIED NUTRITIONIST, COSMETOLOGIST, PRE&POST NATAL CARE AND YOGA)

Have you ever taken a moment to realize how miraculous the Holy Qur'an really is? Sure, ever since growing up it is all we have been hearing, but has one ever taken a moment to process the thought? For instance, whenever we used to get any kind of body pain as kids we would see our mum recite a small verse from the Qur'an, blow it into a glass of water and instruct us to have a sip or two of the water which would lead us to feel an almost instant relief from the pain. At the time we didn't realize it, but as we grow up, we start to wonder how even a small verse of the Qur'an can have such an impact.

Food holds a remarkable significance in our lives, providing sustenance for our bodies and nourishment for our souls. The connection between what we consume and our overall well-being has long been acknowledged. In this article, we delve into the realm of Qur'anic foods—those mentioned in the Holy Qur'an—and explore their profound impact on physical health and spiritual well-being. By understanding the nutritional benefits and incorporating Qur'anic foods into our daily diets, we can unlock a path to holistic wellness.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPLORING QUR'ANIC FOODS

Food plays a pivotal role in our lives, not only as a source of nourishment but also as a means to strengthen our connection with the divine, which is why there are certain foods which are forbidden for surely we have been made aware of their negative impact on our physical, spiritual, and mental health. The Holy Qur'an, a guide for Mankind, contains references to various foods that hold deep spiritual and physical significance. By exploring the connection between Qur'anic foods and health, we can enhance our understanding of the divine wisdom embedded within the Islamic teachings.

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY AND HOW CAN IT HELP US WITH MENTAL HEALTH?

Spirituality – simply put – means giving meaning to life, or better yet, discovering the real meaning in life. Rather than creating false meaning for our lives, if we really discover the deeper meaning in life we would be solving the issue and not just covering up the symptoms.



In recent times a big shift in attention towards spirituality can be noted, one of the possible reasons is that today's human more than ever feels a void inside them and sees that a lot of what they are chasing after in life, doesn't fill that void. American journalist and author of 'Letters from a self-made Merchant to his son' George Horace says about money, 'Money never made a man happy yet, nor will it. The more a man has, the more he wants. Instead of filling a vacuum, it makes one.' Humans have come to realize that money, fame, power, etc. do pull us towards themselves but really don't fulfill us. Marilyn Monroe, one of the most famous people in recent times says about fame 'Fame doesn't fulfill you. It warms you a bit, but that warmth is temporary.'

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'One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.' (11:24)

NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS OF QUR'ANIC FOODS:

Foods mentioned in the Holy Qur'an are rich in essential nutrients, vitamins, and minerals, making them powerful allies in promoting overall health at every stage of life. Just as it is said, the Holy Qur'an contains a solution to everything, similarly the foods mentioned in the Holy Qur'an have the cure and the ability to prevent most of the physical and mental defects. Take, for instance, dates—an emblematic Qur'anic food. Dates are a natural source of fiber, potassium, magnesium, and antioxidants. Consuming them regularly can aid in digestion, regulate blood pressure, improve heart health, and boost energy levels.

Additionally, dates have been shown to possess anti-inflammatory properties, supporting joint health and reducing the risk of chronic diseases. Similarly, olives, mentioned in the Qur'an, offer a multitude of benefits due to their high content of healthy fats, vitamin E, and antioxidants, contributing to cardiovascular health, reducing inflammation, and supporting cognitive function. Furthermore, olives have been linked to improved skin health and may help protect against age-related skin damage. Their polyphenol content has also been associated with a reduced risk of certain cancers.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF QUR'ANIC FOODS AND THEIR HEALTH BENEFITS:

Qur'anic foods encompass a diverse range of fruits, vegetables, grains, and herbs that are both wholesome and beneficial. One such example is honey, recognized for its antibacterial and healing properties. Honey can soothe sore throats, boost immunity, and promote digestive health as it contains enzymes and antioxidants that support overall health and may help prevent chronic diseases.



Another example is barley, a nutritious grain mentioned in the Qur'an. Barley is a great source of dietary fiber, aids in weight management, and supports heart health by reducing cholesterol levels. Its high fiber content promotes satiety, making it an excellent choice for those looking to maintain a healthy weight. Moreover, barley has been associated with a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes due to its ability to regulate blood sugar levels.

Lentils, another staple mentioned in the Quran, are rich in protein, fiber, and various vitamins and minerals. They promote digestive health, stabilize blood sugar levels, and support heart health. Regular consumption of lentils has been linked to a reduced risk of cardiovascular diseases and improved weight management.

INCORPORATING QUR'ANIC FOODS INTO DAILY DIETARY HABITS:

Integrating Qur'anic foods into our daily diet is a practical and rewarding endeavor. By including these foods in our meals and snacks, we can harness their nutritional benefits while savoring their unique flavors. Consider incorporating figs into a refreshing salad or preparing a nourishing soup with lentils (Masoor/red lentils highly recommended), both of which are Qur'anic foods. Experiment with recipes that infuse the essence of Qur'anic foods into everyday dishes, enhancing both taste and nutritional value.

EMBRACING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FAITH, NUTRITION, AND WELL-BEING:

In conclusion, the incorporation of Qur'anic foods into our diets not only nourishes our bodies but also feeds our souls. By exploring the significance of these foods and their inherent health benefits, we embark on a

journey towards holistic well-being. Let us appreciate the divine wisdom embedded within the Qur'an and embrace the opportunity to enhance our physical health and spiritual connection through the inclusion of Qur'anic foods in our daily lives.

THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF QUR'ANIC FOODS:

Beyond their physical benefits, Qur'anic foods hold a profound spiritual significance. When we consume these foods, we partake in a sacred tradition passed down through generations. It is an opportunity to connect with the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and to appreciate the wisdom and guidance provided by Allah SWT. The act of nourishing our bodies with Qur'anic foods becomes a form of worship, an expression of gratitude for the blessings bestowed upon us. By recognizing the spiritual dimension of Qur'anic foods, we deepen our reverence for these ingredients and strengthen our bond with our faith. As we savor the bounties of nature, let us remember the importance of moderation and balance. Qur'anic foods serve as a reminder of the interconnectedness of faith, nutrition, and well-being. By embracing this connection, we unlock the potential to lead vibrant, healthy lives while nurturing our souls with the wisdom of the Qur'an. Incorporating Qur'anic foods into our diets not only nourishes our bodies but also strengthens our spiritual connection. Let us embark on this journey together, exploring the wonders of Qur'anic foods and embracing the holistic well-being they offer.

GRATITUDE & FAITH

DR. MALIKA MUKHTAR BHARWANI
(MD, MMED OPHTHALMOLOGY RSDII)

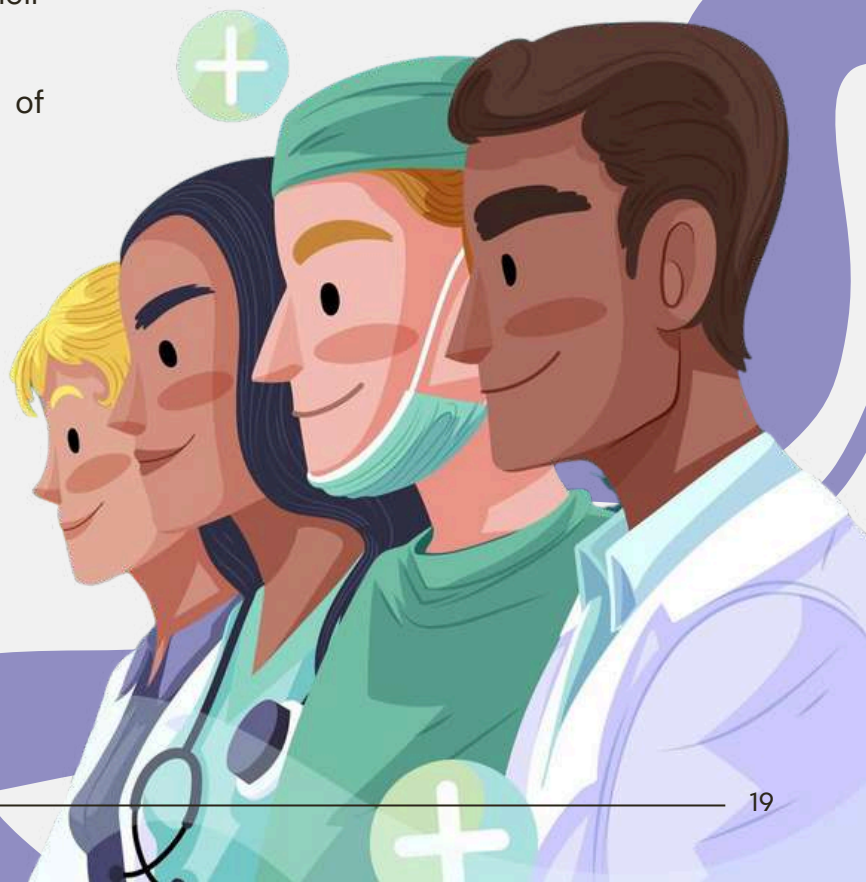
A doctor's job is challenging. When you are treating patients 10 hours a day who are not feeling well, you are constantly seeing people going through difficult times. This can have a massive impact on one's psyche leading to feelings of helplessness, anger and despair.

Gratitude and faith can have a significant impact on a doctor's approach to health, as they provide a connection to something greater than oneself. Gratitude involves recognizing and appreciating the positive aspects of one's life, while faith involves having trust and belief in a higher power or purpose. Both gratitude and faith can help doctors approach their work with a more positive and open mindset, which can lead to better patient outcomes and increased satisfaction in their own work.

Imam Ali (a.s) has stated in Sermon 147 of Nahjul Balagha,

“
**FAITH IS NOT JUST A VERBAL
PROFESSION, NOR IS IT MERELY
WISHFUL THINKING. RATHER, IT
IS A MATTER OF CONVICTION,
SINCERITY, AND STEADFASTNESS
IN THE FACE OF HARDSHIP AND
TEMPTATION.**

I recall an incident that happened recently, I received a young 30-year-old patient and she reported that she was completely well until two days prior to attending the clinic she lost her vision in the right eye. Her life felt shattered, she was so anxious that she was going to be blind and would never be able to fend for herself. It was at that moment I felt a jolt like a realization that Allah (swt) was testing my faith as well as my patients'. Before I did anything else', I just told her, *"No matter what, God gave you two eyes, so we start by thanking Him for vision in the left eye being normal. We then work on finding out why the right eye is diseased and have faith it will all work out well."*



Many such moments take place in our daily lives, all we need to focus is on what we have and how to make the best out of it, and at the same time, not lose faith during those times as that keeps us motivated to keep striving.

Imam Sajjad (a.s) in Sahifa Sajjadiya states:

"O ALLAH, I THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR BLESSINGS, BOTH APPARENT AND HIDDEN, AND FOR ALL YOUR FAVORS, BOTH MANIFEST AND VEILED."

- SUPPLICATION 38

He explains to us that every situation has a good behind it, in some we may see but in others, we may not but the key is to be aware and thankful.

When doctors approach their work with gratitude, they are more likely to be present and engaged with their patients. They may be more aware of the positive aspects of their patient's lives and more attuned to the progress that is being made in their treatment. This can help doctors to build stronger relationships with their patients, which can be especially important in fields such as mental health or chronic illness management.

A study published in the Journal of Religion and Health found that physicians who have a strong sense of personal spirituality and use it in their clinical practice are more likely to provide compassionate care to their patients. The study suggests that physicians' spiritual beliefs and practices can play a positive role in their professional work.¹

Some practical tips that help stay rooted are starting your day with a moment of reflection and gratitude. Take a few minutes to express thanks for the blessings in your life, such as your health, family, and career.

It is also very important to keep up prayer during the day, incorporate it in your routine,

use positive affirmations into your daily routine to help build confidence and increase your sense of gratitude. This can include repeating affirmations such as **"I am grateful for the opportunity to help others"** or **"I am blessed to be in a profession that allows me to make a difference in people's lives."**

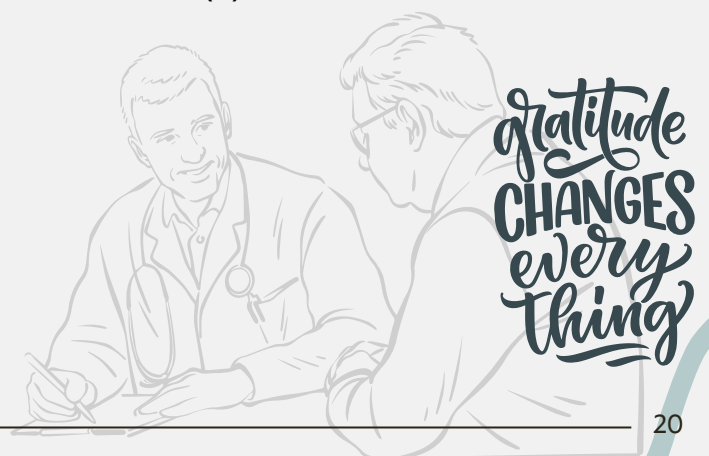
Furthermore, practicing self-care is crucial: Take care of your own physical and emotional health by getting enough rest, eating healthy, and engaging in activities that bring you joy. This can help you feel more centered and better able to serve your patients.

In addition, faith can provide doctors with a sense of purpose and meaning beyond their day-to-day work. When doctors have faith in a higher power or purpose, they may be more resilient in the face of difficult cases or challenging situations. They may also be more compassionate and understanding towards their patients, recognizing that their work is part of a larger purpose or plan.

Overall, connecting to something greater through gratitude and faith can enhance a doctor's approach to health by helping them to approach their work with a more positive and open mindset, build stronger relationships with their patients, and find meaning and purpose in their work.

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choledocholithiasis
cholecystectomy
peritoneoscopy
hematochezia
paracentesis
angioplasty
thoracotomy
mastectomy

gastroenterologist
hemiglossectomy
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hematologist
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arthroscopy
tracheotomy
hepatitis

abdominocentesis
ultrasonography
cardiologist
palatoplasty
colonoscopy
hematemesis
craniotomy

gastroenteritis
diverticulosis
gynecologist
pancreatitis
angiography
laparoscopy
hemoptysis

Staying spiritually connected when in menstruation

MARIAM M. SHERIFF (MSC. NURSING - OBGYN)

It is often difficult for a Muslim woman to connect spiritually during menses mainly due to the limitations set across in carrying out certain spiritual activities during this period. As a woman, it is important to learn, listen, and understand the body while staying in harmony and maintaining the connection with Allah (SWT). To create that balance, there is a need to realize that menstruation is something beautiful and sacred, worthy of celebrating, accepting one's body and loving all its phases and manifestations, learning to tap the sacred power of menstruation and understand what it means to be divinely feminine.

Menstruation is a natural process that takes place in the woman's body every month. It is neither a curse nor a so-called "*original sin of Eve*", rather it is a biological process in which Allah (SWT) ensures perpetuation of the human race. A person once asked Imam Jafar Sadiq (Peace be upon him) about a woman who gives water to a man while she is in her menses, the Holy Imam replied, "*One of the wives of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was pouring water on him and serving him a drink while she was on her menses.*" Hence it can be sufficiently communicated from this narration that menstruation does not prevent a woman from living a normal life.

On the other hand, there are certain acts of worship, so sacred, that a woman cannot perform during menses until she completes certain acts of purification. By the way, these

"acts of worship" are not only prohibited in women, but they are also prohibited in men when they are in a state of impurity, or "Junub" (major impurity after sexual intercourse).

From a physiological point of view, it is very challenging for a woman to connect spiritually when they physically experience extreme cramps, heavy bleeding, nausea, headaches, and mood swings during the phase of menses.

The majority of the women seem to grasp the concept of menstruation as a "*vacation*" from praying, fasting, and recitation of the holy scriptures. Unfortunately, this sort of aversion can only cause a feeling of distance from worship and spiritual detachment. With that, a woman struggles to get back into her spiritual routine thus affecting her connection with Allah (SWT).

In Islam, menstruation is a sign of good health. Sometimes women get so caught up in performing rituals for spiritual connectivity that they forget the very goal of worship is that Allah (SWT) is the core of it all. It is He (SWT) who ordained the process of menstruation in women. The ritual of praying and fasting is about pleasing Allah (SWT), hence it is very important to accept and be pleased with what has been ordained on you.

Accepting and honoring the limits set forward by Allah (SWT) is in itself an act of worship.

It is important to honor what Allah (SWT) has ordained for a woman's body as during menstruation, the body, energy, and morale are low and weak, and abstaining from certain religious rituals is actually a blessing. One can only understand His (SWT) mercy if reflected upon. Abstaining from prayers, fasting, and recitation of religious scriptures during the menstrual period only increases fervor, especially when the woman is consistent with them. Missing them increases appreciation and a sense of longing for them which only strengthens women spiritually.

Abstinence increases fervor. There is deep wisdom of Allah (SWT) in "blocking" these spiritual acts during this period. When one is blocked from certain acts of worship (which is so dear to them) at certain times, it only works by enabling one to better establish that act rather than just doing it. Hence, the "abstinence" of prayers during the menstrual period only helps to strongly establish prayer rather than just performing it as a "monotonous act" five times a day.

Besides the hidden mercies and endless generosity of Allah (SWT), He (SWT) has created many ways that one can get closer to Him through rituals not limited to prayers, fasting, and recitation of holy scriptures.

A few methods are examined as below:

1. Invocation (Dhikr)

The best dhikr is remembrance of Allah (SWT) and it is done with the heart and tongue together, with the often recitation of legislated supplications such as saying, **"Glory be to Allah"** and **"All Praise be to Allah"**.

2. Understanding the Qur'an

Reading the Holy Quran in a native language, understanding the translation or transliteration, and listening to it can further deepen one's understanding of its message to mankind.

3. Supplication (Du'a)

Dua is the essence of worship. A woman often feels emotional, sensitive, and vulnerable when menstruating due to hormonal changes, and these characteristics can be very advantageous as they create a perfect environment for sincerity and is the best time to talk to Allah (SWT).

4. Seeking forgiveness (Istighfar)

It is the best time to honour and appreciate the blessings of Allah (SWT) at a time when it feels less deserving. Using the sensitivity of the heart as a tool, it is beneficial to bow down and cry out for forgiveness during this time of the month. Self-reflection and repentance draws one very close to Allah (SWT).

5. Seeking knowledge

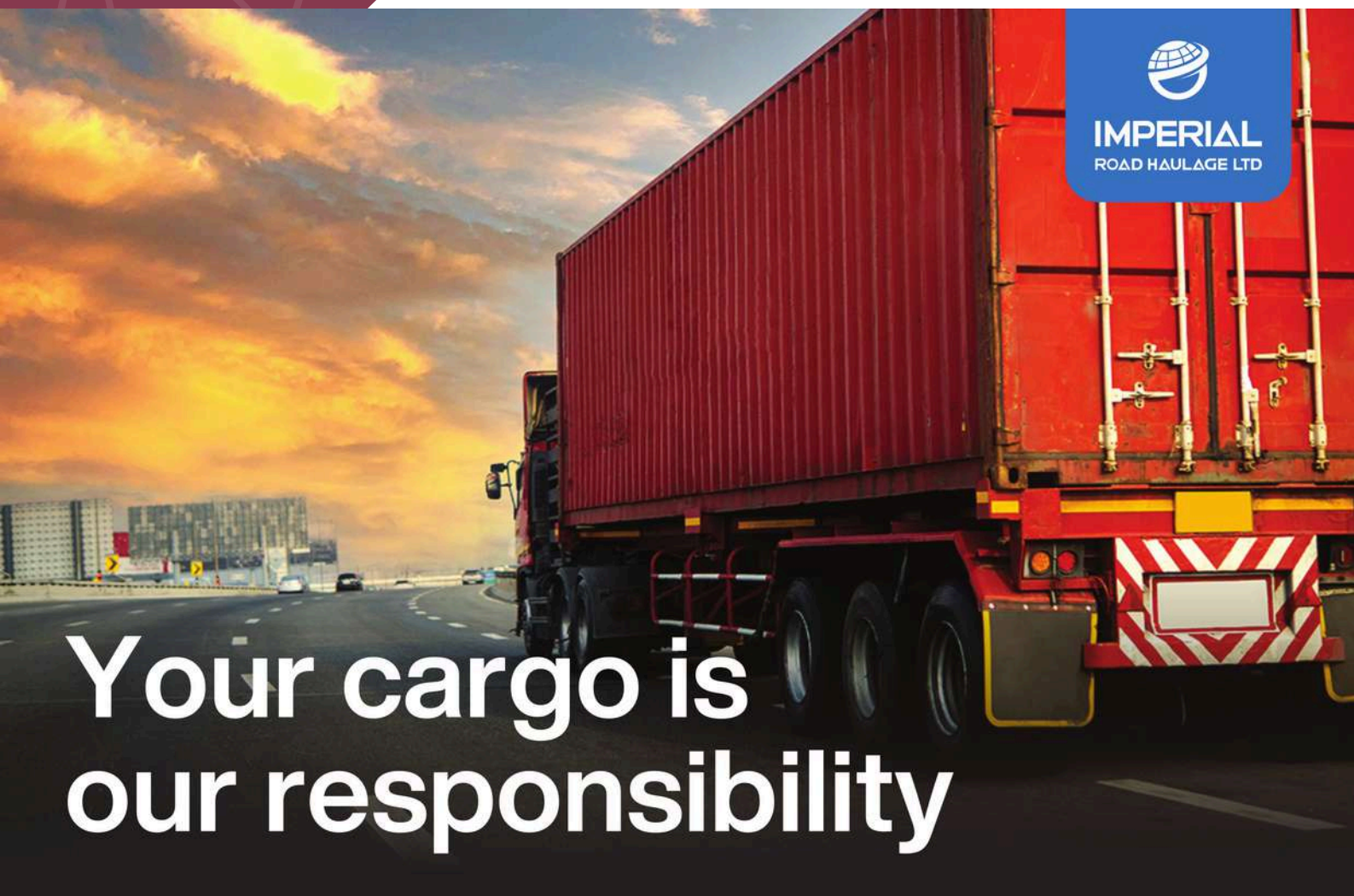
Taking time to read books, especially those specialising in fiqh, hadith, akhlaq, history, and biographies of holy personalities, or acquiring beneficial knowledge from any other source is one of the best acts of worship. The more the knowledge, the better the understanding of the religion, the closer to Allah (SWT), as it strongly suggested by the holy Prophet (PBUH) to "seek knowledge from cradle to grave".

6. Reflection

The marvel of creation, the bounty and blessings of the Almighty, the most important is the fact that Allah (S.W.T) has complete awareness of one's existence. During menstruation, take the time to reflect, it is the best form of worship.

Menstruation is a natural process of a woman and there should be no shame attached to it. It is important to keep the doors for communication open to discuss and acknowledge the biological process in order to support, educate, and enhance the well-being of girls who are already going through it. Non-menstruating individuals should not be excluded from these types of education or conversations, but should be actively involved in conversations around menstruation. Educating and engaging non-menstruators to understand that menstruation is not something to be embarrassed about can further reduce stigma and empower menstruating people.

To summarise, spiritual acts do not need to decrease in the slightest during menstruation. There is a need to refocus from what can and cannot be done during this period. It is even more important to realize that love and obedience to our Lord is the highest form of worship.





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How tragedy and loss can lead us closer to the Divine.

FATEMA WALJI NATHOO & ZAINAB WALJI

The tragic loss of a loved one can be one of the most heartwrenching and life-shattering events that an individual can go through. As prepared as one may think they are, the actual event could leave a person feeling numb, broken, and quite literally unable to understand how to continue living.

Having recently gone through the sudden loss of a loved one myself, I can recount from personal experience the feeling of utter and absolute shock as well as being overcome by a sense of immense devastation and helplessness. I couldn't understand how the rest of the world could carry on when mine had come to a sudden stop, I couldn't imagine a life after this loss – it just didn't seem possible. Life altogether – the life of this world that is – suddenly seemed so fragile and so unworthy.

INSAAN (MAN) AS A SOCIAL BEING

Our beloved Lord has created Insaan as a social being as explained in Chapter 25, verse 54 of the Holy Quran,

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهُ نَسَبًا وَصِهْرًا
وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِيرًا

"It is He who created the human being from water, then invested him with ties of blood and marriage, and your Lord is All-powerful."

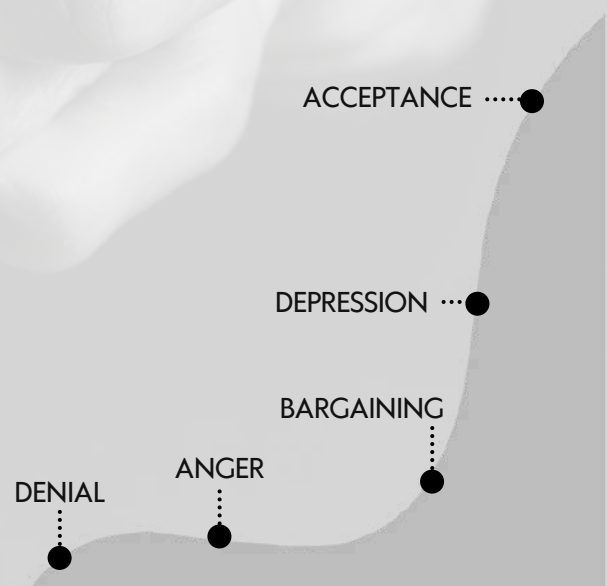
The verse above clarifies the human nature to connect and seek for companionship.

We yearn and seek to build relationships with one another – familial, social, and community bonds that we are able to seek comfort in. When any social bonds we have worked so hard to build are broken for any reason, it's easy to feel despair.

CYCLE OF GRIEF

The tragic loss of a loved one can be one of the most heart wrenching and life shattering events that an individual can go through. As prepared as one may think they are, the actual event could leave a person feeling numb, broken and quite literally unable to understand how to continue living.

The stages of grief that one may go through after experiencing loss or tragedy of some kind as explained by the Kubler-Ross grief cycle is widely accepted and briefly outlined below.



RECONCILING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD WITH OUR EXPERIENCES OF LOSS

As Muslims that believe in a just, kind and loving Lord, it is tragedy and loss that might urge us to question, reflect and try and reconcile such tragedy with our understanding of the Almighty. I know that during my time of despair, I had a number of questions racing through my mind. How, for example, could a Loving Lord take away a child from their parents, a mother from her children or a spouse from their beloved? How could a Just God, allow one person more time on this earth than the other to perhaps repent for his sins and do more good deeds? How could a Kind God give seemingly more difficult hardship to some of His servants?

Let us try and answer these questions with a better understanding of our beautiful creator. God is wise – Al Hakim. We believe in a Lord that has divine wisdom of everything whereas our knowledge is extremely limited. We believe that He is just – Aadil and kind – Rahman, it is therefore quite clear, that whatever He does, is in accordance with the attributes.

Let us reinforce these with verses from the Quran and phrases from our infallibles. A reminder first from the Holy Quran, that Allah is the best planner as He is the only being with all the wisdom and justice.

وَإِذْ يَمْكُرُ بِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِيُثْبِتُوكَ أَوْ يَقْتُلُوكَ أَوْ يُخْرِجُوكَ وَيَمْكُرُونَ وَيَمْكُرُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَكْرِينَ

"They plot and plan, and Allah too plans, but the best of planners is Allah." Holy Quran 8:30

It is also relevant to refer to the story of Prophets Musa and Khidr (as) in Sura Kahf, where both these Prophets of God spend time with one another. Prophet Khidr does some things that do not make any sense to Prophet Musa such as kill a man, and damage a merchant's boat.

These actions seem extremely evil at first glance. However we learn with some context of the bigger picture that these actions were actually ones of kindness. In the same way, we are limited and unable to see the bigger picture, but as believers of the Divine, it is important to remind ourselves that He does, and that all He does is in line with this ultimate Wisdom.

We may also refer to Dua Arafah of Imam Husein (as) where He says the following:

أَمِنَّا لَرَيْبِ الْمُنُونِ

(You) saved me from the vicissitudes of time,

وَأَخْتِلَافِ الدَّهْرِ وَالسِّنِينَ

and change of ages and years.

فَلَمْ أَزَلْ ظَاعِنًا مِنْ صُلْبٍ إِلَى رَحِمٍ

I was moving from a loin to a womb

فِي تَقَادُومِ مَنْ الْأَيَّامِ الْمَاضِيَةِ

throughout the passage of the past days

وَالْقُرُونِ الْخَالِيَةِ

and the ancient ages

لَمْ تُخْرِجْنِي لِرَأْفَتِكَ بِي

as You have not taken me out (to this world)
—on account of Your sympathy to me,

وَلَطْفِكَ لِي

Your kindness to me,

وَإِحْسَانِكَ إِلَيَّ

and Your compassion to me—

From this section of the Supplication, we understand that the Imam is recognizing and

thanking the Almighty for His love and Mercy which He has been bestowing on us from a long time – even before we have entered this world, that for each and every one of us, He has chosen a time for us to enter this world, a time that is best for each individual to fulfil their maximum potential. I would like to think that similarly, the Almighty would also allocate each of us a duration of time to stay in this world and cause us to leave the world when it is most favourable to us. It may not be something we are able to see or clearly understand, but it is something that we have faith in, because of his attributes of mercy and compassion.

Finally, as much as we understand the Almighty, it does not take away from the fact, that facing tragedy or a loss is not easy.

Losing a loved one for example, is still heart breaking – our beloved 4th Imam (AS), as well as Bibi Zaynab (as) both, expressed their grief at having lost their loved ones in the tragedy of Karbala, they both lamented and missed the presence of the beloved family members. However, they were always content and pleased with the decree of their Lord in all affairs, knowing that His plan was the best and most beautiful plan. This may be what led lady Zaynab (as) to bravely state:

ما رأيتُ إلا جميلاً

I see nothing but beauty

We learn from her therefore to Let go, and let God. and let God and submit to God, the one who has control over all our affairs and the one who heals our hearts.



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EINSTEIN SYNDROME: SPEECH DELAY OR ANALYTICAL GIFTEDNESS?

SABIHA DEWJI-AZAD

Parents, medical personnel, educators, and policymakers are constantly agonizing about children's holistic development. From the day a mother conceives her child, the race against standardized benchmarks begins, from the size of the baby inside the womb to the weight of the baby post-birth and then the crawling, walking, talking, reading, and writing, it is safe to say, the benchmarks are endless.

Understandably, parents get nervous when their child is not reaching a key developmental milestone such as learning to speak at the same time as their peers. The key thing to remember is that developmental milestones are considered a general guide rather than concrete evidence of speech delay. Well then, what could a speech delay mean and what can we do about it at home and school? Who do I talk to? While speech delay is most commonly considered a sign of autism there is another explanation for it, the Einstein Syndrome.

Einstein Syndrome named after the famous Albert Einstein who was both, a certified genius and a late talker is now used to refer to children who in their early years' present speech delays and display giftedness in memory retention activities or when engaging in activities that require analysis. The truth is that there hasn't been enough research on Einstein syndrome and it has no agreed-upon medical definition or criteria. We have yet to conclude on what causes this condition and whether it is genetic or environmental. So, what do we know about Einstein syndrome?

A lot of what we do know comes from Thomas Sowell, an American economist who coined the term 'Einstein Syndrome', and Dr. Stephen Camarata- a physician and professor from Vanderbilt University- School of Medicine.

HOW DOES A CHILD WITH EINSTEIN SYNDROME PRESENT?

In his book titled '*Late-Talking Children*', Sowell highlights key characteristics that may suggest you could be raising the next Einstein

- ***Delayed speech,***
- ***Delayed toilet training,***
- ***Strong-willed behavior,***
- ***Incredible memory,***
- ***Outstanding ability to read or use numbers or a computer,***
- ***Analytically or musically inclined,***
- ***Selective interest, or***
- ***An extended concentration span when it comes to activities that interest them.***

Activities may include but are not limited to solving puzzles/Rubik's cubes, doing mental/quick math, re-calling events in order and with attention to detail, and exceptional reading abilities.

Will my child receive a formal diagnosis? No, probably not. Your child will not receive a formal diagnosis because Einstein Syndrome does not yet have a medical definition. This is a fairly new term and does not have enough long-term research to qualify for diagnosis.

SO, WHAT NEXT? PARENTS CORNER ...

- Set up an appointment with your speech therapist and get customized therapeutic methods to improve communication. While your child may overcome the speech delay, it is good to seek support.
- The therapy methods you will receive will depend on the severity of the speech delay. Your child may have a form of expressive language delay, where they understand what is being said to them but they have yet to develop the vocabulary to respond. Alternatively, they may have a receptive delay, whereby they are unable to comprehend what is being said to them.
- Follow your child's lead, give them opportunities to do more of the activities they enjoy, and model conversation around that.
- Enroll your child in after-school activities that will allow them to develop their talents and extend their learning beyond conventional subjects such as LAMDA, robotics, and abacus.
- Challenge your child: do not be afraid to level up and challenge them once they show mastery in an activity. Continue to encourage their verbal reasoning, and ask them how they figured the puzzle out.
- Conscious conversation i.e. if your child points to the water, that means they are using non-verbal communication.

- Create a sentence for your child to hear how that would sound verbally, remember to use a full sentence and speak slowly and clearly.
- Be conscious of how you speak to your child, speech delay may be a short-term problem but if you damage their self-confidence, that may be a long-term problem. How you speak to your child and about your child will set the boundaries for others in your social circle.
- Share the professional report with your child's school and set up a meeting to discuss how the school can support your child.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM THE SCHOOL?

- Ask your school if they have a Special Education Needs (SEN) department. The SEN department is made up of teachers and counselors who have in-depth knowledge of how to support learners beyond the classroom.
- Talk to your child's teacher and find out if they have a policy for 'gifted and talented learners/high achievers'. These are terms used to describe learners who present giftedness in certain areas. The school's SEN department and policies will.
- The school will make reasonable accommodations based on the report you will share with them.
- Remember, the school is on the same team as you, everyone has the child's best interest at heart.



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Nutrition and Mental Health: The Missing Link

MARIAM M. SHERIFF (PREGNANCY COACH, NUTRITION ENTHUSIAST)

What we eat and drink affects how we feel, think, and behave. One of the most obvious, yet under-recognized factors, in the development of mental health, is nutrition. Just like the heart, stomach, and liver, the brain is an organ that requires different amounts of complex carbohydrates, essential fatty acids, amino acids, vitamins, minerals, and water to remain healthy.

It is so important to limit the intake of processed foods, sugary snacks, and excessive caffeine as these can negatively impact mental health instead consuming a diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, whole grains, lean proteins, fruits, and vegetables, can provide the necessary nutritional support for brain functioning and overall mental health.

Nutrients play a crucial role in brain function and production of neurotransmitters. Neurotransmitters are chemicals that regulate mood and behavior and the decrease of these nutrients is linked to mental health disorders. For example, deficiencies in nutrients such as B vitamins (particularly folate and B12) and minerals such as Zinc and Magnesium impact the body's stress response and have been linked to an increased risk of mood disorders such as depression and anxiety. Omega-3 fatty acids help to reduce the symptoms of depression, and antioxidants help in reducing/limiting inflammation.

High-processed foods can in turn lead to

inflammation and oxidative stress which affect brain functioning. Foods that are high in sugar, highly processed, and unhealthy fats may contribute to the development or worsening of anxiety and depression and can also cause fluctuations in blood sugar levels which directly affects mental focus, mood, and brain energy levels.

Several foods can improve mood and support mental well-being including:

01 Fatty fish diet:

Salmon, mackerel, and sardines are rich in omega-3 fatty acids which are linked to improved functioning of the brain.

02 Berries:

Blueberries, strawberries, and other berries are high in antioxidants which help to fight inflammation and oxidative stress potentially benefiting the overall functioning of the brain

03 Nuts and seeds:

Almonds, walnuts, flaxseeds, and chia seeds are good sources of healthy fats that support brain health.

04 Leafy greens:

Spinach, kale, and other local grown leafy greens are rich in folate, which is important to the production of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that impacts the brain health and mood



05 Whole grains:

Millet, quinoa, brown rice, and oats provide complex carbohydrates that can help stabilize blood sugar levels and provide a steady source of energy for the brain functioning.

06 Fermented food:

Probiotic foods such as yogurt can support gut health, and emerging research has suggested a link between gut health and mental health.

07 Dark chocolate:

It contains flavonoids which have been associated with improving mood and reducing symptoms of depression. Turmeric: This spice contains curcumin, which has been studied for its potential anti-inflammatory properties and antidepressant effects.

It is important to note that incorporating these foods into a balanced diet can help support mental health and improve overall well-being. There are several natural ways to potentially boost neurotransmitters, in your brain, that play a key role in regulating mood, sleep, and appetite.

Although nutrition can play an important role in the production of serotonin, it is also impacted by various other factors such as stress, sleep, and physical activities.

Nutrition can play a supportive role in managing psychological conditions, and the inclusion of specific nutrients may exhibit their specific roles in improving these conditions. A few of them from amongst the list include the following:

Alzheimer's disease

- Consuming a diet rich in antioxidants, omega-3 fatty acids, and vitamins reduces inflammation and improves brain health.
- Consuming fatty fish, nuts, seeds, berries, leafy greens, and whole grains improves brain health.

Bipolar disorder

- Consuming a well-balanced diet with complex carbohydrates, lean proteins, and healthy fats stabilizes mood and energy levels.
- Salmon, flaxseeds, and walnuts have a positive impact on mood regulation.

ADHD

- Consuming a diet low in processed foods and high nutrient-dense whole foods including fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains supports overall brain function and cognitive health.
- Omega-3 fatty acids and certain minerals such as Zinc and Magnesium play a role in managing symptoms of ADHD.

It's important to work with healthcare professionals to develop a comprehensive treatment plan that may include other interventions tailored to the specific needs of each individual.

To conclude, there is a growing body of research that highlights the intricate connection between nutrition and mental health. Intake of adequate nutrients through a balanced diet can contribute to maintaining cognitive function and support mental well-being. It is also important to understand your gut and its connection with your brain. As a researcher rightly mentioned: **Is the gut-brain axis the missing link to depression?**

EBRAHIM HAJI

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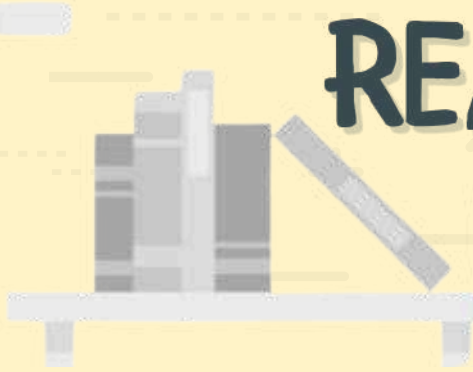
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READING AND HIGHER ORDER THINKING

GULBANU SULEMAN

It's all too easy to overlook the importance of reading in a child's early years in the hubbub of modern life. Reading may not be given the importance it deserves in many households. The journey of raising a reader begins long before a child says their first word, and it's critical to understand why reading should be a treasured and prioritized activity in every child's life, even before birth. As silly as it may sound, it is proven that parents who read to their unborn children are laying the groundwork for literacy skills that will serve them for the rest of their lives. In these formative years, the seeds of language comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and a love of storytelling are sown.

DID YOU KNOW THAT BABIES CAN HEAR AND RESPOND TO THE RHYTHMIC CADENCE OF THEIR MOTHER'S VOICE BEFORE BIRTH? IT'S THE EARLIEST FORM OF STORYTELLING, A BOND FOSTERED BY THE SIMPLE ACT OF READING ALOUD. ACCORDING TO RESEARCH, EXPOSURE TO LANGUAGE AND READING DURING PREGNANCY CAN HAVE A LONG-TERM IMPACT ON A CHILD'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT.

As children grow, the words they hear and the stories they read continue to shape their minds. Reading not only introduces them to the wonders of the world, but also sparks their imagination, fosters empathy, and arouses their curiosity.

Reading is more than just deciphering words on a page; it is a cognitive journey that engages the mind and fosters higher-order thinking abilities. A few are listed below for those of you who will continue READING!

Vocabulary development is an important aspect of children's reading skills development.

A large vocabulary not only improves a child's reading comprehension but also their ability to communicate effectively and achieve academic success. Reading often begins with the introduction of new words and phrases. Children develop their vocabulary gradually through visuals and books. This process continues throughout our lives as we come across new words in a variety of texts. A large vocabulary is the foundation of higher-order thinking because it allows people to express complex ideas and concepts with precision and nuance. Consider how a well-developed vocabulary improves our ability to communicate ideas during discussions, debates, or written assignments. A larger lexicon allows us to more effectively articulate our ideas and engage in meaningful dialogue, fostering critical thinking.

Engaging with a variety of literary forms, from novels and poems to essays and historical accounts, requires readers to think critically about the content. Readers are encouraged to delve into the plot, characters, themes, and symbolism when they analyze literature. When reading a novel, for example, one may consider the motivations of the characters, the author's intended message, and the historical or cultural context in which the story is set. As we evaluate, compare, contrast, and synthesize information from the text, we improve our critical thinking skills. We frequently conclude that literary analysis is a complex concept best suited to older readers, but even younger children can benefit from a simplified version of literary analysis.

While they may not engage in the same level of in-depth analysis as older students, young readers can be introduced to the fundamental principles of literary analysis in age-appropriate ways. Exploring themes, discussing a plot, predicting what will happen next, or even something as simple as what the picture is trying to show us, and predictions about the story are all ways we encourage young and old readers to practice higher-order thinking skills.

Fictional narratives, in particular, provide fertile ground for the development of higher-order thinking skills, particularly problem-solving and creativity. Many stories feature characters who face challenges and dilemmas that necessitate creative solutions. Take, for example, a mystery novel; readers are given a puzzle to solve, and as the story progresses, they are asked to consider alternative solutions, predict outcomes, and make connections between seemingly unrelated clues.

This type of active engagement **encourages readers to think creatively and critically** as they work with the characters to solve the narrative puzzle. Literature, whether fiction or nonfiction, expands our empathy and perspective-taking abilities. Stories frequently invite readers to put themselves in the shoes of various characters, experiencing their emotions, struggles, and perspectives. This emotional connection fosters empathy and improves our ability to consider multiple points of view, which is a necessary component of higher-order thinking. Nonfiction texts, on the other hand, introduce readers to new cultures, historical contexts, and social issues hence, readers are encouraged to broaden their horizons, challenge their preconceptions, and think critically about complex global issues by engaging with such texts.

The ability to discern credible sources and evaluate evidence is critical in today's information-rich age. Reading newspapers, research papers, and nonfiction exposes people to a wealth of information, often from different points of view.

Higher-order thinking is used when we critically evaluate the reliability of sources, distinguish between fact and opinion, and make evidence-based decisions. These abilities are not only beneficial in academics and professional settings, but they are also necessary for informed citizenship in an increasingly complex world.

Reading requires a significant amount of interpretation and inference. Many literary and informational texts leave room for interpretation. Readers must read between the lines, infer meaning from context, and connect ideas. These abilities are essential for higher-order thinking because they allow readers to effectively infer and interpret information. Interpretation and inference are constant companions on the journey of reading, whether it's deciphering the author's implied message or understanding the underlying themes in a poem.

Reading fiction, in particular, has a unique ability to **stimulate the imagination**. Readers are encouraged to visualize and create mental images

by engaging in vivid descriptions of characters, settings, and events. This reading-honed creativity can spill over into problem-solving and innovative thinking in many areas of life.

Immersion in a well-crafted story can stimulate creative thinking and innovation. It encourages readers to experiment with new ideas, imagine new possibilities, and approach problems from new angles.



Philosophical texts and abstract literature force readers to grapple with difficult and abstract concepts. These texts frequently address profound issues such as existence, morality, and the nature of reality. Working with such materials fosters abstract thinking, or the ability to consider intangible ideas and theories.



The concept of lifelong learning is perhaps one of the most compelling arguments for the relationship between reading and higher-order thinking.

It provides ongoing opportunities for intellectual development, critical reflection, and creative exploration. As we consider the profound relationship between reading and higher-order thinking, it becomes clear that nurturing this relationship is **critical** for personal development, academic success, and living a richer, more meaningful life.

Whether you've been a lifelong reader or are just starting to rediscover the pleasures of reading, keep in mind that every book, article, or text you come across is an invitation to explore the limitless realms of higher-order thinking.

Reading is a lifelong pursuit, not a one-time event. We ensure that our higher-order thinking skills remain sharp, adaptable, and ever-evolving by continuing to engage with a variety of materials throughout our lives

Reading's allure stems from its ability to cultivate and nurture the mind throughout one's life.

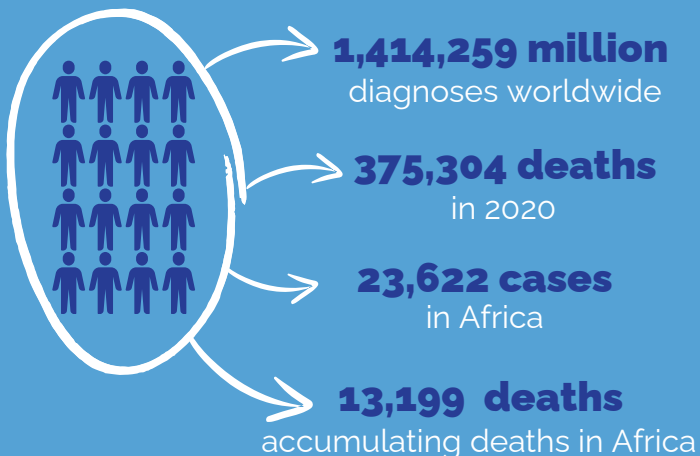
Prostate Cancer

YOUR GUIDE TO AWARENESS AND ACTION

DR. ABBAS N SACHEDINA (MD, MMED UROLOGY)

The prostate is a 30g walnut-sized glandular structure found in men just below the urinary bladder and surrounds the urethra and functions to produce about one-third of the total seminal fluid. Diseases related to men involving the urinary tract after the age of forty may largely be related to the prostate, these may include a benign or malignant disease, simply a cancerous or non-cancerous disease.

Prostate cancer is the second most commonly diagnosed cancer in men, with an estimated:



According to GLOBOCAN, prostate cancer in Tanzania was found to have the highest incidence however, in a study done involving residents of Dar es Salaam, the knowledge about prostate cancer was found to be low among those aged 40 years and above, a third perceiving themselves to be at no risk for the disease.

The average age of death from prostate cancer is 77 years of age and has remained stable over the past three decades however, men with familial prostate cancer, on average, die at an earlier age than men without a family history of prostate cancer.



Many patients who have localized disease, that is confined to the prostate may have present with the following symptoms:

- A weak stream of urination
- Intermittent flow of urine
- Straining while urinating
- Feeling of incomplete voiding/urination
- Frequent urination which can be during the day or night or both
- Unable to control the urge to urinate
- Painful urination.

A few other non-specific symptoms may include such as fever, pus in the urine and blood in urine, and blood in semen. Patients who have an advanced disease may present with lower back pain, bone pain, lower limb numbness, weakness, or paralysis.

Several risk factors have been studied to be linked to prostate cancer. One may present with all or one from the many risk factors which include:

Age:

Prostate cancer is known to be a disease of the elderly due to the hormonal and enzymatic changes the body goes through as one ages and is therefore rare in men younger than 40. The chance of having prostate cancer rises rapidly after age 50; about 6 in 10 prostate cancers are found in men older than 65.

Family history:

Community and laboratory evidence suggests that prostate cancer has a strong familial component, however, still, most prostate cancers occur in men without a family history of it. Generally, the risk is much higher according to the number of affected family members, their degree of relatedness, and the age at which they were affected. Having a father or brother with prostate cancer more than doubles a man's risk of developing this disease. (The risk is higher for men who have a brother with the disease than for those who have a father with it.)

Hypertension and waist circumference >102cm were found to be associated with a greater risk of prostate cancer.

Alcohol: High alcohol intake has been associated with a higher risk of prostate cancer and death due to prostate cancer

Obesity was found to be associated with an increased risk of high-grade prostate cancer.

Some of the complications of the disease may include, complete inability to urinate, spinal cord compression, fractures, renal failure, low blood levels, and hypercoagulable state (easy clotting of blood).

Diagnosis of the disease includes a patient undergoing a blood test for the prostate-specific antigen (PSA), and may require a digital rectal examination (DRE) upon which a clinician if prostate cancer may be suspected, may order radiographic imaging investigations such as an MRI which will show the extent of the disease. Should the radiologic results show an abnormality, the patient will be required to undergo a minor procedure to take biopsies of the suspected areas to know the cell type and grade of the disease.

Treatment of the disease includes either a deferred treatment or active treatment based on the age, life expectancy, stage of the disease, grade, and type of histology/cells involved.

Screening for prostate cancer is still one of the most controversial topics in urologic literature. It has been shown to reduce mortality rates, and the reduction of high rates of advanced disease, however, the harms of overdiagnosis, over-treatment, and subsequent treatment-related side effects remain prevalent hence, the benefits and side effects seem to balance out.

Guidelines suggest that screening is to be done for well-informed men at an elevated risk of having prostate cancer, including:

- Men from 50 years of age
- Men from 45 years of age with a family history of prostate cancer
- Men of African descent from 45 years of age
- Men carrying BRCA2 mutations from 40 years of age

Vitamin supplements: helpful or not?

MUJAHIDHUSSEIN VALJI

Several lines of evidence suggest that taking a multivitamin and mineral supplement could improve immune function and help in the prevention and treatment of different diseases. Some supplements that were found to have health benefits in certain observational research studies with more rigorous testing, were noted to be not only ineffective but also risky.

Vitamin E, which was initially thought to protect the heart, was later discovered to increase the risk of bleeding strokes. Folic acid and other B vitamins were once believed to prevent heart disease and strokes—until later studies not only provided no confirmation of this benefit but actually raised concerns that high doses of these nutrients might increase cancer risk.

Many people worldwide use dietary supplements, and most of them think that dietary supplements, especially natural products, are safe. Previous surveys have shown that approximately 20% of consumers reported concomitant usage of dietary supplements and medicines. In addition, the concomitant use of dietary supplements and medicines is reported in not only adults but also adolescents in Japan. Adverse effects resulting from dietary supplement use have been reported. However, attractive health claim leads to consumer purchasing behavior, especially in patients.

The health claims of dietary supplements are regulated in each country and claims for treatment of any diseases are prohibited in common. So, most dietary supplements implicitly claim to have effectiveness in the treatment of diseases, and these claims mislead consumers to use dietary supplements for the treatment of diseases. In addition, it is reported that many ingredients of dietary supplements, especially botanicals, have the potential to interact with drugs, and their concomitant use can cause serious adverse events. In this regard, particular attention should be paid to the use of dietary supplements by patients. Most patients think that dietary supplements are equivalent to food and that they do not interact with their medication.

In this regard, healthcare professionals, especially physicians and pharmacists, must consult with their patients about dietary supplement use. However, only 30% of patients inform their doctors or pharmacists of their dietary supplement use because most of them believe that dietary supplements are equivalent to food and that concomitant usage is safe. It is also reported that doctors and pharmacists do not have sufficient knowledge of dietary supplements because education about this topic is not adequately addressed in the university curriculum. Therefore, they do not regularly ask their patients about dietary supplement usage, and they cannot provide them with appropriate consultation.



An average American diet leaves a lot to be desired. Research suggests that our plates lack a number of essential nutrients, including calcium, potassium, magnesium, and vitamins A, C, and D. It's no wonder that more than half of us open a supplement bottle to get the nutrition we need. Many of us take supplements not just to make up for what we're missing, but also because we hope to give ourselves an extra health boost—a preventive buffer to ward off disease. Getting our nutrients straight from a pill sounds easy, but supplements don't necessarily deliver on the promise of better health. Some can even be dangerous, especially when taken in larger-than-recommended amounts.

Few research studies have addressed the efficacy of multivitamin/mineral supplement use in chronic disease prevention in the general population of the United States. One trial conducted on poorly nourished Chinese showed supplementation with combined β -carotene, Vitamin E, and Selenium reduced the incidence of gastric cancer and overall cancer fatality. In a French study; the combined use of vitamin C, vitamin E, β -carotene, Selenium, and Zinc reduced the risk of cancer in men by 31%, but not in women. No cardiovascular benefits were evident in the studies. Multivitamin/mineral supplement use had no benefit for preventing cataracts. Zinc and/or antioxidants had benefits for preventing advanced age-related macular degeneration in persons at high risk for the disease.

The advantages of multivitamins and/or supplements are documented not only in adults and children but also in other special groups like pregnancy and older people. But certain risky situations can be invited when these supplements are used without caution or monitoring as they can cause complications with regards to the worsening of the existing complication or interacting with the medications being currently consumed.

Before you take any supplements for disease prevention or treatment it is very crucial to know and understand whether the benefits outweigh the risks. Some of the supplements/multivitamins have shown great results in treating and preventing chronic diseases but people should not self-prescribe the medications due to lack of a particular nutrient because some nutrient deficiencies can be replaced with diet also people should not take more than the recommended daily intake for that nutrient unless your health care provider advises it.

Doctors and pharmacists should be responsible for understanding well about the use of supplements to properly advise patients on the possible benefits and harms. So continuing health education for healthcare providers is of paramount importance.



Genetics: The Blueprint of Health

DR. MOHAMED ZAHIR ALIMOHAMED,
PHD BIOMEDICAL SCIENTIST - MOLECULAR GENETICIST

The age-old debate between genetics and lifestyle choices continues to captivate our attention when it comes to our health. Are our genes the primary dictators of our well-being, or can we alter the course of our health through our lifestyle choices? This article delves into this intriguing conundrum, exploring the extent to which genetics influence our health compared to the impact of lifestyle choices, such as diet, exercise, and stress management. Additionally, we will examine the pivotal role of behavioral change strategies in helping individuals align their choices with their health goals.

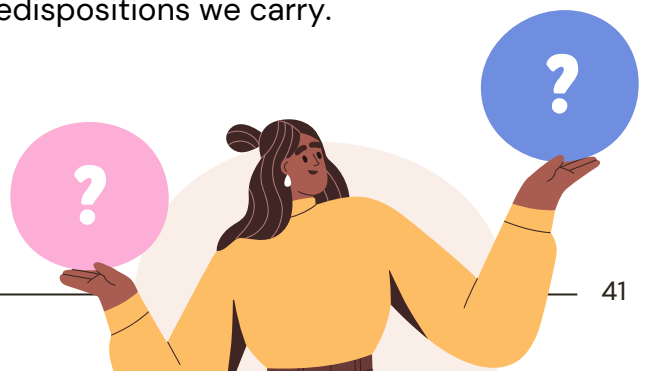
Genetics: The Blueprint of Health

Our genetic makeup undoubtedly plays a significant role in determining our health outcomes. Genes are like the instruction manual for our bodies, influencing everything from our susceptibility to certain diseases to our metabolism and even our response to medications. These genetic factors are often beyond our control and inherited from our parents.

For instance, certain genetic mutations can predispose individuals to conditions like heart disease, diabetes, or cancer. A classic example is hereditary breast cancer, where specific mutations in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes significantly increase the risk of developing breast and ovarian cancer. This genetic influence is undeniable, but it is essential to remember that having a genetic predisposition does not guarantee that you will develop a specific condition; it merely increases the risk.

Lifestyle Choices: The Power to Influence

While genetics lay the foundation, lifestyle choices build the structure of our health. The impact of diet, exercise, stress management, and other lifestyle factors on our well-being cannot be overstated. These choices can either exacerbate or mitigate the genetic predispositions we carry.



Diet: The Foundation of Health

Diet plays a crucial role in our health. It is not merely a source of calories but a means to provide our bodies with essential nutrients, vitamins, and minerals. A prime example of the interaction between genetics and diet is seen in celiac disease. This autoimmune disorder is triggered by the consumption of gluten in genetically predisposed individuals. Those with specific genetic markers are at a higher risk of developing celiac disease when exposed to gluten.

The Genetic Link:

Genetics can influence how our bodies metabolize certain nutrients. Some individuals may have genetic variations that affect their ability to process gluten efficiently, increasing their susceptibility to celiac disease. **Lifestyle Impact:** Conversely, a diet high in processed foods, sugars, and saturated fats is associated with an increased risk of conditions like obesity, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.

Exercise: Moving Towards Health

Regular physical activity is not only essential for maintaining a healthy weight but also for promoting cardiovascular health, reducing stress, and improving mental well-being. The interplay between genetics and exercise is evident in diseases like Huntington's disease. This inherited genetic disorder leads to the degeneration of nerve cells in the brain and affects muscle coordination. While exercise cannot prevent or cure Huntington's disease, it can improve mobility and overall quality of life for affected individuals.

The Genetic Link:

Genetics can influence factors such as muscle composition and oxygen-carrying capacity, affecting athletic performance and the ease with which we gain or lose weight. However, regular exercise can significantly impact these factors.

Lifestyle Impact:

Sedentary lifestyles contribute to obesity, muscle loss, and a higher risk of chronic diseases. Regular exercise can counteract these negative effects and improve overall health.

Stress Management: Calming the Genetic Storm

Chronic stress can take a toll on our health, increasing the risk of conditions like hypertension and depression. Effective stress management techniques, such as meditation, yoga, or counseling, can mitigate the negative impact of stress on our genes. An example of stress influencing genetics can be seen in the field of epigenetics, where stressors can lead to changes in gene expression.

The Genetic Link:

Genetic factors can influence how individuals respond to stress. Some may have a heightened stress response due to genetic variations. However, lifestyle choices and coping strategies can modulate this response.

Lifestyle Impact:

Engaging in stress-reduction practices can lead to lower cortisol levels, reduced inflammation, and improved mental health. These changes can positively influence overall well-being.

Behavioral Change Strategies: Bridging the Gap

Given the significance of lifestyle choices, it is essential to implement effective behavioral change strategies to align our actions with our health goals. Here are some key strategies:

1. Education: Knowledge Empowers

Understanding the connection between lifestyle choices and health outcomes is the first step. An example of the impact of education can be seen in smoking cessation programs. When individuals learn about the harmful effects of

smoking and how it can interact with their genetic predisposition to lung cancer, they are more motivated to quit.

The Genetic Link:

Genetic testing and counseling can provide individuals with valuable insights into their genetic risk factors, such as the risk of developing lung cancer due to smoking. Lifestyle Impact: Informed individuals are more likely to make conscious choices that promote health and well-being.

2. Goal Setting: Setting the Path

Setting specific, achievable health goals can provide a roadmap for individuals looking to make lifestyle changes. These goals should be personalized and measurable. An example is setting a goal to lower cholesterol levels through diet and exercise for someone genetically predisposed to high cholesterol.

The Genetic Link:

Genetic information can help individuals set realistic goals based on their unique genetic makeup. For example, someone with a genetic predisposition to obesity may set a goal to maintain a healthy weight through regular exercise and a balanced diet. Lifestyle Impact: Goal setting provides direction and motivation, helping individuals stay on track with their health-oriented choices.

3. Support Systems: Strength in Numbers

Having a support system, whether it is a friend, family member, or healthcare professional, can make a significant difference in adopting healthier habits. Support provides motivation, accountability, and guidance. A prime example is the success of weight loss support groups where individuals with shared goals provide encouragement and mutual assistance.

The Genetic Link:

Genetic counseling can involve family members to create a supportive environment for making lifestyle changes that benefit everyone. Lifestyle Impact: Support systems offer encouragement, share knowledge, and help individuals overcome obstacles on their health journey.

Gradual Changes: Sustainable Transformation

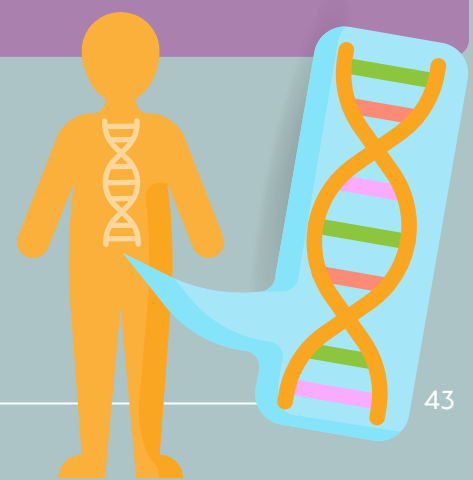
Making drastic changes all at once can be overwhelming. Encouraging gradual, sustainable lifestyle changes is often more effective in the long run. An example is gradually reducing sugar intake rather than attempting to eliminate it completely.

The Genetic Link:

Genetic factors can influence an individual's ability to adapt to new dietary or exercise routines. Gradual changes may be better tolerated and more likely to become permanent habits. Lifestyle Impact: Sustainable changes lead to long-term health improvements, as they are more likely to be maintained over time.

CONCLUSION

In the genetics vs. lifestyle debate, both factors play crucial roles in our health. While genetics may determine our predisposition to certain conditions, lifestyle choices ultimately influence the outcomes. Understanding this dynamic and implementing behavioral change strategies empowers individuals to take control of their health, making choices that align with their well-being goals. It's not a matter of genetics vs. lifestyle but rather a harmonious integration of both to achieve optimal health.





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FINANCIAL WELL-BEING

TALIB SHERIFF

Financial well-being can be termed as the overall state of financial wellness and security in an individual's or household's life. It is characterized by the ability to meet basic day-to-day financial obligations, manage unexpected or unplanned expenses, save for future goals, and achieve a sense of financial stability and freedom.

Below is a step-by-step guide on some building blocks to help you build your way toward financial independence and consequently well-being.

1. Building an Emergency Fund

Having an emergency fund worth a few months of expenses is a cornerstone of financial well-being. This fund serves as a financial cushion in times of unexpected crises, such as medical emergencies or job transitions. It ensures that you can cover essential expenses without resorting to high-interest debt or having to depend on others for survival. The size of your emergency fund might vary based on where you are in your journey, for instance, you can begin with an emergency fund worth 3 months' expenses and build it up to 6-12 months' worth as you progress in your financial stability status. The purpose of the emergency fund is that it should be readily accessible in times of crisis and should therefore not be used for any other purpose that would hinder its availability in times of need. The 8th Holy Imam after the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is narrated to have said: ***"If one saves food for one year, his burden becomes light and he feels comfortable"*** (Al-Kafi, Vol. 1)

2. Protecting against financial shocks

This is crucial for maintaining financial well-being and peace of mind. One effective strategy is to identify and invest in sound medical insurance for yourself and your family members. Medical insurance shields you from the potentially devastating financial consequences of unexpected healthcare expenses. In the event of illness or injury, having comprehensive medical coverage ensures that you can access necessary medical care without depleting your savings or going into debt. Similarly, other key insurances, like life insurance, disability insurance, and property insurance, serve as a safety net against unforeseen events. These policies provide financial support in times of crisis, such as the loss of a loved one, a disability that hinders your ability to work, or damage to your property due to unforeseen circumstances. By investing in these forms of insurance, you create a protective barrier that helps safeguard your financial stability, ensuring that you and your loved ones are well-prepared to weather any financial shocks that may come your way.

3. Informed Financial Decisions:

Making well-researched and informed decisions when it comes to big financial decisions is crucial. Often we make purchases that have a long-term financial burden on the household budget. A simple example could be for instance when buying a car, consider factors like fuel efficiency and resale value. Opting for a car with good fuel efficiency not only reduces ongoing expenses but can also have a positive impact on your budget in the long run.

A car with a strong resale value ensures that you can recoup a significant portion of your investment when you decide to sell it. A simple trick to use here is whenever you are planning to make a purchase involving a significant sum of money according to your budget, take into consideration a medium-term total cost i.e. cost of the item plus its operational costs over a period of 3–5 years, compare this total cost over the options you have and consider if your budget can afford the expense.

- **Budgeting:** Staying well below your means would give you a significant surplus at the end of the month. This involves effective and disciplined budgeting, which entails tracking your income and expenses. It goes beyond this by identifying needs (essential expenses) versus wants (non-essential expenses). Financial well-being is achieved by prioritizing needs while keeping wants in check. For instance, if you determine that eating out at restaurants frequently is a want, you may reduce this expense and increase the surplus that you would have at the end of every month. Sometimes it might entail going with a less pricey option rather than totally giving up on the want.
- **Investing Surplus Income:** An important cornerstone of achieving financial well-being involves investing of the surplus income you've managed to save. This involves reading up and learning about investment options that are available to you. You may also opt to consult financial experts to advise you on matters that are beyond your expertise. Having basic

financial literacy is a must in today's age and time. A basic tip in this area is to seek investment schemes with returns higher than market inflation rates. For example, if inflation is at **3–5%** (current inflation range in Tanzania), investing in stocks or bonds that historically yield an average of 8–10% or better annually can help your wealth grow faster than the eroding effects of inflation.

- **Long-Term Goals:** Once we have a sound investment plan for our surplus income, the next step is to now cater to long-term financial goals. These could entail purchasing your first home or planning for your children's higher education. It is prudent to identify a target time for each financial goal and then work backward to calculate how to get to your target in the time that is available. This would give you a clear picture of how much you would need to save monthly and by what multiple your savings would need to grow each year to enable you to hit your financial goal. Setting goals needs to be realistic and achievable so as not to put a huge strain on your budget and impact your well-being.

Having given the above tips as guidance in one's journey towards financial well-being in this world, it is also important to remember one's responsibility in securing one's well-being in the hereafter. God says in the holy Qur'an (2:245 – Who is it that will lend Allah a goodly loan, so that He may multiply it for him many times over? And it is Allah who withholds and grants abundance, and to Him, you will be returned).

How to plan your financial freedom

ABID LADHA

“Financial freedom”, a phrase that has the power to inspire and motivate individuals to take control of their financial destinies. But what exactly is financial freedom? Is it the accumulation of vast wealth, the ability to live a luxurious life, or perhaps something more profound and personal? The truth is, financial freedom is a subjective concept, unique to each individual, and it represents the path to a rich life that aligns with your deepest desires and aspirations.

At its core, financial freedom means having the financial resources and flexibility to live life on your terms. It's about having enough money to cover your basic needs, pursue your passions, and achieve your goals without being bound by financial constraints. However, it's essential to understand that everyone's definition of a rich life is subjective. For some, it might mean quitting a stressful job to pursue a passion project, while for others, it could involve traveling the world, giving back to their community, or simply having the peace of mind that comes with financial security. Your vision of financial freedom is a reflection of your values, dreams, and priorities.

One crucial aspect to grasp is that financial freedom is not a one-night success story. It's a journey that requires time, dedication, and smart financial planning. It's a path filled with ups and downs, setbacks, and triumphs. The road to financial freedom is a marathon, not a sprint, and it's essential to be patient and persistent.

The journey begins with setting clear financial goals and creating a well-thought-out plan. Start by assessing your current financial situation, including your income, expenses, debts, and assets. Then, set specific, measurable, and achievable goals that will lead you toward financial freedom. These goals could include paying off debt, saving for retirement, or building an emergency fund.

The most common misconception about financial freedom is that it's only attainable for the young or those who start early. However, it's never too late to begin your journey to financial freedom. Whether you're in your twenties or fifties, taking the first step toward a better financial future is always a wise decision. In fact, many successful individuals didn't achieve financial freedom until later in life. The key is to start now and stay committed to your goals. The sooner you begin, the more time you have to leverage the power of compounding interest and growing your wealth.

Attaining financial freedom may seem like a daunting goal, but in reality, it's not rocket science. It primarily demands discipline, dedication, and a bit of hard work. The key to success in this journey is consistency. Listed below are some practical ways to make progress on this path:

Budgeting:

Start by creating a budget that outlines your income and expenses. This will help you identify areas where you can cut costs and redirect that money toward your financial goals.





Debt Management:

If you have outstanding debts, prioritize paying them off. High-interest debts, such as credit card balances, can eat into your financial freedom. Focus on paying down these debts as quickly as possible.



Emergency Fund:

Build an emergency fund to cover unexpected expenses. Having a financial safety net will prevent you from dipping into your savings or investments when unexpected events occur.



Savings and Investments:

Regularly save a portion of your income and invest it wisely. Diversify your investments to manage risk and take advantage of growth opportunities. Consider consulting with a financial advisor to create an investment strategy tailored to your goals.



Passive Income:

Explore opportunities to generate passive income streams, such as rental properties, dividend-paying stocks, government bonds or online businesses. Passive income can accelerate your journey to financial freedom.



Continuous Learning:

Invest in your financial education; stay updated on personal finance topics, investment strategies, and money management techniques. The more you know, the better equipped you'll be to make informed financial decisions.

By consistently practicing good financial habits, saving, investing wisely, and living within your means, you can steadily progress towards achieving financial freedom; it's a journey that rewards your efforts and commitment along the way, and with the right mindset and actions, you can certainly get there.

As you progress on your journey to financial freedom, you begin to experience a range of incredible benefits such as **attaining peace of mind, and reduced stress, and anxiety associated with money-related worries**. You have the freedom of choice empowering you to make decisions that align with your values and desires, whether it's pursuing a new career, embarking on adventures, or simply spending more quality time with your loved ones. **Additionally, financial security becomes your steadfast companion**, ensuring you're well-prepared to handle unexpected expenses, emergencies, and health-related issues without depleting your savings or resorting to debt. Lastly, **it instills in you a sense of generosity**, as it allows you to give back to your community, support causes you're passionate about, and make a profound and positive impact on the world around you.

While financial freedom is undoubtedly a desirable goal, it's essential to be aware of potential adverse effects. Achieving financial freedom can sometimes lead to complacency, as some individuals may become content and lose their drive to pursue new goals or challenges. It may also strain relationships, as money can be a source of tension if not managed and communicated effectively with loved ones and without clear goals and purpose, one may end up feeling unfulfilled and adrift, highlighting the importance of maintaining a sense of purpose beyond financial success.

In conclusion, financial freedom is not just about accumulating wealth; it's about gaining control over your financial destiny and creating a life that aligns with your values and aspirations. It's a journey that requires planning, discipline, and dedication, but the benefits of peace of mind, freedom of choice, and financial security are well worth the effort. Remember, it's never too late to start, and your definition of a rich life is uniquely yours. So, embark on your journey to financial freedom today and let it lead you to the rich and fulfilling life you deserve.

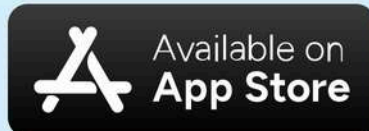


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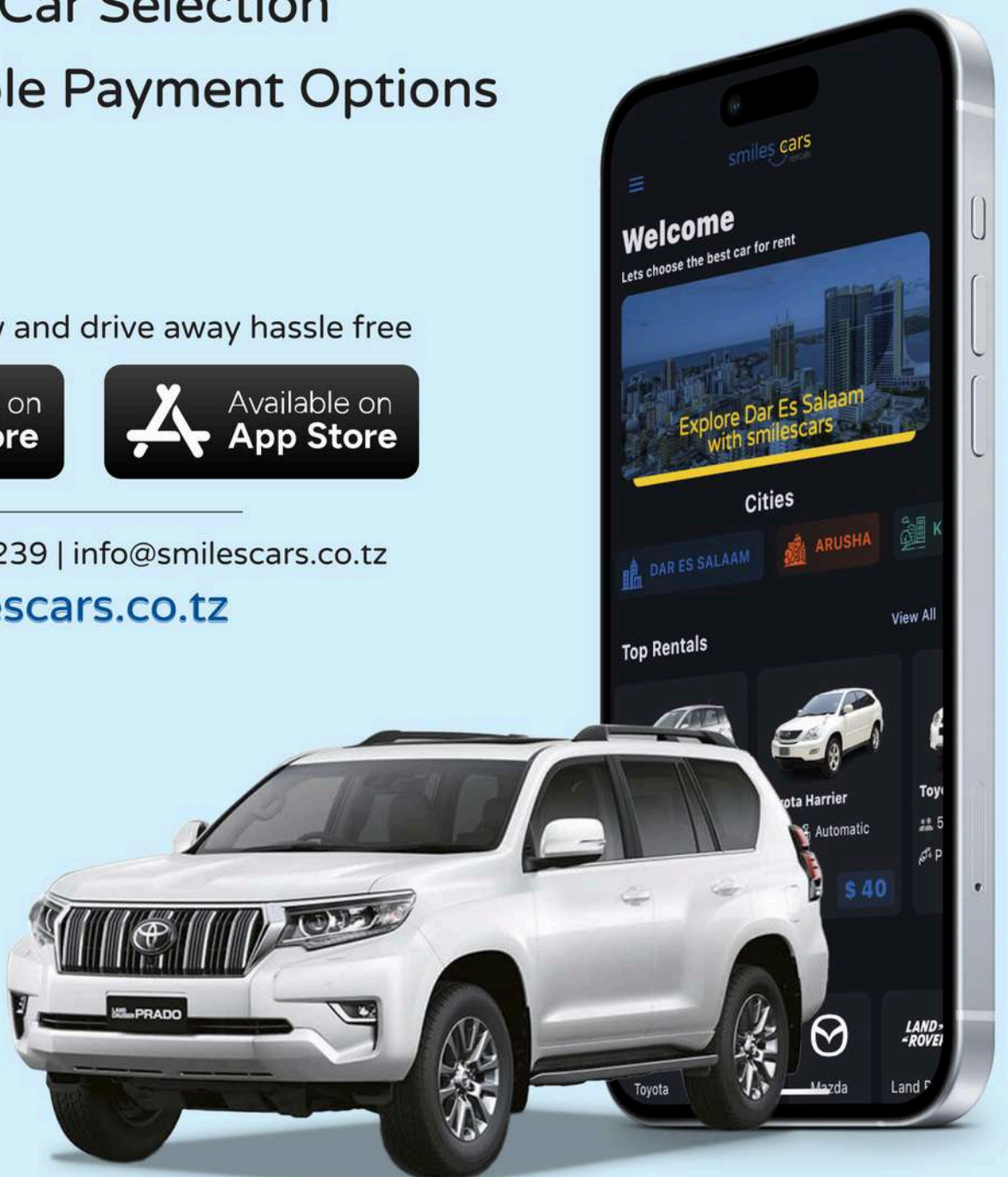
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STRESS MANAGEMENT & HORMONAL IMBALANCE

DR. SAKINA A MOLOO (MD, MMED INTERNAL MEDICINE)

In the relentless pace of modern life, stress has become an unwelcome companion for many. Often underestimated, stress can profoundly impact our overall well-being, disrupting the delicate balance of hormones within our bodies.

Stress is a natural response to challenging or threatening situations. It is the body's way of reacting to a demand or pressure. When you perceive a threat, whether real or imagined, the body's stress response, often known as the "fight or flight" response, is triggered. This response involves a complex combination of physiological, behavioral, and emotional reactions. Hormones like cortisol and adrenaline are released, preparing the body to respond to the perceived danger.

It must be emphasized that stress equally affects both genders. In men, chronic stress leads to decreased testosterone levels, impacting vital aspects of health such as energy levels, muscle mass, and libido. Emotional well-being is also compromised, often leading to increased irritability and reduced concentration. For women, stress can disrupt the menstrual cycle, exacerbate symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMS), and even affect fertility. Both genders may experience disrupted sleep patterns, heightened anxiety, and changes in appetite, all linked to hormonal imbalances induced by stress.

Stress can be caused by various factors, including work or school pressure, social media misuse, personal relationships, parenthood,

financial concerns, or significant life events such as death of a loved one. While some stress is normal and can even be motivating, excessive or chronic stress can have negative effects on both physical and mental health.

Hormonal imbalance due to chronic stress has led to diseases prevalent to the digital century and these include; obesity, diabetes, reproductive issues such as PCOS in women and erectile dysfunction in men, thyroid disorders, mental disorders such as anxiety and depression, digestive issues such as irritable bowel syndrome and skin disturbances e.g. acne and eczema.

Prolonged stress causes elevated levels of cortisol which causes insomnia and increased appetite to unhealthy foods hence leading to weight gain.

Social media can indirectly contribute to hormonal imbalances through the stress and emotional disturbances it causes. It occurs due to constant comparison to others, cyberbullying, social pressures, FOMO and body image issues.

Taking the workplace as an example, relationship with work mates, type of work environment and even hours of work may lead to stress. Prolonged exposure to workplace stressors not only elevates cortisol levels but also suppresses other hormones crucial for immune function, metabolism, and emotional well-being. The relentless stress at work can lead to adrenal fatigue, a condition where the adrenal glands struggle to keep up with the

constant demand for stress hormones, causing imbalances. Moreover, chronic workplace stress often leads to sleep disturbances, further exacerbating hormonal disruption. Addressing workplace stress is not just a matter of improving job satisfaction; it's essential for safeguarding hormonal health and overall well-being.

In the face of stress-induced hormonal imbalances, many individuals find themselves compelled to seek medical assistance. However, it's a paradoxical situation, as the very stress that triggers their hormonal disruption often accompanies their efforts to alleviate it. Stress can create a barrier, making it challenging for people to articulate their symptoms clearly or comprehend the advice provided by healthcare professionals. Consequently, this stress-related barrier can hinder effective communication between patients and medical practitioners. Thus, stress needs to be addressed first.

Stress manifests in various ways, and recognizing its signs and symptoms is paramount for addressing it effectively and preventing potential hormonal imbalances. Physical indications often include; frequent headaches, muscle tension, and disturbed sleep patterns. Emotional symptoms may range from irritability and mood swings to feelings of being overwhelmed and a lack of focus. Changes in appetite, whether an increase or decrease and alterations in social behavior, such as withdrawal from activities once enjoyed, can also signify elevated stress levels.

If you've come this far in reading the article you might feel you have stress-related hormonal imbalance, but the good news is that effective stress management can restore hormonal balance and improve overall well-being. Regular exercise stands as a powerful antidote, reducing stress hormones

while triggering the release of endorphins, our body's natural stress relievers. Adopting a balanced diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, and vitamins supports hormonal regulation, enhancing both physical and mental health.

Mindful practices such as journaling, meditation, and yoga provide respite for the mind, calming the production of stress hormones and promoting relaxation. Adequate sleep, often undermined in our busy lives, plays a crucial role in hormone regulation. Establishing a consistent sleep schedule and creating a sleep-conducive environment can significantly improve sleep quality. Avoiding screen time 30 minutes before bedtime soothes the mind and offers relaxation to the body.

Planning and organizing work not only ensures tasks are completed more smoothly but also provides a psychological sense of order and accomplishment. Don't be afraid to ask for help when a task feels overwhelming, you don't have to figure it out all alone and at once!



Social support acts as a natural stress buffer, allowing emotional well-being and hormonal balance. Engaging in meaningful social connections or even meeting a counselor provides a sense of belonging and security, reducing stress hormones and promoting mental health.

As explored above, the complex ways in which chronic stress disrupts our hormonal equilibrium, it becomes evident that addressing stress is not merely a matter of mental health but a vital component of well being. Recognizing the signs, understanding the triggers, and adopting proactive stress management strategies are crucial steps in preventing the adverse effects of stress-induced hormonal imbalances. By embracing mindfulness, exercise, supportive social networks, and seeking professional guidance when needed, we empower ourselves to regain control over our hormones and, ultimately, our lives.





Mbu Hawasumbui tena

...ukitumia Rungu



CHALLENGES AS OPPORTUNITIES

An interview with Aashiq Sheriff



01 What role does creativity play in turning challenges into opportunities? Can you share an example of a creative solution that arose from a difficult situation?

Rethinking Creativity in Crisis

Have you ever heard someone say, "think outside the box"? I like to say, think as if there's no box at all. This idea comes from how I see creativity. This mindset and perspective are important because they help us find good things in bad times, a way through tough spots, and light when things seem dark.

Let me tell you about one time this thinking helped. A few years ago, we were helping a company that made meat products sell more of their stuff. They usually sold to restaurants and hotels but then COVID-19 happened, and those places closed. Supermarkets weren't buying much either.

So, what could we do? We looked around to see who was still open for business in Tanzania during this time and found that the "mama ntiliie" shops were. Our big idea was to get people on bikes (Boda-boda) to take these meat products and offer them to the informal food shops. – everything they sold, they earned a commission (this worked well for them, as it gave them an alternative income option).

By doing this, not only did we meet our goal of selling more even with COVID-19 happening, but we also found a whole new group of customers that we didn't know before!

02 In your opinion, what is the mindset/approach that allows individuals to view challenges as opportunities rather than obstacles? Is it necessary to fixate on positivity as the drive to achieve good outcomes?

I think that things in life are supposed to be hard in the beginning, then they get easy, and then hard again – it only means it is time to level up again. I believe that meaningful growth is built on journeying through tough situations and times. These challenges, situations, and times are an opportunity to reveal your alpha state – the best version of you! It is important to know that when you do something new, you'll probably be bad at it first. You will either find that it is not for you, so you move on to something else, or you will keep at it and eventually master it. It could lead you to your purpose.

Staying positive is super important too. Sure, there are bad times and outcomes in life—that's just how it goes. Remember, some challenges are a result of our past decisions. The bad and good thing about that is, you can't change your yesterday, but you can work on your tomorrow.

Are there any practical strategies that you recommend for recognizing and harnessing opportunities in hidden challenges?

Here is how I'd like to look at it. There is rarely a challenge you face that hasn't been faced before by someone else. Yes, the magnitude and medium of the challenge may have been different but I assure you there are others with the same challenge. Some people will live with it, others create newer problems (for themselves or others around them) because of the challenges, and some overcome them. If that is a fact then, a challenge can be looked at as an opportunity.

Let's say you have a problem with something, knowing the facts, find out if there are others with the same problem. Your problem doesn't need to affect everyone in the world or even your country. It could just be something in your town or building. Understand what this problem does to people and figure out how to solve it (start simple, get fancy later). Sell the solution to people affected. You just turned a challenge into an opportunity.

Can you share a personal experience where you turned significant challenges into a remarkable opportunity? What did you learn from that experience?

Yes, I can. Before COVID hit, we were helping a meat company sell more to restaurants and hotels. But when the pandemic started, those places had to close first. Looking around, we realized the small street shops "Mama ntiles" and other local spots stayed open. So, we asked 15 to 20 Boda Boda motorcycle drivers if they wanted to make extra money by selling our products. We gave them special carriers for their bikes and sent them out. They earned money each time they sold something and got extra cash for fuel every day. After three months of doing this, these small sellers became important customers that we never thought of before – we were selling about a thousand packets a day!

How do you distinguish between a challenge that is worth pursuing as an opportunity and one that should be approached differently?

How do you know if a challenge is worth taking on? First, ask yourself if it matches what you love to do. Does it fit with your goals and values? If the answer is yes, and the challenge feels right for you, then it's a good opportunity. But if the challenge doesn't excite you or match your life path, it might deviate you from your path and eventually tire you out. It could also take away from other important things in your life. Next, think about what could come from facing this challenge. Will solving this problem help a lot of people or just a few? Could this experience make you better at what you do? Challenges can teach us new skills, but they can be tough too. Make sure that these challenges are ones that will help you grow before deciding to take them on.

When and how can one strike a balance between embracing life's challenges as growth opportunities and seeking support when needed?

Finding balance in life starts with your mindset. Life is meant to be tough and full of challenges, but these help you discover your character, skills, strengths, and what are not good at. To get the balance right, first, understand yourself – self-awareness; know your strengths and when to take a break. Next, be ready to change how you do things; life changes all the time, so being flexible helps a lot – adaptability.

Time management matters too – everything in its own time. Knowing and understanding what requires your attention and action and what doesn't is vital.

Lastly, when you love what you do in life, you will not need to balance – from work to friends – it doesn't feel hard or like extra weight because it's just part of who you are.

In your experience, what role do adaptability and flexibility play in transforming challenges into opportunities be it in life or in the workplace?

Change is the one thing that always happens in life. Being able to adjust and be flexible is really important if you want to handle these changes well. Sometimes, change comes from new technology or different things happening professionally and personally. What you thought would work at first might not be the best way later on. You may need to think of new ideas or ways of doing things so you can keep going and do even better than before. When facing a problem, it helps to think about whether it's something you can fix and if it's worth fixing.

Having a "**growth mindset**" means seeing challenges and failures as chances to learn something new rather than feeling stuck forever.



WHAT HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS NEED TO KNOW

My experience from the International Conference on Public Health in Africa

FARHAN YUSUF

The annual International Conference on Public Health in Africa (CPHIA) is organized by the Africa Centre for Disease Control & Prevention (Africa CDC). It provides a unique African-led platform for leaders from across the continent to reflect on lessons learned in health and science and align on a way forward for creating more resilient health systems.

For general information, the Africa CDC is a specialized technical institution of the African Union established to support public health initiatives of Member States and strengthen the capacity of their public health institutions to detect, prevent, control, and respond quickly and effectively to disease threats. Africa CDC supports African Union Member States in providing coordinated and integrated solutions to their public health infrastructure inadequacies, human resource capacity, disease surveillance, laboratory diagnostics, and preparedness and response to health emergencies and disasters.

The impetus for the organization of this conference as an annual event came from the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic where it was realized that the African continent must leverage the work being done on the continent, especially in the health sector, and create a platform where health professionals and scientists from the continent can share the work being done and create an environment of collaboration.

The 1st conference was organized virtually in the year 2021, the second one was organized in Kigali, Zambia in 2022 and the most recent one was organized in Lusaka, Zambia with the theme: “Breaking Barriers: Repositioning Africa in the Global Health Architecture” – a theme that was explored across nine plenary sessions, several parallel and abstract sessions, and dozens of official side events. I have been fortunate enough to attend all three iterations of the conference and will try through this article to share some of my overall learnings from attending them.

Over the last three years, the CPHIA has become perhaps the most important health-related event on the African continent and brings together participants from different sectors – public, private, and non-governmental- providing an excellent opportunity for learning and networking. In today’s climate of continuous learning and self-development being essential for career growth, such gatherings and platforms provide the necessary environment for such learning to take place.

Through the abstract presentations health practitioners from different countries also get an opportunity to share their work for feedback and potential collaborations with others from the continent to take their work forward. This becomes especially important for young health professionals who intend to grow within the health sector and due to the scientific focus of the conference, it allows participation and presentations from both public health-related themes and topics along with clinical work.

Attending these kinds of conferences also allows one as a health professional to grasp what the current key discussions are that are happening at national, regional, continental, and global levels as far as the health sector is concerned and can help health professionals to align their career goals to these emerging topics and trends. As can be seen from the nine different tracks that were highlighted during the conference last year, there was good coverage across different thematic areas:

- Pandemic Preparedness and Resilient Financing Mechanisms for Africa
- Fostering African-led Innovation: Advancing Local Production in Vaccines, Diagnostics and Therapeutics
- Delivering Universal Health Coverage in Africa – Strengthened and Equitable Health Systems
- For Women by Women: Access to adequate healthcare for young girls and women in Africa
- Safeguarding Africa's Health Security: health emergencies, biosecurity, climate change, and multi-sectoral response mechanisms
- Transforming Health in Africa through Digital Innovation
- Whole-of-society – the Power of Engaging Civil Society, the Private Sector and Local Philanthropy
- Combating Infectious Diseases, NTDs, and Antimicrobial Resistance in Africa
- Unmasking the Silent Epidemics: NCDs, Mental Health and Injuries

All of these are topics that highlight what is currently of importance within the health sector.

Now, the CPHIA as mentioned before is probably the biggest forum for health in Africa, however participation in different conferences is important for career growth.

To be organized as far as attending such platforms is concerned, avoid being overwhelmed, and make the most of these experiences below are some tips:

- The first step is for a health professional to identify their own topics of interest from within the health sector. This might be easier for those in clinicals due to their specialties and more difficult for public health practitioners however is important to do.
- Based on identified topics of interest and thematic areas, use the start of the year to identify different important meetings, conferences, etc. that will be taking place throughout the year and mark the important ones.
- Identify how you would like to engage with each opportunity – would you like to just attend as a participant or present your work? Prepare accordingly and understand the timelines for registration and other processes for each convening.
- Being able to attend some of these convenings might be a challenge in terms of location, logistics, finances, etc. Many of them will have some form of support, especially for presenters of sessions or abstracts. Try to find out if such opportunities are available. If they aren't, think about the convenings that are either in your own country or nearby first.
- Check the agenda for the convenings in advance and note the sessions of interest.
- Think about specific people or representatives of organizations that you would like to meet during these convenings.

The better prepared you are the more effective these sessions can be for you.

FROM CONFUSION TO CONFIDENCE: TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

ZAINAB K MANJI (CRITICAL CARE NURSE)

“In a world where medical instructions often resemble cryptic codes, Arya realized she had to take steps to ask about what she did not understand.”



This is a story of Arya, a middle-aged woman who took a journey towards better health and while it seems like an ordinary story, it holds within it the power of change that relies on an often-overlooked critical element: **Health Literacy.**

One rainy morning, Arya found herself seated at the kitchen table, while her tea was brewing, a small white packet in her hand, containing pills that were meant to be her companion in her battle against high blood pressure. As Arya took the pills out of the packet, recalling her doctor telling her that he would write some pills for her, and the pharmacist instructing her to take one pill every morning with tea - a million questions rushed through her mind. How was this tiny pill supposed to actually control her blood pressure, would she have to take this forever, what would happen if she forgot to take the pill for one day, how often would the dosage need to be adjusted, would these pills affect her in any other way like a friend of hers who used to feel very dizzy when she used the same pills?

She took the tiny slip of paper that came inside accompanying the pill with ‘*medical information*’ and started to read it. There were some things she understood, but a lot of it that she did not. Her head hurt with confusion and in a world where medical instructions often resemble cryptic codes, Arya realized she had to take steps to ask about what she did not understand. After the right consultations with her doctor, nurses, and pharmacists, and some help from reliable online sources – Aryas’s journey took an unexpected turn!

Imagine her transformation after being armed with improved health literacy, she actually understood the link between her diagnosis, symptoms, and the medication; but, more importantly, Arya discovered that she has authority over her own health. She then confidently took this tiny pill, knowing what to expect, and believed she would be okay.

As we reflect on Aryas’s story, we see empowerment leading to control over health – the very definition of Health Literacy. This is not limited to Arya’s story but extends to many such incidences. When Adam, a father of two, is concerned about his family’s nutrition because he often buys packaged foods without understanding the nutritional labels – improved health literacy would enable Adam to interpret nutritional labels, helping him make healthier food choices for his family. Similarly, Aneth, a young professional, who avoids seeking medical help for persistent headaches due to fear of complex healthcare processes, health literacy would help her feel more confident scheduling appointments and understanding medical procedures, leading to earlier intervention and improved outcomes.

Also, Omar, a college student, who is unaware of basic hygiene practices during flu and rainy seasons, ended up spreading viruses to his classmates. Health literacy initiatives on hygiene and disease prevention can help students like Omar understand the importance of handwashing, vaccination, and other preventive measures. This knowledge contributes to a healthier community by reducing the spread of infectious diseases.

These examples signal us to recognize that health literacy is not a privilege but a right — it is a tool that empowers individuals to understand, question, and actively participate in their own healthcare journey. These examples also highlight that health literacy is not just about understanding complex medical terms; it’s about practical, everyday knowledge that enables individuals to make informed decisions, take control of their health, and ultimately improve health outcomes.

Understanding Health Literacy:

Health literacy is the ability to understand, process, and apply health information to make informed decisions about one’s well-being. In a community context, this involves not only individual skills but also the capacity of the community as a whole to access and understand health information.

It focuses on improving reading, writing, and numeracy skills in relation to health, using plain language. By doing so, health literacy initiatives empower individuals to understand medical instructions, labels, and preventive measures, thus promoting a proactive approach to healthcare.

Empowering Individuals to Make Informed Decisions:

The ultimate goal of health literacy and community engagement is to empower you to make informed decisions about your health. In a world filled with misinformation, it is crucial to differentiate reliable sources from unreliable ones and understand the consequences of this choice.

Health literacy and community engagement are indispensable tools for building healthier, more informed communities. By equipping yourself with the knowledge and skills needed to understand and act on health information, you create a foundation for social wellness where individuals like Arya, Adam, Omar, and Aneth can thrive.

This is for everyone; take charge of your health and well-being so that we can move closer to a future where empowered individuals and communities work together with healthcare workers to achieve optimal health for all.

If you have read up to this far, you now might be wondering, so how exactly do I improve my health literacy and take charge of my own health, find practical steps in doing so through the Health Literacy Guide for Consumers below.

If you are a healthcare worker, and wondering how you can help your clients and how you can contribute to improved health literacy, there's a guide for you too. Make sure to check out the WHO Toolkit for Health Literacy for Health Workers, Hospitals/Institutions, and Organizations by scanning the QR Code below!

It is also important for healthcare workers, health institutions, and organizations to understand that health literacy is a fundamental right. This is crucial because it implies that every individual has the power to access, understand, and utilize health information and services to the fullest extent possible. This way, communities can move towards fostering a culture where individuals are not just passive recipients of healthcare information but active participants in their health journey.

Health Literacy

A GUIDE FOR CONSUMERS

1 Ask Questions

Don't hesitate to ask your healthcare provider questions about your condition, treatment options, and medications. Request information in simple language and ask for clarification if something is unclear.

3 Make Use of Educational Resources

Look for pamphlets, brochures, magazines, and online resources to help supplement your knowledge.

5 Build a Relationship with Your Healthcare Provider

Establish open communication with your healthcare provider. Share your concerns, symptoms, and any challenges you may be facing. A strong patient-provider relationship contributes to better understanding and collaboration.

7 Stay Informed About Preventive Measures

Educate yourself about preventive healthcare measures such as vaccinations, screenings, and healthy lifestyle choices. Understanding how to prevent illnesses can contribute to long-term well-being.

2 Seek Reliable Sources

Access information from reputable sources such as government health websites, medical associations, and recognized health organizations. Be cautious with information from social media and unverified websites/sources.

4 Understand Medication Labels

Learn to read and understand medication labels. Pay attention to dosage instructions, potential side effects, and any warnings. If in doubt, consult your pharmacist or healthcare provider for clarification.

6 Participate in Health Events

Participate in health events. These forums provide opportunities to share experiences, gain insights from others, and access valuable health information in a supportive environment.

8 Request the use of Plain Language

Request that healthcare providers use plain language to explain medical information. If something is unclear, ask them to simplify the explanation until you fully grasp the information.

Health Literacy

A GUIDE FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

1 Use Plain Language

Communicate in clear and simple language, avoiding medical jargon. Break down complex concepts into easily understandable terms to ensure patients comprehend important information about their health.

3 Empower with Information

Provide patients with written materials that include essential information about their condition, treatment plans, and medications. Ensure these materials are in plain language, easy to read, and readily accessible.

5 Offer Follow-Up Resources

Provide patients with additional resources for further reading or reliable websites where they can find more information about their health conditions. This empowers patients to become proactive in managing their health.

7 Collaborate with Interdisciplinary Teams

Work collaboratively with other healthcare professionals to ensure a comprehensive approach to health literacy. Each team member can contribute unique perspectives and expertise.

2 Interactive Communication

Encourage two-way communication during appointments. Ask open-ended questions, listen actively, encourage questioning and ensure patients feel comfortable asking questions. Utilize visual aids and educational materials where possible.

4 Demonstrate Medication Use

Demonstrate how to take medications correctly. Use models, videos, or written instructions to illustrate dosage instructions, potential side effects, and the importance of adherence.

6 Cultural Sensitivity

Be culturally sensitive and aware of diverse backgrounds. Tailor communication to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of patients, ensuring that health information is relatable.

8 Promote Health Literacy Programs

Advocate for and participate in health literacy programs within the community. Engaging in initiatives that promote health literacy outside of clinical settings can have a positive impact on the overall community.





Occupational Therapy within the community

SAYYEDA MASTER
(CERTIFIED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST)



Occupations are the important activities you need to do for your survival

Occupations include activities we carry out and perform to keep us well mentally, such as making a meal and interacting with our friends and family. When something happens, such as physical injuries or difficulties within one's mental health that hinder a person's ability to engage in these, Occupational Therapists (OT) provide specialist knowledge and support to guide one's recovery.

OTs work within a range of settings, including but not limited to general hospitals, mental health hospitals, community rehabilitation, community mental health services, social care, and schools. I currently work as a Lead OT for Adult Community Mental Health Services within a borough in London. My perspective of an OT's role will be within Mental Health Services, primarily focused on more community-based interventions to promote independence and well-being.

Within Community Mental Health services, our main aim is to keep them well in their homes and avoid further hospital admissions. This is done not only through managing medication but also by promoting everyday activities that will give them a sense of purpose and enhance their recovery and general well-being. We do this by offering personalized one-to-one support as well as group work. In addition to that, we also carry out specialized assessments to address physical functional issues that can often be a co-morbidity of a mental illness and prescribe basic mobility equipment, assist in providing suitable housing, and promote independence.

Through one-on-one sessions, we work closely with individuals to identify their strengths, challenges, and goals that are personal to them and develop interventions that target those. We utilize special assessments to determine these, such as the MOHOST and VdTMoCA that look at their participation in occupations and their motivation in doing so in a holistic manner that takes into account both their mental and physical health. We also use this as a measure for understanding the outcome of therapy and whether this has been helpful or not.

After the parameters have been set, we work on the identified goals. This could be working on enhancing self-care routines, such as developing a structured morning routine, incorporating regular walks or gaining skills in preparing nutritious meals. We also work on their self-esteem and building confidence through graded exposure. This involves working with the individual's fears and conquering them by slowly venturing out, engaging with people in the community by ordering a coffee in their local coffee shop or joining a community group. This empowers them to regain control they have lost over their lives, nurturing a sense of purpose and independence.

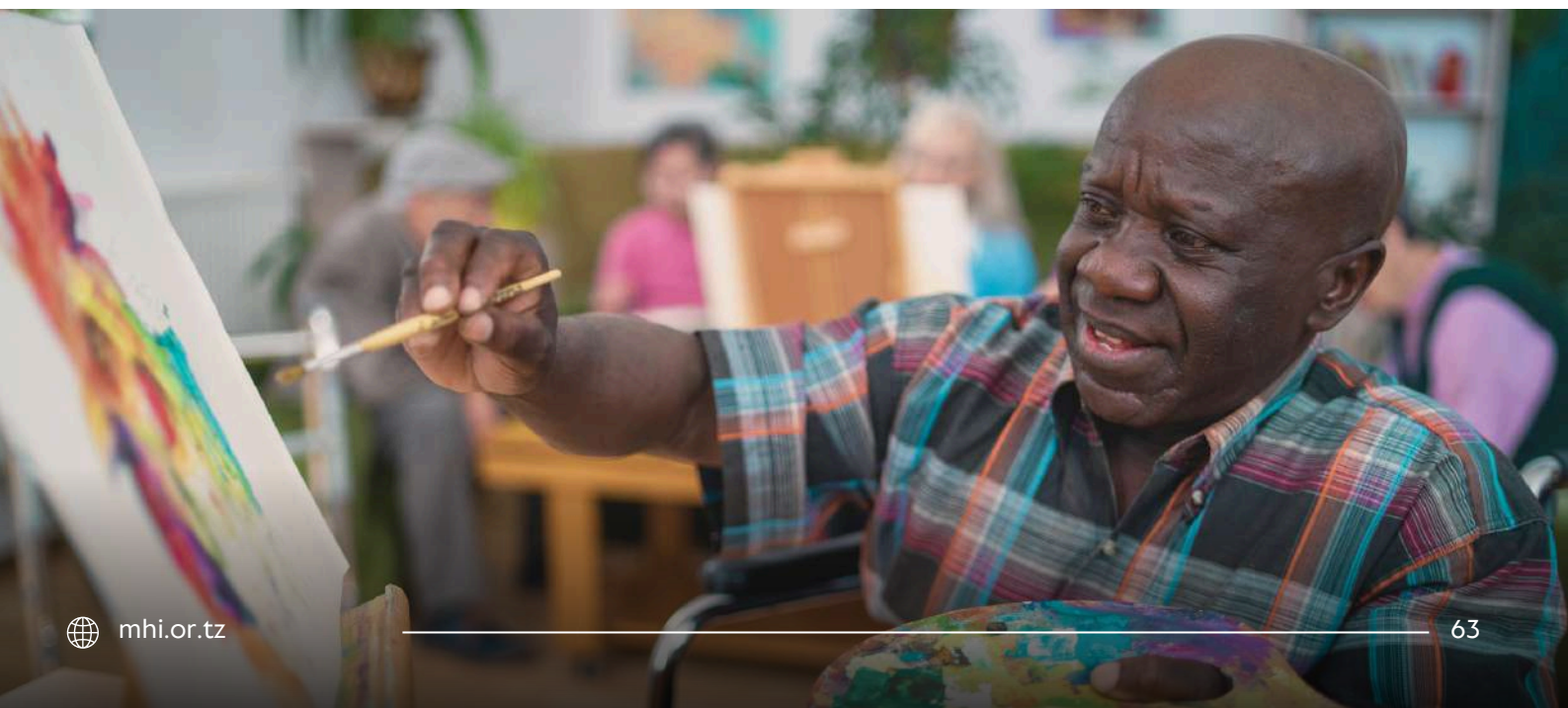
We generally offer 6 to 8 weekly sessions, however, this is reviewed regularly with the client to see if this has benefitted from that and if there is a need for more sessions or to conclude therapy. Some of the groups that OT can offer in this setting include life

skills, cooking and healthy eating, coping skills as well as sensory groups. These not only address the main aim of the groups but also address additional life skills and social interactions.

A great illustration of this is a cooking and healthy eating group, where members not only learn how to make a meal but also address fine motor skills through chopping, community access, and budgeting ingredients, understanding quantities and time management as well as enhancing social skills through interacting within the group and meeting new people. As a result of an outcome from this, we identified that patients bought less takeaways, took interest in picking healthy food options, and made new friends.

Other groups have also produced similar effects and have also encouraged OT to be able to expand their capacities in seeing more people and producing more outcomes for the team.

In conclusion, OTs are instrumental in supporting individuals through a dynamic approach to addressing their individual goals and challenges. We collaborate closely with clients, adapting sessions as needed to ensure progress. OTs have an invaluable role in promoting well-being and ensuring independence for people to do the things they need to do and want to do.





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MY COMFORT ZONE SAFE OR DANGEROUS?



SHIRIN K JERAJ

Have you ever found yourself facing a daunting challenge, like conquering your fear of public speaking or navigating professional relationships with colleagues who don't share your work ethic?

These situations often push us to the edge, where we feel a lack of control over the outcome, fostering a sense of threat. Yet, if we let the fear of negative outcomes dictate our actions, we risk missing out on valuable opportunities for growth and learning.

This dilemma is particularly evident when our comfort zone becomes too comfortable. As Albert Einstein famously said,

“
*A ship is always safe at the shore,
but that's not what it's built for.*
”

Many of us gravitate toward the familiar embrace of our comfort zone, finding solace in its warmth and security. It's like wearing your favorite shoes

everywhere, regardless of their appropriateness, or sticking to the same dish on a menu because it's familiar. Our comfort zone offers a sanctuary where we feel secure and at ease, a refuge from the uncertainties of the world. But what happens if we never venture beyond this safe haven? Will there be any progress or innovation? Will new businesses thrive if we stick to the familiar? Will medical breakthroughs occur if we shy away from trying new treatments? Will we remain stuck in outdated professions, ignoring emerging fields like cybersecurity or robotics? If we do, we risk stagnation and regression, with consequences ranging from increased cybercrimes to agricultural crises.

Despite its allure, every individual must step out of their comfort zone at some point. Whether it's the first day of school, opening up to a potential partner, or mastering solo driving, these experiences shape us and propel us forward.

It's crucial to recognize that staying within our comfort zone not only hampers personal growth but also limits societal progress. It diminishes our confidence, stifles our learning, and blinds us to life-changing opportunities.

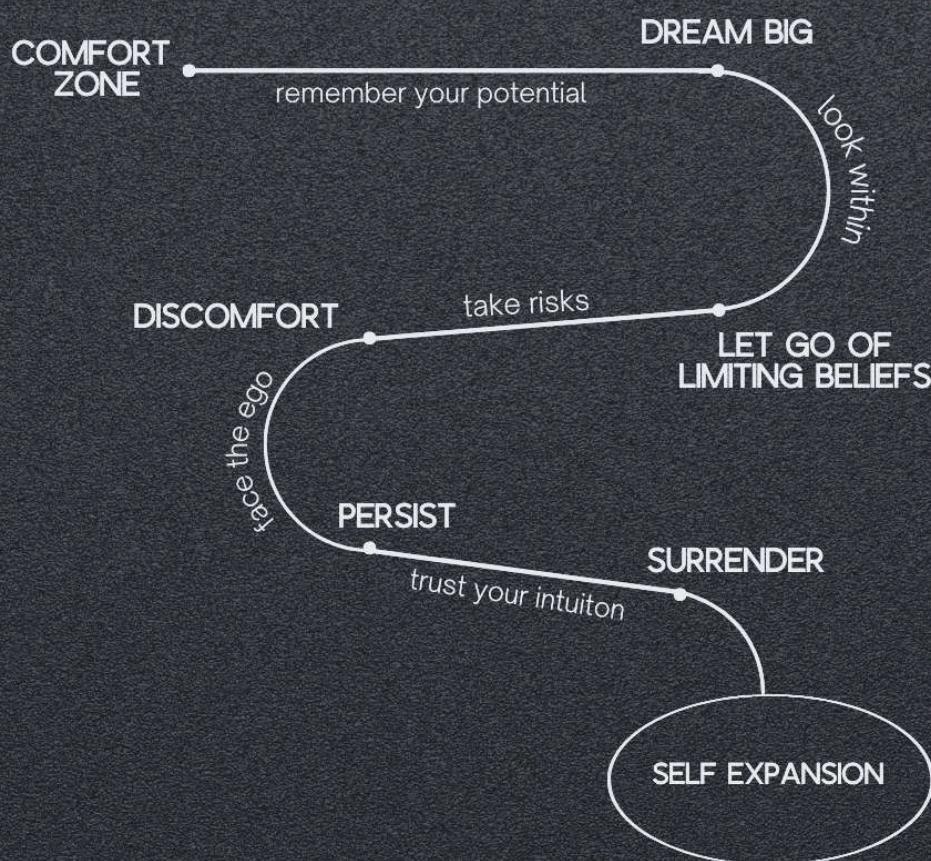
From a psychological standpoint, our comfort zone is not just a physical space but also a mental state. It's where we feel most at ease, shielded from the anxiety and stress associated with unfamiliar territory. However, while staying within our comfort zone may offer temporary relief, it ultimately hampers personal growth and psychological resilience. Psychologists often refer to this phenomenon as the **"zone of proximal development"**, a concept introduced by psychologist Lev Vygotsky. According to Vygotsky, learning and development occur most effectively when individuals operate within this zone, just beyond their current abilities. By pushing the boundaries of what we know and are comfortable with, we stimulate cognitive growth and adaptability.

Moreover, research in positive psychology suggests that embracing

discomfort can lead to greater levels of happiness and fulfillment. When we challenge ourselves and confront our fears, we experience a sense of accomplishment and self-efficacy, which are essential components of psychological well-being.

In today's rapidly evolving world, skills like creativity, collaboration, and communication are indispensable. We must embrace discomfort as a catalyst for growth, understanding that comfort and progress cannot coexist. Remember, every expert was once a beginner. So, don't let the fear of the unknown hold you back; focus on taking that first step, knowing that challenges are the stepping stones to transformation. As Zig Ziglar has said, **"You don't have to be great to start, but you do have to start to be great."**

The comfort zone is a behavioral state within which a person operates in an anxiety-neutral condition, using a limited set of behaviors to deliver a steady level of performance, usually without a sense of risk."



Scan me to read more

VAPING, A SOCIAL DILEMMA

DR. SIBTAIN MOLEDINA (MD, MMED
INTERNAL MEDICINE, PULMONOLOGIST)

Vaping, also called smoking e-cigarettes, has revolutionized the tobacco industry in the last decade. They are also known as vape pens, e-hookahs, pod mods, and tanks. It has gained popularity because of natural curiosity, novel flavors, and advertising campaigns promoting it as an aid to smoking cessation and a 'safe' alternative to cigarette smoking. But is that really the case? Is vaping helpful for someone who wants to quit smoking? Is vaping safe for those who have never smoked before? These questions commonly arise in the minds of individuals, particularly adolescents who are the primary target of vaping advertising campaigns.

E-cigarettes are essentially made up of cartridges filled with a liquid and a heating element that vaporizes the liquid to create an aerosol form that can be inhaled by the user. The liquids contain different chemicals and flavorings, usually with nicotine. This system provides a sensation similar to tobacco smoking but supposedly without the harmful effects of cigarette smoking.

However, it has been shown that the heating process of the liquid can lead to the formation of new chemicals that may be harmful to the user.

Laboratory investigations comparing the harmful effects of e-cigarettes and conventional cigarette smoking have shown that the harmful effects of e-cigarettes may be less but they do not qualify to be a safe choice or an alternative. Most of these studies have focused on short-term effects, so the long-term effects of vaping are not very clear but seem to suggest significant harm to the user.

Additionally, the concentration of nicotine in e-cigarettes is not constant. They can be available in low, medium, and high concentrations. Researchers have looked into the content of many commercially available e-cigarettes, and the majority of them have a very high level of nicotine, much more beyond the known safe concentration.

Furthermore, many e-cigarettes are mislabeled as far as the nicotine content is concerned, which has been proven in other studies. The harmful effects of nicotine are well known and using an unknown concentration of nicotine while vaping can lead to significant and permanent health effects.

The flavorings that are added to e-cigarettes have also been shown to have harmful effects on the lungs, especially the potential to cause lung cancer. Some of these flavors that were proven to have these effects include Cinnamon Ceylon, Global Smoke Caramel, and Freedom Smoke Menthol Arctic flavors. To add to the uncertainty, many black market products contain unknown chemicals. Informal sources of e-cigarettes such as those available online can pose a serious health risk to the user because the contents of e-cigarettes are not known and, at times, harmful chemicals are added to the liquid. The effect was seen when a new disease emerged in 2020 in the USA, known as EVALI (e-cigarette or vaping-associated lung injury) which led to at least 68 deaths among whom many were young individuals.

Overall the harmful effects of e-cigarettes are similar to conventional cigarette smoking and these include heart and lung disease, cancer, and a host of other illnesses. What makes it worse is the fact that nicotine addiction can be serious with e-cigarettes and will often lead to the use of conventional cigarettes in the future, which compounds the problem.

Despite all these concerns, the practice of vaping is rising daily in all parts of the world. Many adolescents and young adults are taking up this habit instead of cigarette smoking thinking that it is safe, which is far from the truth. Surveys among e-cigarette users reveal that the reasons for starting to vape are “to look cool”, peer pressure from friends, and curiosity.

The problem with this is that once the nicotine addiction kicks in, it becomes very hard to quit and the craving leads one to increased usage and trying different flavors – all of this adds to the vicious cycle of addiction and disastrous short-term and long-term effects.

What about the claim that it’s useful as an aid to quit smoking? Although this has been one method of advertisement from the manufacturers, the reality is far from this. Different surveys have shown that vaping does not help a person quit smoking.

It ends up in the person vaping and also continuing to use conventional cigarettes. There are better and safer ways to quit smoking which your doctor can guide you on, but vaping is not one of them. One often-forgotten effect of vaping is its effect on the mental and cognitive function of its users, particularly adolescents. Studies have shown that vaping can lead to depression, anxiety, violence, other substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts. Ironically, one of the reasons that adolescents start vaping is to treat their depression and sadness. But in reality, vaping can worsen depression and even lead to suicide.

Therefore, it is vital to increase awareness of the harmful effects of vaping, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Social media campaigns, and outreach programs at schools and colleges can help reduce the use of e-cigarettes and prevent the negative impact it has on physical and mental health.

There is a huge role for parents, teachers, and elder siblings in spreading awareness about this deadly habit. Social media influencers can utilize their platform to raise awareness about the harmful effects of vaping. Together, we can all play a role in improving the quality of life of our youth and children and provide them with healthier and happier lives in the future.

Postpartum DEPRESSION

DR. FATEMA M VERSI (MD, MMED OBGY) &
HINA ESMAIL (CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST)



Pregnancy and childbirth in a woman's life are of the most significant events invoking serious changes in one's life. Despite being a blissful time for many, these events may bring about feelings of extreme sadness, anxiety, or irritability in others (1). While every individual copes differently with their emotions, such feelings are often expected due to the major hormonal changes that occur during pregnancy and the following delivery.

These feelings are referred to as postpartum blues, or more commonly known as **'baby blues'**. These symptoms consist of mild depressive symptoms that are generally self-limited (i.e., clear out without treatment) and often last for a period of 2 weeks. They do not significantly impair one's ability to take care of themselves or their baby after delivery (2). However, the persistence of these feelings may significantly affect a woman's mental health and develop a disorder referred to as **Postpartum Depression**.

Postpartum depression is a type of major depressive disorder that occurs at a specific time – postpartum, which means in the period following delivery. It is characterized by depressive symptoms following delivery for more than 2 weeks, occurring within 4 to 6 weeks of delivery (1, 3).

These symptoms include feelings of depressed mood, loss of interest in previously enjoyable

activities, imbalanced sleep, imbalanced appetite, loss of energy, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, reduced ability to concentrate, irritability, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide.

WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION?

There are two sides to this coin neither of which are favorable to women. One is where postpartum depression is confused with postpartum blues and self-diagnosed, and the other is where postpartum depression is neglected and stigmatized. Unlike a physical illness, postpartum depression may not be identified in the most obvious way presenting with clear signs/symptoms. Whereas some cases are self-reported others are identified during a routine clinical visit.

It has been noted that mental disorders in low- and middle- income countries are often misdiagnosed or undiagnosed due to stigma or lack of awareness, and thus under-reported (3, 4). Keeping with this, little to no studies on postpartum depression are available in Tanzania.



One study done in 2021 among Tanzanian women reported an 8.8% prevalence of postpartum depression (5). Additionally, the estimated worldwide prevalence of a mental disorder in postpartum women is 13%, most of whom suffer from postpartum depression (4).

There are several risk factors associated with postpartum depression. The most significant of these are having a history of depression or anxiety, regardless of whether it was during pregnancy or not. Other risk factors include a history of other psychiatric disorders, experiencing stressful life events, exposure to violence (especially intimate partner violence), poor marital relationship, perceived lack of support (psychological, social, or economic) and certain cultural expectations (3, 6, 7).

Additionally, studies have reported some factors regarding delivery or the baby that may also have an impact on the mother's mental health and develop a risk for postpartum depression. Such as having poor physical health during and after delivery, having negative birth outcomes (e.g., pre-term delivery, low birth weight, etc.), having difficulty breastfeeding, having a child outside of marriage, and having unplanned pregnancies (3, 4, 7). These may be explained by the difficult transition for women into motherhood being exaggerated by other stressful events.

The weight of concern for postpartum depression can be identified by its implications on not only the mother but also the infant, the family, and society in general. Together with poor mental health, mothers suffering from postpartum depression may present with poor physical health, such as weight problems, developing chronic diseases, and having an overall low quality of life often due to self-neglect^{1, 3}. It has been reported that women with postpartum depression also present with risky behaviors such as substance abuse, and have an increased risk of committing suicide (1, 4).

Much literature has also documented the negative effect on children whose mothers suffered from postpartum, these include delayed developmental stages (e.g., delayed talking, delayed walking, etc.), poor cognitive functioning, poor academic performance, emotional instability, behavioral problems such as violent and/or risky behaviors, and

increased vulnerability to mental health problems (1, 3). The effect on children may be explained by the neglected mother-child relationship, whereby mothers suffering from postpartum depression are less likely to build a healthy and secure relationship with their child, and thus restrict the child's fundamental exposure for proper growth and development.

In addition to this is the impact of postpartum depression on other family relationships, most importantly with one's spouse. Its symptoms together with neglecting their own and their infant's health, may raise stress and anxiety for family members resulting in emotional strain in the relationships. Lastly, postpartum depression may also bring about societal challenges such as increased healthcare costs for the postpartum women and possibly their children, heightened concern for growing mental health challenges among the future generation, decreased productivity in social activities as well as employment, etc (4, 6).

Prevention of postpartum depression may begin at spreading awareness of mental health and its disorders amongst societies to identify the risk for postpartum depression among pregnant women during pregnancy and provide appropriate resources for support. Additionally, identifying and reporting of any unusual symptoms mentioned above during pregnancy or early on following delivery may help one get the correct management and support in time to prevent the progression/worsening of this condition.

NB: If you might be experiencing any of the above-mentioned symptoms or any unusual symptoms, please visit a clinician for the correct guidance and support.



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