

### Mental Health and Ayurveda

Mental health is defined as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to his or her community.” Emotional, psychological and social well-being are the key aspects of mental health.

A report by the World Health Organization (WHO) has enumerated that about 12% of the global burden of disease is due to mental disorders. Developing countries like India are witnessing a disproportionately large increase in the burden attributable to mental disorders in the coming decades.

“..... प्रसन्नात्मैन्द्रियमनः स्वस्थ इति अभिधीयते॥ (सुश्रुत संहिता सूत्रस्थान १५ / १०)”

“.....Prasanna atmendriya manah’ part of definition of *swasthya*—health reflects mental health and well-being.

Ayurveda has given due importance to mental health as explained in its definition of health, which covers all its domains, i.e., a pleasantly disposed and contented mind (*mana*), senses (*indriya*) and soul (*atma*). A controlled and coordinated mind in the positive sense plays a pivotal role in proper functioning of a biological system with contented sense and soul and also in the attainment of *Sukha Ayu* — harmonious and happy life. This control and coordination of mind are better attained by following Yoga practice and leading a Yogic life.

*Mana* is a constitution of three operational qualities: *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. Disharmony in the balance among them brings about mental illness which is known as *Manovikara*. Various diseases of psychological origin under the spectrum of *Graha Roga*, *Unmada*, *Apasmara*, *Chittodvega*, *Chittavasada*, etc., are detailed in Ayurveda literature.

Mental health is emerging as a significant challenge where Ayurveda can become the key to address this. Ayurveda approaches mental illness through psychological, spiritual and behavioral interventions rather than a pure pharmacological approach. This multipronged approach of *Satvavajaya chikitsa*, *Daivavyapasraya chikitsa*, *Yuktivyapasraya chikitsa* and following *Sadvritta* (code of good conduct) in daily regimen in accordance to Ayurveda can produce significant results. Ayurveda practitioners act as counselors because their system principles meet this demand and the systems focus on wellness rather than illness care, and it is enriched with many single drug and compound formulations with *Medhya* properties which are indicated and are beneficial in the management of various conditions related with mental health. Various researches have also been taken up to explore the effectiveness of Ayurveda intervention in various psychological disorders with promising results. Further mental illness is a severe condition just like any other disease, and it is advisable that one should approach a health practitioner and Yoga expert for proper consultation and management.



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