



IMPACT OF GBV ON MENTAL HEALTH

What is Mental Health

Mental health refers to a state of well-being. Mental health includes our emotions, feelings of connection to others, our thoughts, and feelings, and being able to manage life's highs and lows.

What is Mental Illness

Mental illness is a specific condition that negatively affect how a person feels, thinks, or behaves. Examples of mental illness include anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia.

Who is affected by Mental Illness?

Mental illness affects people of all ages, education, income levels, and cultures; however, systemic inequalities such as racism, poverty, homelessness, discrimination, gender-based violence, among others, can worsen mental health and symptoms of mental illness, especially if mental health supports are difficult to access.

Impact Of Gender Based Violence (GBV) On Women's Mental Health

- Gender-based violence is an unrelenting assault on human dignity, depriving people of their human rights. Freedom from violence is a fundamental human right, and gender-based violence undermines a person's sense of self-worth and self-esteem.
- Gender-based violence is an obstacle to the realisation of every person's well-being and to their right to fulfilment and self-development.



- Women experiencing gender-based violence are 2.4 times more likely to suffer depression and 4 times more likely to suffer anxiety.
- The survivors of gender-based violence can develop depression, generalized anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is an anxiety disorder that can develop after experiencing a traumatic event and can continue for weeks, months, or longer.
- Discrimination can negatively affect women's mental health, both short- and long-term.
- Women also can become frustrated and feel powerless when discriminated against and turn that anger inward, becoming depressed and anxious. They also sometimes blame themselves for the problems even if the institution is at fault.
- Cultural norms and expectations can also lead to stigma, violence, and exclusion, making women more vulnerable to attack and a silenced voice in society, further straining mental health.

Coping strategies

- Coping strategies are skills that people use to deal with mental health challenges to achieve positive mental health and wellbeing. Coping skills take many forms. People can use their own personal coping skills to take charge of their thoughts, feelings, and actions, and when they do, they find that they experience mental health and even begin to thrive.



- Coping skills don't necessarily remove stress or eradicate challenges like mental illness, but they go a long way toward helping people function well despite challenges.

- Coping strategies can include such things as:

1. Making a visit to your doctor to check for depression or anxiety.
2. Meditating (or using alternatives to meditation).
3. Educating yourself on all aspects of abuse.

4. Detaching from your abuser (mentally & emotionally).
5. Calling a domestic violence hotline to vent.
6. Filling out a domestic violence safety plan.
7. Building a network of supportive friends (online too), family members, and local domestic violence programs that include support groups.
8. Noticing tension and taking deep breaths to reduce it.
9. Catching negative thoughts and replacing them with healthy ones.
10. Setting and maintaining appropriate and healthy boundaries between you and others.
11. Relaxing with aromatherapy.
12. Destressing with soothing activities like journaling, reading, etc.
13. Eating healthy.
14. Sleeping the right amount.
15. Avoid alcohol and addictive substances.
16. Finding things that make you grateful.
17. Creating little moments of joy in each day.