

ISSUES OF MENTAL HEALTH: ROLE OF A FACILITATOR

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Abstract: Mental Health has become one of the unidentified illness among adolescents today. People suffering with mental disorder do not speak up due to the fear of society, community or cultural beliefs that may produce negative effect not only on the person suffering but also on the family. This paper helps in identifying mental health problems and how to respond to such people. I also lay emphasis on the responsibility of a facilitator in building resilience in youth.

Index Term: Mental Health, Disorders, Community, Facilitators.

INTRODUCTION:

Mental health in individuals, families and communities is the most vital issue to consider. World Health Organization defines Mental health as 'a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.'^[1] A mental disorder is any illness that effects an individual's emotions, thoughts or behavior. Mental disorders and poverty go hand in hand. Poor people with mental disorders are less able to access appropriate care due to lack of awareness regarding available treatments and services, and lack of money to pay for them Knowledge and beliefs about the recognition, management and prevention of mental health is known as Mental Health Literacy (MHL).^[2] Components of MHL has the sufficient knowledge and skill in supporting people who are suffering with mental health disorders. A trained facilitator with efficient skills can provide necessary help to someone experiencing a mental health problem before professional help is obtained.

1. FACTORS EFFECTING MENTAL HEALTH:

Mental disorder can effect both women and men of any age group. It is common in one in five adults in their life time. It is not easy to say just by looking at someone whether they are actually suffering from mental disorder. Mental disorders include a variety of different conditions ranging from more common problems such as excessive fear and worry (anxiety) or unusually sad mood (depression), to more severe behavioral problems that can involve suspiciousness, violence, agitation and other unusual behaviours (psychosis).^[3] There is no one single cause of a mental disorder. Most of them are caused by a combination of factors such as:

- Stressful life events such as competence, work pressure, family pressure
- Biological factors such as chemical imbalance in brain chronic illness, brain injury
- Individual psychological factors such as poor self-esteem, negative thinking
- Social factors such as family conflict, unemployment, infertility
- Adverse life experiences during childhood such as violence and abuse, neglect, death of parents or other traumatic experiences.
- Public also believe in myths as mental disorder being possession by evil, black magic or even Karma. Supernatural, astrological and religious explanations for mental disorder are common in India.^[4]

2. SYMTOMS OF MENTAL DISORDER:

The symptoms of mental disorders can be physical or psychological. It's not always possible to identify people with mental disorder by just looking at them. Understanding the symptoms will help a facilitator to better know a person who is suffering with mental disorder. Types of symptoms are:

- Physical symptoms are those which cause physically such as headaches, sleeplessness, weakness, bad appetite, etc.
- Psychological symptoms are those caused by the mental functioning of body.
 - Feeling symptoms: those that are emotional such as sadness, feeling bad, fear, etc.
 - Thinking symptoms: those that effect the thinking such as understanding, concentration, low memory, being judgmental thinking something bad is going to happen.
 - Behavioural symptoms: are those that affect the way people act or what they do such as being aggressive, self-harm e.g. cutting the skin, and attempting suicide.
 - Imagining symptoms: are those that are not happening in real such as hearing voice, smelling things that are not there, seeing people around, etc.

3. TYPES OF MENTAL DISORDERS:

Mental disorders can be divided into two main categories:

- Common Mental Disorders are which include symptoms that we all experience from time to time, for example, feelings of fear, worry or sadness.

- Severe Mental Disorders which are often difficult for the general community to understand, for example, hearing voices or expressing strange or unusual beliefs.

Severe Mental Disorders are further divided into:

- Psychotic episode: These are behavioural problems that effects suddenly. It is caused by a combination of factors including genetics, brain chemistry, stress and other factors such as the use of drugs or intense depression.^[5]
- Schizophrenia: It effects young people below 30 years age. False beliefs e.g. thinking others are trying to harm him/her, or believing that his/her mind is being controlled by others false perceptions as seeing, smelling or tasting things that are not there, and most commonly hearing voices that are not there strange behaviours e.g. talking to him/herself.
- Bipolar disorder: : The person experiences extreme mood swings between low mood (depression), high mood (mania) and normal mood such as irritability, rapid talking, unable to be still and relax, beliefs that he/she is special or superhuman.

4. WHO CAN BE A FACILITATORS:

A facilitator could be anyone who helps a group of people come together with common objectives and helps them achieve these objectives. Facilitators need to be able to engage a group, listen to them and help them come to conclusions together. As a good facilitator, you need to create an environment where every opinion is valued. It's also important for a facilitator to make them feel comfortable to express their thoughts, opinions and experiences. Most important is not to be judgmental rather should have a good listening skills.

5. ROLE OF A FACILITATOR:

Many Global Mental Health groups have designed manuals for facilitator's which provides:

- A plan for each training session including the purpose, timing and required materials
- Background information for each session
- A series of case studies that provide realistic scenarios describing people possibly experiencing mental disorders
- Suggestions for participatory activities and role-plays
- Images and diagrams to assist in explaining concepts and frameworks.

Basic responsibilities of a facilitator:

As a facilitator you need to know your role while communicating with the different groups such as:

- **Prepare in Advance:** As a facilitator you need to be prepared yourself in advance about how much time is need, what questions you will ask and how well you can make the group clear about the objectives at the beginning of each session.
- **Reach Young ones expectations:** Make a way to interact, identify the members in the group and give opportunity to everyone to open up.
- **Guide them in sharing and learning:** Group Activity based learning can help them learn and share their ideas, if not good at discussions make them do paper work and express their thoughts.
- **Engage in communication:** Some may feel shy to talk, or feel less important in group, as a facilitator identify and call each individual with their names. Tell small stories of your experience and ask to summarize.
- **Be a support system:** Making them feel comfortable and assure that its ok to become sad or feel low at moments. Do not criticize or make fun of any one, listen to what they have to say and keep it completely confidential.

CONCLUSION:

Promoting positive mental health in and around our surroundings is a responsibility of every individual. There is a need to develop the knowledge, resources and skills in health and safety at every level. It's not only the job of community health workers but every teacher who could be a good facilitator in schools and colleges to understand and identify psychological differences in children. In my further analysis I would study the mental health problems in workplaces and the need of proper guidelines and facilitators in prevention of mental health problems at workplaces.

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