



## MIND MATTERS : MENTAL HEALTH IN A CHANGING WORLD



**From Doubt to Dominance: Sanju Samson's Mental Strength Story**

Read more on Page 4 >>



**Hidden Kerala Story: Rising Suicide Cases in Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam.**

Read more on Page 4 >>

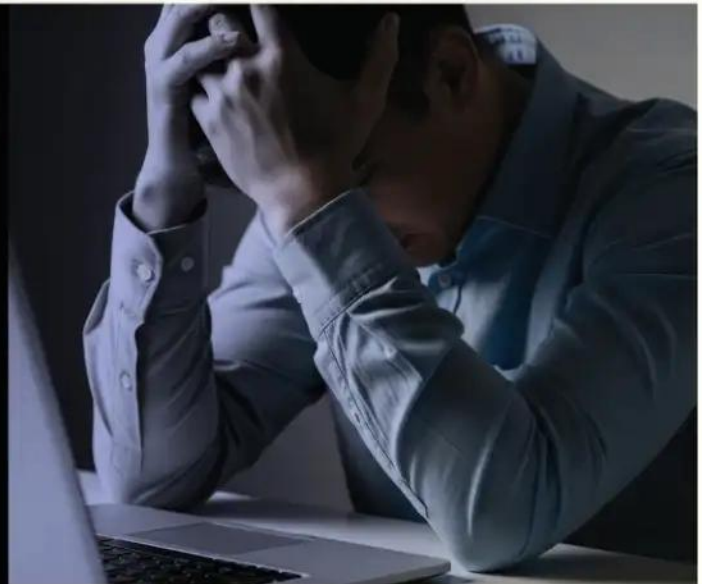


**EXPERT TALK Navigating the Modern Mental Health Landscape**

Read more on Page 5 >>

## BURNOUT SYNDROME: A 21ST-CENTURY OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD

The term "burnout" is a workplace-related syndrome caused by chronic workplace stress that has not been effectively managed. It is characterized by: 1. Emotional exhaustion 2. Increased mental detachment or thoughts of negativity towards work 3. Reduced professional efficiency.



### Coronasomnia: The Silent

### Pandemic Affecting Mental Health

During the COVID-19 pandemic, sleep disturbances increased dramatically worldwide, a phenomenon often referred to as coronasomnia. A global meta-analysis on insomnia reported that the prevalence ranged up to 88% during the pandemic, far higher than the 10–40% observed before COVID-19. Sleep issues were particularly common among survivors; one study found that 76% of non-hospitalized patients reported insomnia, with 23% experiencing severe symptoms. Among individuals with long COVID-19, nearly 78% reported persistent sleep disturbances, often linked to anxiety, depression, stress, and cognitive impairment. These disruptions significantly affected mental health by increasing emotional distress and mood instability. Insomnia also appeared to influence after recovery, as affected individuals showed longer illness duration compared to those without sleep problems.

## Connected, Yet Alone: The Mental Health Paradox of Social Media

Excessive social media use is increasingly associated with anxiety and sadness in the current digital era. 'Psychological anguish' is caused by several factors, including social comparison, Fear of missing out (FOMO), cyberbullying and sleep disruption.

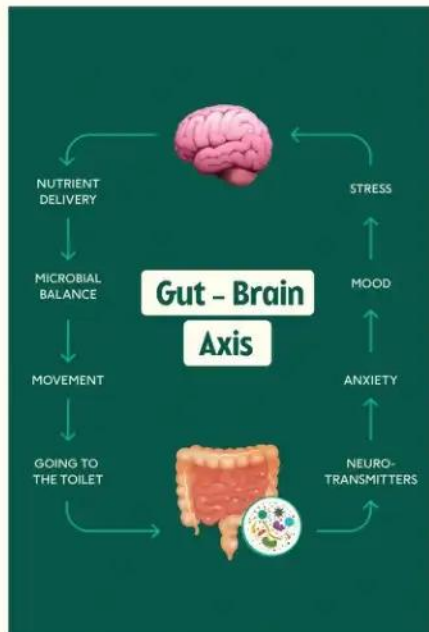
While active engagement can provide connection and support, passive scrolling is often linked to reduced well-being. Crucially, the effect is usage-dependent. Social media has both benefits and drawbacks; therefore, BALANCE IS KEY. In order to preserve mental health, mindful use and real-life connections are essential.





## Talking Helps: Breaking the Myths Around Therapy

Therapy is not just for serious mental illness but for everyone dealing with life's difficulties. Counselling helps individuals in the management of relationships, stress and emotions through structured approaches such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). Psychiatry, in contrast deals with medical treatment, including medicines for disorders like depression. Seeking therapy is a step towards strength and self-awareness, not a sign of weakness. Maintaining one's emotional and physical well-being is equally crucial. "Taking care of your mind is not a luxury – it is a necessity."



## The Gut-Brain Connection: Where Mental Health Meets Biology

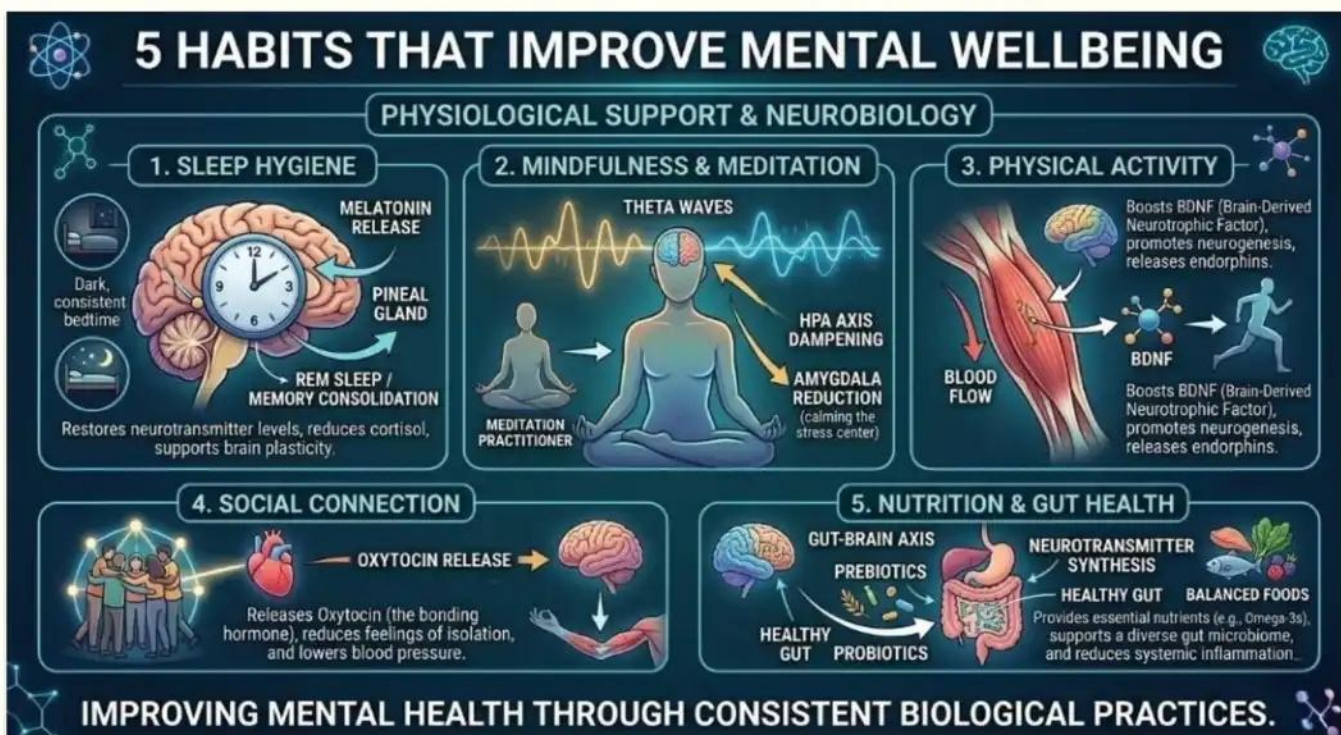
Mental health isn't just psychological, it is deeply biological. The gut-brain axis acts as a biological "phone line," as mediated by vagus nerve, facilitates constant communication between our digestive system and brain. With 95% of the body's serotonin produced in the digestive tract, our microbiome directly regulates mood, anxiety, and sleep. This physiological link highlights the role of physical health in shaping emotional well-being.



## Digital Detox: Unplug to Recharge Your Mind

Digital detox can play a key role in improving mental well-being by reducing stress, enhancing sleep quality and boosting overall mood. Studies suggest that even short breaks from digital devices can positively impact emotional health, while excessive screen time is linked to anxiety, poor sleep, and low mood. Rather than completely avoiding screens, adopting mindful usage is more effective. Simple steps like setting app limits, scheduling screen-free hours, and engaging in offline activities can help build healthier, sustainable digital habits. Balance your screen; protect your mind.

# 5 Habits for mental wellbeing and its physiology



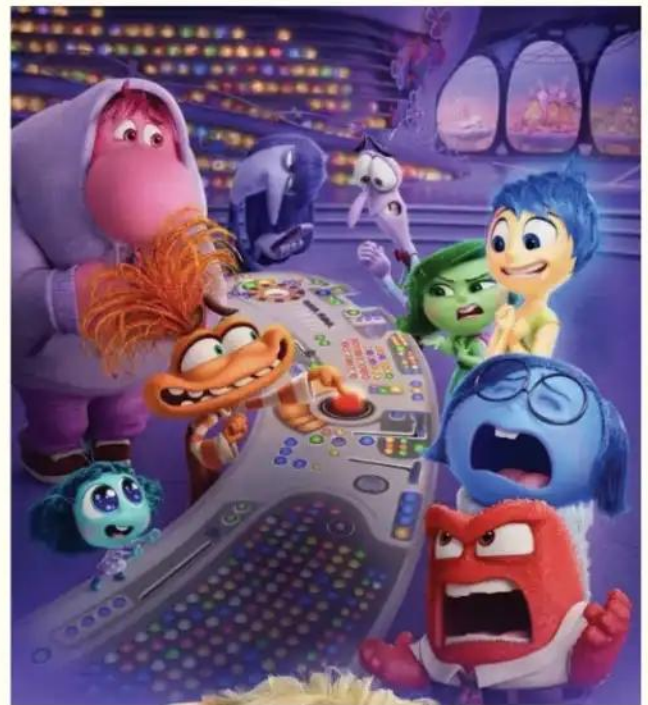


## EXERCISE: MEDICINE FOR THE MIND

Regular exercise stimulates release of neurotrophic factors, which stimulate the growth and formation of neural connections. You feel better as a result of this improvement in brain function. The hippocampus, the part of the brain that aids in mood regulation, is smaller in depressed individuals. Exercise promotes the formation of nerve cells in the hippocampus, strengthening nerve cell connections and reducing depression. Move More, Feel Better.

## Every Emotion Matters: The Psychology Behind Inside Out

Mainstream media often fumble mental health, relying on stereotypes or over-romanticizing trauma. "Pixar's Inside Out" movie franchise makes complex psychological concepts accessible and vividly visualizes emotional regulation—how we recognize, process, and manage our feelings. The movie teaches that forced positivity fails and how sadness is not a villain but a vital emotion that elicits empathy and healing. Its sequel highlights how unchecked results in a paralyzing panic attack. Both movies reveal a powerful truth: suppressing emotions can be harmful, while accepting our complex, messy feelings build long-term cognitive resilience. Every emotion has a physiological and evolutionary purpose, and acknowledging them is the first step towards a healthier mind.



# MENTAL HEALTH MYTHBUSTERS

DISMANTLING COMMON MENTAL HEALTH MYTHS

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <div style="text-align: center; background-color: #007bff; color: white; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold;">1. THE 'WEAKNESS' MYTH</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><b>MYTH</b></p> <p><b>MYTH</b> I'm so weak....</p> <p>Mental health struggles are a sign of character flaw or weakness.</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><b>FACT</b></p> <p><b>FACT</b> I'm getting help, and I'm strong!</p> <p>Asking for help is a sign of immense courage and strength.</p> </div> </div> | <div style="text-align: center; background-color: #28a745; color: white; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold;">2. THE 'FAMILY SHAME' MYTH</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><b>MYTH</b></p> <p><b>MYTH</b> Discussing mental health brings shame to our family name.</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><b>FACT</b></p> <p><b>FACT</b> Being open and supportive strengthens family bonds and fights stigma.</p> </div> </div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <div style="text-align: center; background-color: #ffc107; color: white; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold;">3. THE 'LAZY CHILD' MYTH</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><b>MYTH</b></p> <p><b>MYTH</b> You're just lazy!</p> <p>A child's poor performance means they aren't trying hard enough.</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><b>FACT</b></p> <p><b>FACT</b> Often, struggles are signs of learning issues, anxiety, or depression that need understanding.</p> </div> </div>   | <div style="text-align: center; background-color: #6f42c1; color: white; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold;">4. THE 'GENDER EMOTION' MYTH</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><b>MYTH</b></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>GIRLS ARE EMOTIONAL</b></p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>BOYS SHOULD BE STRONG</b></p> </div> </div> <p><b>MYTH</b> Girls are 'just emotional' and boys must always show strength.</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><b>FACT</b></p> <p><b>FACT</b> It's okay to feel. I can be vulnerable, too.</p> <p>Everyone has emotions and can be resilient, regardless of their gender.</p> </div> </div> |

\*A Public Health Advocacy Initiative for Mental Wellness.\*

# ICONS TAKE ON MENTAL HEALTH



## From Doubt to Dominance: Sanju Samson's Mental Strength Story

Sanju Samson, a stalwart cricketer from Kerala, gained early recognition for his elegant batting and performances in the IPL. Despite his potential, his international journey has often been uncertain, with irregular inclusion in the team and high expectations creating significant mental pressure. Samson has admitted that these challenges led to periods of self-doubt and emotional strain and he talked about the mental struggles encountered throughout his career. His masterclass innings against the West Indies became the highest individual score by an Indian in a successful run chase in ICC Men's T20 World Cup history. Recognizing the mental nature of his challenges, Samson highlighted the importance of psychological strength in elite sport. Thanks to this internet detox.



## Prioritizing Mental Health Beyond the Spotlight : ft Parvathy Thiruvothu

Actress Parvathy Thiruvothu has openly spoken about her experiences with panic attacks and clinical depression, emphasizing the importance of mental health awareness. She revealed that although she received a formal diagnosis later in life, she had experienced depressive symptoms since childhood. For years, she believed she had to cope alone, but later realized that ignoring emotional distress only worsened it. Seeking therapy helped her in addressing all her struggles with the support of friends and family. Parvathy highlights that acknowledging mental health challenges and seeking help are vital steps toward healing.

# Hidden Kerala Story: Rising Suicide Cases in Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam.

As per the National Crime Records Bureau 2023 report, Kerala reported 10,972 suicides, marking an 8% rise from 2022. The state's suicide rate reached 30.6 per lakh population, ranking third highest in the country and the highest among unemployed individuals. District-level figures reveal notable disparities, with Thiruvananthapuram reporting the highest number of deaths, followed by Kollam and Ernakulam. Experts link this increase largely to the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, including extended periods of isolation, heightened anxiety, and financial hardships (layoff, debt, etc.). High-risk groups include adolescents, elderly, and tribal youth, who are further affected by factors like alcohol misuse and social pressures. Men represent about 80% of the total cases, with family-related issues being a leading cause. Overall, Kerala's suicide rate being more than double the national average underscores the pressing need for improved mental health support and focused preventive measures.

## Stalwarts of Public Health



### Dorothea Dix and the Birth of Mental Health Reform

Dorothea Dix, known as the "Voice for the Voiceless," exposed the inhumane conditions in which mentally ill patients were confined in prisons and poorhouses, sparking widespread reform. Her relentless advocacy led to the establishment of over 30 mental hospitals across the United States and Europe and helped shift mental health care into the responsibility of governments rather than families alone. During the American Civil War, she served as the Superintendent of Army Nurses, further demonstrating her commitment to care and service. Believing firmly in dignity and humane treatment for all, her efforts laid the foundation for modern mental health care systems.



### The Finnish Way to Mental Well-Being

Finland, consistently ranked the world's happiest nation in the World Happiness Report, sustains mental wellbeing through equity, trust, and community-centred governance. A strong sense of social cohesion ensures that everyone is valued and supported by their communities. The Finnish welfare state provides a safety net that ensures access to healthcare, education, and social services for all citizens. This egalitarian ethos fosters a deep sense of belonging, security and collective responsibility.

Sauna culture plays a significant role in Finland's social cohesion. Sauna culture is deeply ingrained in Finnish society, offering a space for relaxation, reflection, and socializing. Whether in urban centers or remote villages, saunas provide a refuge from the stresses of daily life, promoting physical and mental well-being. The act of socializing in saunas fosters bonds between friends, families, and communities, enriching the social fabric of Finnish society. Its decentralized mental health care model delivers services at municipal levels, prioritizing early intervention, prevention, and stigma reduction. Although Finland faced high suicide rates in the 1990s, the National Suicide Prevention Project and continued policy efforts led to a marked decline through awareness, crisis services, and community engagement. Finland demonstrates how holistic, preventive, and socially cohesive strategies can sustainably enhance population mental wellbeing. (Reference: Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare)

## INTERVIEW:



### Dr Unnikrishna Pisharody

Head of Psychiatry Department

Ananthapuri Hospitals and Research Institute, Trivandrum

### EXPERT TALK Navigating the Modern Mental Health Landscape

*"Mental illness must be treated with the same urgency and lack of judgment as any physical ailment."*

**Q:** How has the landscape of mental health changed, and who is most affected today?

**A:** While public awareness is growing, psychological well-being still lacks the critical parity it deserves with physical health. We are seeing a sharp rise in challenges across all age groups. This is heavily driven by intense academic and career pressures, societal comparisons, and the weight of high parental expectations, which are increasingly impacting even young children.

**Q:** What toll do modern technology and social media take on our mental well-being?

**A:** Technology is a double-edged sword. It offers immense convenience but fosters a dangerous reliance on self-diagnosis via search engines rather than consulting professionals. Furthermore, the post-pandemic spike in excessive screen and social media use has led to increased distractions, disrupted sleep, and noticeably declining academic performance.

**Q:** What are the early red flags of distress, and when should someone seek help?

**A:** Key warning signs include sudden drops in academic or professional performance, disrupted sleep patterns, withdrawal from family and social activities, and excessive phone use. If you observe these behavioral changes, step away from internet diagnoses and seek help from a qualified professional immediately.

**Q:** How can families, workplaces, and institutions help dismantle the stigma?

**A:** Mental illness must be treated with the same urgency and lack of judgment as any physical ailment. Supportive families and empathetic workplaces that address issues privately are vital for recovery. Notably, stigma often hits harder in highly educated circles, where individuals may hide their condition. To combat this, comprehensive institutional support and patient education after recovery are essential to ensure long-term well-being and treatment adherence.

# INFOTAINMENT

## Mind Behind the Faces-

Identify the mental health disorder portrayed in the films

### ACROSS



3.



4.



5.



7.

### DOWN



1.



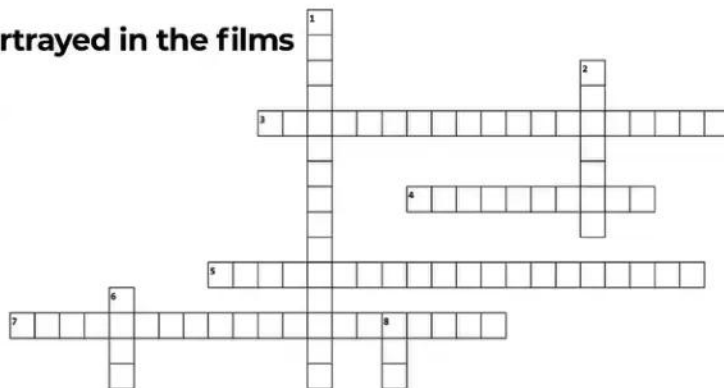
2.



6.



8.



## GUESS THE DISORDERS

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**"Win  
₹1000!"**

Find all the answers to the Crossword and Quiz and email them to [public.health.wire@gmail.com](mailto:public.health.wire@gmail.com). We also accept student artwork and mental health quotes for our next issue!"

## IMPORTANT DATES CALENDAR

### MARCH

- March 1 – Self-Injury Awareness Day
- March 20 – International Day of Happiness
- March 30 – World Bipolar Day

### APRIL

- April 2 – World Autism Awareness Day
- April 7 – World Health Day (often includes mental health themes)
- April (full month) – Stress Awareness Month

### MAY

- May 1-31 – Mental Health Awareness Month
- May 6 – World Maternal Mental Health Day (first Wednesday of May varies yearly)

### JUNE

- June (full month) – PTSD Awareness Month
- June 27 – PTSD Awareness Day.

## Unlocking the Self: The Power of the Johari Window

The Johari Window is a psychological tool developed by Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham in 1955 that improves self-awareness and helps to understand themselves with better communication with others by dividing personal awareness into four areas.



## THE COMIC STRIP

### BREAK THE SILENCE: Navigating Mental Health

Public Health Newsletter



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## GIPH CORNER

We are thrilled to announce the commencement of the 9th batch of our Master of Public Health (MPH) program! It is wonderful to see our community grow with a new cohort of passionate individuals ready to shape the future of public health.



We are delighted to continue the tradition of hosting distinguished guest speakers who enrich the academic environment at GIPH. For us as Master's in Public Health students, these sessions offer valuable insights from real-world practice and global perspectives, while encouraging critical thinking and meaningful dialogue.



This edition featured a distinguished panel of speakers, including Dr. Madhav Ram Balakrishnan (WHO Geneva), Dr. Sandhya Sukumaran (USA), Smt. Sreeja Syam (Journalist), Smt. Hemalatha C.K., Smt. Echmukutty (Malayalam author), Smt. Priya S. (Chief Judge, CDRC), Dr. Sanjeev Nair (Chairman, NTEP South Zone II), Dr. Renu Singh (UK), and Dr. Dennis John. Their diverse expertise enriched academic discussions and inspired active engagement within the GIPH community.

## Newsletter 4<sup>th</sup> Edition outreach

We are pleased to note that copies of our newsletter have been successfully disseminated to several esteemed institutions in Thiruvananthapuram, including the SHSRC, Government Women and Child Hospital, Thycaud; the State Central Library; the District Medical Office; the Directorate of Health Services; and the Red Cross, Thiruvananthapuram, among others.



## SUPPORT IS JUST A CALL AWAY

Tele-MANAS (Govt. of India)  
1056 | 0471-2552056  
State Health Helpline | 24/7  
  
DISHA Kerala  
14416 | 1-800-891-4416  
Free | Multilingual | 24/7

## ONLINE & CHAT-BASED SUPPORT

Vandrevala Foundation  
022-25521111  
Call | WhatsApp | Chat | 24/7  
  
iCALL (TISS)  
9999666555  
Email + Phone counselling

## Editor's Note

Welcome to the 5th edition of The Public Health Wire. This issue explores a critical theme: **"Mind Matters: Mental Health in a Changing World"**.

Transitioning from clinical practice to public health, one reality stands out: mental health is not an individual burden; it is a community mandate. While we face global challenges even our local data is sobering. The rising suicide rates in Kerala, specifically in Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam districts demand urgent and systemic action.

A decentralized, community-driven support systems— drawing inspiration from models like Finland's and integrating mental health screenings directly into our primary care networks is the need of the hour.

As Dr. Pisharody emphasizes in this edition, "Mental illness must be treated with the same urgency and lack of judgment as any physical ailment".

Interactive mental health-themed games and puzzles have been included with cash prizes to test your awareness. Be sure to check them out and send in your answers for a chance to win!

Let us work together to dismantle the stigma and build a more resilient society.

In health and solidarity,  
**Dr. Kehren R Rayma**  
Chief Editor,  
The Public Health Wire



## Team



## Online Counselling in Malayalam with Experienced Psychologists

<https://www.koott.in/>

District-Level Mental Health Support (DMHP/ Medical college)

Thiruvananthapuram

**0471-2528300**

Remember: Seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

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