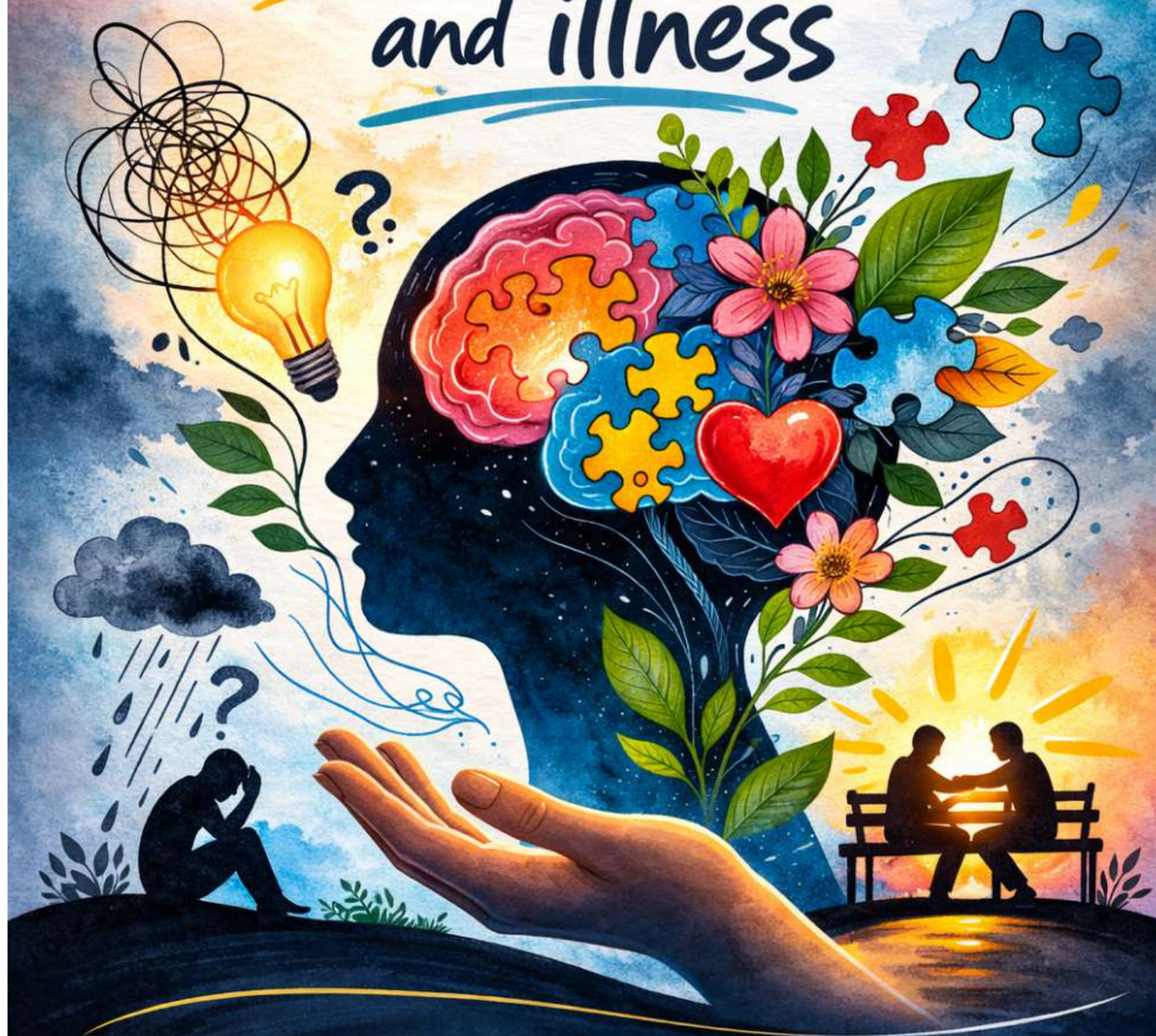


Myths and facts about mental health and illness



By Prof (Dr) Priyadarshee Patra

MYTH 1

Mental illness is a sign of weakness.



FACT:

Mental illnesses are medical conditions caused by a combination of biological, psychological and social factors.



MYTH 2

People with mental illness are dangerous.



FACT:

Most people with mental illness are **not violent** and are more likely to be victims than perpetrators.



MYTH 3

Mental illness is rare.



FACT:

Mental illnesses are very common. About **1 in 4** people experience a mental health problem during their lifetime.



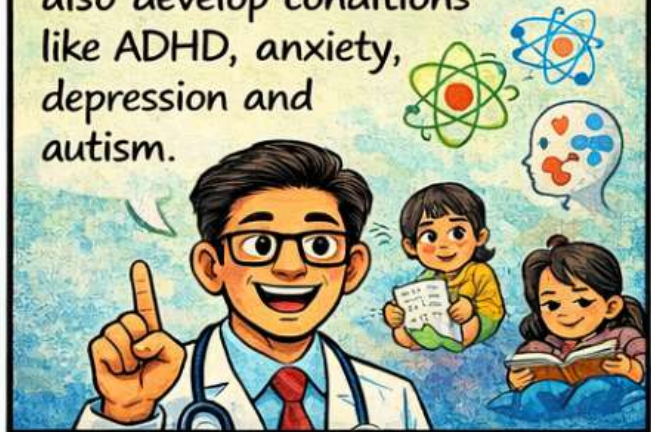
MYTH 4

Children don't get mental illness.



FACT:

Children and adolescents can also develop conditions like ADHD, anxiety, depression and autism.



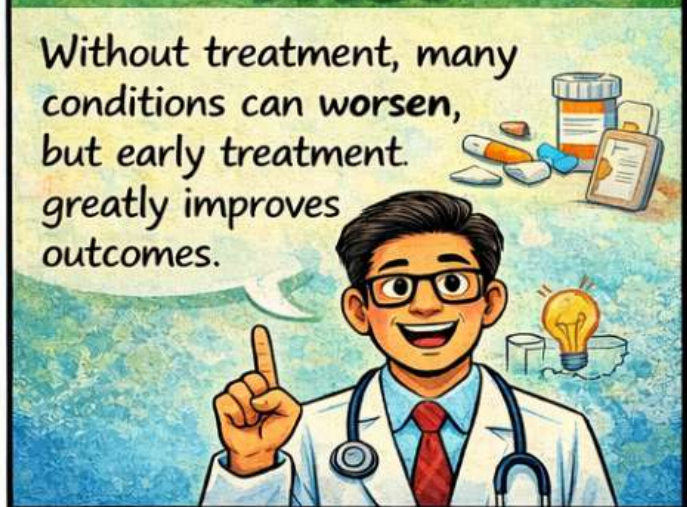
MYTH 5

Mental illness will go away if you ignore it.



FACT:

Without treatment, many conditions can worsen, but early treatment greatly improves outcomes.



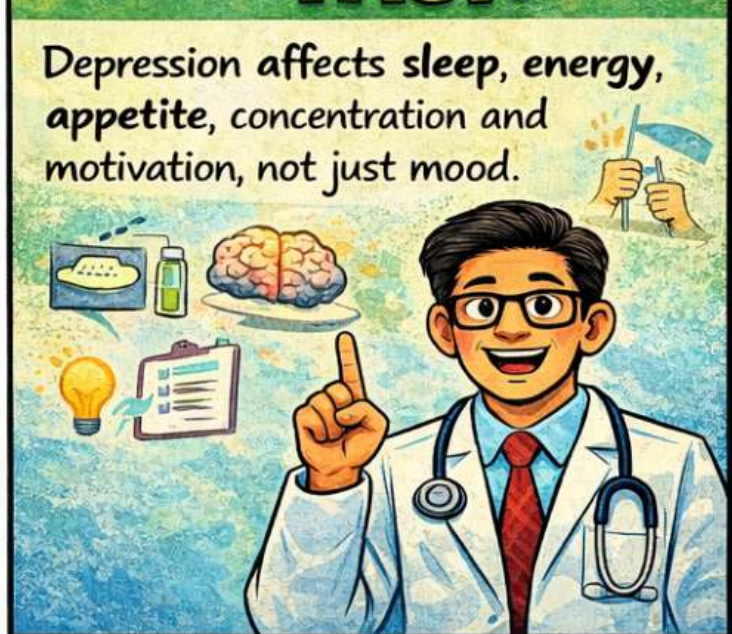
MYTH 6

Depression is just sadness.



FACT:

Depression affects sleep, energy, appetite, concentration and motivation, not just mood.



MYTH 7

People with schizophrenia have split personalities.



FACT:

Schizophrenia involves disturbances in thinking, perception and behaviour, not multiple personalities.



MYTH 8

People with mental illness can't work.



FACT:

With treatment and support, many people with mental illness lead productive lives.



MYTH 9

Mental illness only affects adults.



FACT:

Mental illness can affect people of any age.



MYTH 10

Psychiatric medicines change your personality.



FACT:

These medicines help restore balance in brain chemistry and help people feel like themselves again.



MYTH 11

Antidepressants are addictive.



FACT:

Antidepressants are **not** addictive and do not produce cravings.



MYTH 12

Once you start psychiatric medication, you must take it forever.



FACT:

Treatment duration depends on the condition. Many people take medication only for a limited period.



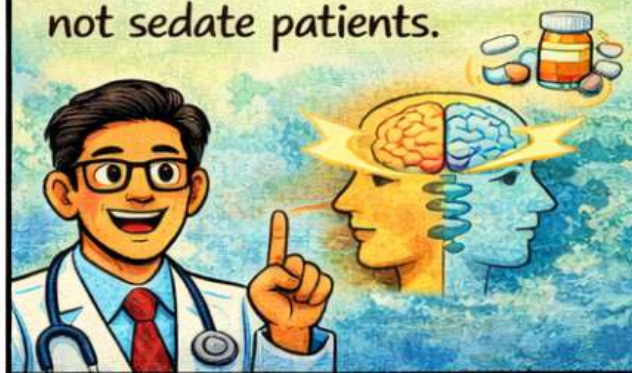
MYTH 13

"Psychiatric medications make people like zombies."



FACT:

Modern medicines aim to improve functioning, not sedate patients.



MYTH 14

Medication means the illness is severe.



FACT:

Medication is simply one of many treatment tools.



MYTH 15

"Psychiatric medications damage the brain."



FACT:

Many medications actually protect brain functioning and improve recovery.



MYTH 16

"Taking psychiatric medication is a lifelong stigma."



FACT:

Seeking treatment is a sign of responsibility and self-care.



MYTH 17

"Herbal remedies are always safer."



FACT:

Herbal products can also have side effects and drug interactions.



MYTH 18

"If medication works, psychotherapy is unnecessary."



FACT:

Often the best results come from combining medication and therapy.



MYTH 19

"Psychotherapy is only for severe mental illness."



FACT:

Therapy can help with stress, relationships, coping and personal growth.



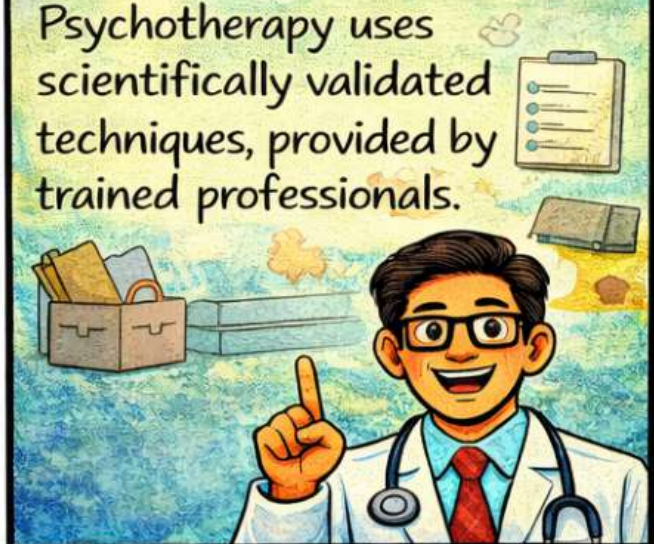
MYTH 20

"Talking to friends is the same as therapy."



FACT:

Psychotherapy uses scientifically validated techniques, provided by trained professionals.



MYTH 21

"Therapy takes forever."



FACT:

Many therapies are brief and structured, sometimes, lasting only a few months.



MYTH 22

"Therapists just listen silently."



FACT:

Therapists actively teach skills and strategies to manage problems.



MYTH 23

"Strong people don't need therapy."



FACT:

Seeking help shows strength and insight.



MYTH 24

"Therapy is only about talking about childhood."



FACT:

Many therapies are brief and structured, sometimes lasting only a few months.



MYTH 25

"Therapy works instantly."



FACT:

Like learning any skill, therapy takes time and practice.



MYTH 26

"Therapists will judge you."



FACT:

Therapists provide a safe, confidential and non-judgmental space.



MYTH 27

"Only people with 'big problems' go to therapy."



FACT:

Anyone can benefit from improving emotional wellbeing



MYTH 28

"Mental illness is caused by poor parenting."



FACT:

Mental illnesses arise from a complex interaction of biological, psychological and environmental factors, not simply parenting style.



MYTH 29

"People with mental illness cannot make important decisions."



FACT:

Most people with mental illness retain decision-making capacity and can lead independent lives with appropriate support.



MYTH 30

"Mental health problems mean a person is weak."



FACT:

Mental health problems can affect anyone regardless of strength, intelligence or character.



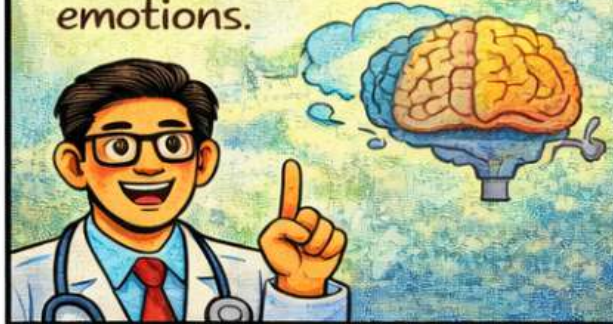
MYTH 31

"Mental illness is not a real medical condition."



FACT:

Mental illnesses are recognized medical disorders involving changes in brain function, behaviour and emotions.



MYTH 32

"People with mental illness are unpredictable."



FACT:

Most people with mental illness behave no differently from others especially when receiving treatment.



MYTH 33

"If someone looks fine, they cannot have a mental illness."



FACT:

Many mental health conditions are invisible illnesses that are not always obvious externally.



MYTH 34

"Mental illness is a permanent condition."



FACT:

Many people recover completely or manage symptoms successfully with treatment and support.



MYTH 35

"Mental illness happens only to people with difficult lives."



FACT:

Mental illness can affect anyone regardless of background, success or lifestyle.



MYTH 36

"Mental illness is contagious."



FACT:

Mental illnesses cannot be transmitted from one person to another.



MYTH 37

"Psychiatric medicines work immediately."



FACT:

Most psychiatric medications take several weeks to show full benefit.



MYTH 38

"All psychiatric medications have severe side effects."



FACT:

Most medications are well tolerated, and doctors carefully balance benefits and risks.



MYTH 39

"Medication alone is enough for recovery."



FACT:

Recovery often improves with psychotherapy, lifestyle changes and social support.



MYTH 40

"Mental health problems always require hospitalization."



FACT:

Most mental health conditions are treated successfully in outpatient settings.



MYTH 41

"People with mental illness cannot maintain relationships."



FACT:

With support and treatment, people with mental illness can have healthy relationships.



MYTH 42

"Mental illness always runs in families."



FACT:

Genetics may increase risk, but environment and life experiences also play important roles.



MYTH

"Stress alone causes mental illness."



FACT:

Stress can contribute, but mental illness usually results from multiple interacting factors.



MYTH

"Mental illness is a modern problem."



FACT:

Mental illnesses have existed throughout human history.



MYTH

"Psychiatrists only prescribe medicines."



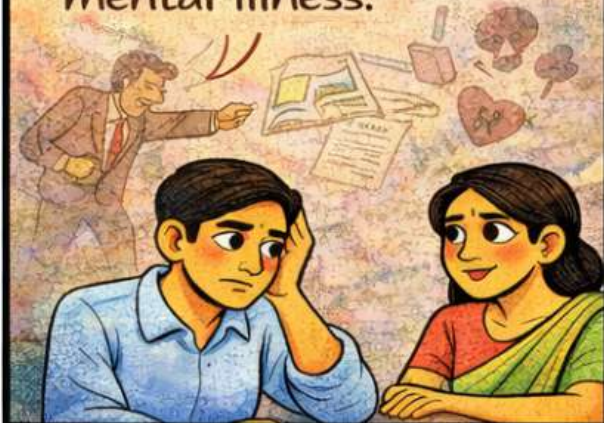
FACT:

Psychiatrists provide comprehensive care including psychotherapy.



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"Stress alone causes mental illness."



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MYTH 45

"Psychiatrists only prescribe medicines."



FACT:

Psychiatrists provide comprehensive care including psychotherapy.



MYTH 46

"Talking about suicide will put the idea in someone's mind."



FACT:

Open and supportive conversations about suicide can actually reduce risk and help people seek help.



MYTH 47

"Exercise and positive thinking alone can cure mental illness."



FACT:

Healthy lifestyle habits help, but many conditions require professional treatment.



MYTH 48

"Exercise and positive thinking alone can cure mental illness."



FACT:

Healthy lifestyle habits help, but many conditions require professional treatment.



MYTH 49

"People who talk about suicide are only seeking attention."



FACT:

Talking about suicide is often a sign of deep distress and a cry for help. Such statements should always be taken seriously.



MYTH 50

"Only people with severe mental illness die by suicide."



FACT:

Suicide can occur in people with or without diagnosed mental illness, often influenced by stress, crisis, or life difficulties.

