

Minimum of ₹30 towards free psychiatric treatment for the underprivileged

TURNING 30

A booklet on
mental health

Depression

Suicide

Self-harm

Anxiety

Alcoholism



Covering the most common
mental illnesses in India



Turning 30

Mental illness is a grave issue that struggles to take the spotlight. There is a stigma around seeking help for mental illnesses and a number of misconceptions surrounding them. In an effort to break the stigma, provide information and urge people to get help, 'Turning 30' is a campaign for mental health awareness.

This booklet will provide you with information about the most common mental illnesses in India. It has been written under the guidance of Bangalore based renowned psychiatrist, Dr.Sandip Deshpande.

This booklet costs a minimum of ₹30 (you can donate more if you like). The proceeds will be donated to Department of Psychiatry, Kasturba Medical College, Manipal. The donations will be utilized directly for funding medicines and nutritional requirements of the underprivileged.

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What is mental health?

Mental health is inclusive of our emotional, psychological and social well-being. It is responsible for how we think, feel and act. It determines how we handle stress, relate to other people and our decisions. Mental health is crucial at every stage, starting from childhood to old age.

Mental illnesses occur when either of these things go out of balance. They could be triggered by specific situations or be hereditary. It is imperative to offer the same importance to mental health that we do to physical health.

In India



Mental health is severely ignored in India. While there are many facilities available for people to seek help, there is a strong stigma surrounding the subject. The common mental illnesses in India are

Depression	Anxiety	Suicide & Self-harm
Eating Disorders	Obsessive Compulsive Disorder	Schizophrenia
Bipolar Disorder	Other Personality Disorders	Addiction

 Covered in this booklet

It is crucial to remember that a lot of mental illnesses are linked to each other and can be the cause for one another.

If at the end of the booklet, you feel that you may know someone struggling to cope with any of the illnesses mentioned, the first and foremost thing that you can do is to acquire more information about it before you proceed.



Flip to the colour

Depression

Suicide

Self-harm

Anxiety

Alcohol Addiction

Team Turning 30



Depression

What is depression?

Depression is a common mental illness. It can cause prolonged sadness ranging between the severity of symptoms that don't interfere with our normal lives to life threatening thoughts of death and suicide. Depression is the most common of mental illnesses and most people go through periods of depression in response to some form of stress or change or an underlying health condition. In some others, there may not be an obvious cause or trigger.

Types of depression

Postnatal or Post-delivery Depression

Also known as the baby blues, new mothers experience depression after the birth of their babies. This usually passes quickly but can be serious at times. New fathers also suffer from depression post birth known as post-partum depression.

Bipolar Disorder (Manic Depression)

A highly misunderstood variant of depression, Bipolar disorder causes mood swings in people with periods of depression and mania. When manic, you will be in a state of high excitement and may plan or try out over-ambitious schemes and ideas. This mood will swing to an extreme of severe depression.

“*Depression isn't a straightforward response to a bad situation; depression just is, like the weather.*”

Stephen Fry

Symptoms of Depression

Feelings

Low mood or sadness

Restless and agitated

Helplessness

A lack of interest in sexual activity

Feeling sad, guilty, upset or numb

Crying a lot or being unable to cry

Feeling isolated even when you're in the company of people

Physical Signs

Fatigue. Low on energy or lack of it.

Restlessness

Oversleeping, insomnia or disturbed sleep

Change in diet: overeating or lack of hunger

Weight gain or loss

Unexplainable aches and pains

Increase in intake of nicotine, alcohol or drugs

Behaviour

Lack of interest in activities otherwise pleasurable

Avoiding social events otherwise enjoyable

Becoming withdrawn; cutting off from people; unable to ask for help

Self-harm

Difficulty in talking

Thoughts

Difficulty remembering things and becoming forgetful

Difficulty in concentrating

Indecisiveness

Guilt and Self-blame

Low self-confidence or self-esteem

Negative thoughts about self, future and people around you

Apathy

Suicidal thoughts

(You may not have all of these symptoms)

Are you depressed?

You may be depressed if you're having some of the symptoms mentioned in the previous table. You may not have all of the symptoms and the intensity could vary. It is best to seek diagnosis from a psychiatrist.

Depression can be accompanied by other illnesses like anxiety, self-harm, suicidal thoughts or ideas and addiction. In some people, it can also lead to **psychotic experiences** where you could hear voices, see things and believe that you are evil or that you are influencing things in a way that harms others. You could believe that you are a bad person and that you deserve to feel all the unpleasant symptoms of depression.

It is imperative to remember that while depression can be accompanied by other illnesses, it isn't always the case. To assume that someone with depression indulges in self-harm or is suicidal is wrong.

Depression varies from person to person. It can either be triggered by one reason or can be a snowball effect of reasons over time. Sometimes, it can appear to come out of nowhere. Here are some of the causes that can trigger depression.

Trauma

Traumatic events or unwelcomed events like being fired, getting divorced or emotional, physical and sexual assault can trigger depression.

Childhood experiences

Most events we experience in childhood are left to fester in our minds because as children we didn't have the skills to cope with them. Traumatic events like abuse from childhood can trigger depression in adults.

Loss

Bereavement over the loss of someone, moving from one city to another, changing jobs or just any major life change can trigger depression. The problem with loss is that it's not just the change or loss that we have to deal with but also that when certain feelings are not confronted, depression creeps in.

Anger

Depression is sometimes referred to as frozen anger because it manifests in situations where you have experienced something that has left you angry and helpless, even if you did not express your feelings at the time. Events from your childhood that left you with overwhelming emotions may trigger depression without your knowledge.

Physical conditions

Some physical conditions can cause depression and are often undiagnosed because the focus tends to be on physical symptoms.

Conditions affecting the brain and nervous system

Hormonal problems including those of thyroid and parathyroid problems

Symptoms related to menstruation or menopause

Low blood sugar

Sleep disorders

If you have any of these conditions and are consulting a psychiatrist, make sure to mention it as it will affect your diagnosis and treatment.

Side effects of medication

Depression can be a side effect of some medications used for treating physical illnesses. If you've recently had a heart attack and have been feeling depressed, it could be because of a beta-blocker that you have been prescribed. If you are feeling depressed after any kind of medication that you've been prescribed, you must consult your doctor and seek an alternative.

Diet

If you are taking in a poor diet or not paying attention to your fitness, either of these can lead to depression. In some cases, you may find certain food and beverage to cause your mood to swing. In these cases, it is wise to observe the patterns of your body.

Street drugs and alcohol

If your intake of alcohol or street drugs is higher than moderation, it could lead to depression. However, you may feel inclined to have a drink when you are feeling depressed as it causes a temporary relief. This could lead to addiction.

Genetics

Although science has not recognised specific genes that cause depression, a pattern does emerge where depression runs in families. Some people are more prone to depression and it could be because certain behaviour patterns are learnt by one generation from the previous.

Chemical changes in the brain

In some cases, depression is caused by chemical imbalance in the brain and can be corrected by medication. However, this cause is not verified entirely by scientific observation and experimentation at this moment.

I feel depressed. What do I do?

Firstly, realise that it is a completely normal thing to be depressed and to respond to stress in this way. These are some of the things you can do if you're feeling depressed.

Working through the problem



$2+2=5$

It is important that you accept that there may not be an instant solution to the problems you are going through. Solutions take time and effort and depression is highly characterised by fatigue and lack of motivation. So while you are looking to solve your problem, be patient with yourself. But also, be proactive about the solution as this could prove therapeutic for your recovery.

Break the cycle of negativity



Depression can cause a cycle of negative thoughts where your depression begets depressed feelings. For example, you may be feeling worthless. Being unmotivated may cause you to feel more worthless in turn worsening your symptoms. Make a conscious effort to break this cycle. Understand that the way your body is reacting is normal. Recognise the irrational thoughts that lead to this cycle and reason your way out of them.

Stay active

Research shows that exercise is very effective in lifting spirits as it releases endorphins which can make you feel better. It also increases energy levels and improves appetite and sleep, two things that are not only affected by depression but imbalances of which can aggravate it.

Although fatigue and lack of motivation may be a hindrance to staying physically active, even a short session of 20 minutes can make a significant difference. Pick an activity that you like; it could be anything from walking or running to dancing for 20 minutes to a song you like.



Keep yourself busy



Although it is easy to dismiss engaging in hobbies and activities saying that they won't help, it plays an essential part in recovery and staying well. It is important to keep as busy as your depression allows you to, so as to not fuel it further by boredom and under-stimulation.

Connect with other people



Try a short phone call or even an email or text message to a close friend or relative, even though you may not feel like it, just to get things in perspective. Another option would be to participate in self-help groups where you meet and share with people undergoing similar experiences. This will help you understand and figure out coping mechanisms that worked for other people, provide mutual support as well as overcoming feelings of isolation. Try finding local self-help groups in your neighbourhood or ask your doctor about them. Online self-help groups are a great way to connect with lots of people who can help you cope with depression.

Look after yourself



One of the important things you should do when feeling low or depressed is to care for yourself. A long bath and other positive experiences will help immensely. You should also set goals for what you want to achieve to get a sense of satisfaction, eat healthily and be cautious with tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. If you feel you might not remember things, use notes or your phone to set reminders. Most importantly, pay attention to your personal appearance.

“When I start to feel low and depressed, I sometimes get myself a new haircut. It's strange and I can't explain it but it makes me feel better.”

How to be a good support system

What can you do to support someone you know who has depression? They may avoid friends and relatives more often than asking for support, but this is the time they need your support the most.

Dos

Encourage them to talk about how they're feeling and support them in finding out what they can do to cope with their feelings.

Spend time with them even if they don't feel like talking or doing any activities. Sometimes, they may just need your silent company.

Listen to them without being judgemental. Allow them to feel like you are a safe space and they can tell you anything.

Affection goes a long way. Be affectionate to them emotionally and physically. Of course, do this only if you are very close to them and they would be comfortable with it.

If they are isolating themselves, send them a message or an email just to remind them that you are there so that when they feel like it, they can open up to you.

Be patient. There is no specific time that a person will take to recover from depression. Approach them in a calm manner and your support will help them through this time.

Observe them and see if you can determine what the triggers are for their episodes of depression. Encourage them to proactively overcome these triggers.

While supporting them can bring you closer, it can be very frustrating and take a toll on you. Look after yourself so you can support them better.

If their depression is severe, take them to a psychiatrist and seek treatment through therapy and medication.

Reassure them that you will stand by them against the stigma surrounding depression and that they are not weak when they seek treatment.

Don'ts

Do NOT tell them to just be happy or move on with their life. Depression can cause them to be unmotivated and affect their physical well-being hindering their ability to carry on smoothly.

Do NOT be judgemental. You may not understand their triggers for depression. Be open-minded and try to understand them and support them.

Do NOT belittle their reasons for low points.

Do NOT criticize them and ask them to "pull themselves together". This only serves to worsen their condition.

Do NOT expect instant results if they have just started treatment. Therapy and medication take time to start showing results.

Do NOT tell a person who is taking medication for depression that they don't need it.

Do NOT judge them for seeking treatment for their depression.

Avoid clichés. They will just make them feel worse and are not really going to help their situation or your relationship with them.



Just be happy or Be positive

Cheer up!

Get over it. Other people have it worse than you

C'est la vie (That's life)

It's not Depression. You're just complaining

Life is full of ups and downs

You're just being lazy or you're just overacting

“If you think that young and successful people cannot succumb to depression, you are wrong. One out of four people suffer from depression today, and that one person could be your favourite movie star too”

Dr. Sandip Deshpande

Common Misconceptions

Depression does not choose its victims according to bank balances or hardships in life. You may have everything in life but still feel low and have episodes of depression.

Depressed people may not appear to be sad all the time. Some of them may have mastered the art of masking their sadness in public. People who may appear to be very cheerful and happy could be battling depression silently by themselves.

Medication for depression **does not work like a happy pill** that magically transforms their mind or life. It takes time and therapy for medication to show lasting results. Even if you are on medication, you will still have days where you will feel low and have to tide through.

Depression is not a choice. Like any other illness, it occurs mentally and physically and no-one chooses to react to stress or trauma with depression.

One good day cannot change depression. You may have a good day or many good days and can still be depressed.

“If you know someone who's depressed, please resolve never to ask them why. Depression isn't a straightforward response to a bad situation; depression just is, like the weather.

Try to understand the blackness, lethargy, hopelessness, and loneliness they're going through. Be there for them when they come through the other side. It's hard to be a friend to someone who's depressed, but it is one of the kindest, noblest, and best things you will ever do.”

Stephen Fry

Suicide

Suicidal ideas are thoughts and feelings that could drive someone to attempt or commit suicide.

“I don't see why I should go on living.”

“I hate myself. I don't deserve to live.”

“I am useless. The world would be better off without me.”

“Nobody cares if I'm alive or dead.”

“I'm tired of living my life.”

If you've been having any of these feelings, you MAY be having suicidal ideas.

Suicidal ideas can emerge for many reasons like painful experiences like loss, conflicts with loved ones and financial, professional or personal difficulties. Suicidal ideas are a way of coping with an unhelpful situation in life. It is to be viewed as a cry for help.

When there are too many things beyond your control, suicide may feel like it offers you a sense of control. Depending on your religious beliefs, you may feel like reincarnation or being reunited with a loved one is a solution.

What are suicidal ideas?


Sometimes, you may not know why you are feeling suicidal. Having no reason may make you feel irrational like you are losing control and lead to intense emotions of guilt and shame. This could worsen your feelings.

Whether it is an obvious reason or something you cannot explain to yourself, suicidal ideas are terrifying as regardless of the trigger, your mind could rationalise that death is your only option.

Suicidal ideas can also stem from other underlying mental illnesses like anxiety, depression, self-harm and eating disorders.

Other psychological and physiological symptoms of suicide include

Alienating yourself from people	Disturbed sleep patterns
Change in appetite	Weight gain or loss
Feeling cut off from your body	Feeling numb
Fatigue	Neglecting physical appearance and wellbeing

 Many people go through a range of mixed feelings while having suicidal ideas. Whether it is a surety of wanting death or an apathy to life, suicidal thoughts can be very confusing. These conflicting thoughts can result in a great deal of anxiety.



For Example

Convinced you don't want to live because you feel unloved

BUT

Also want others to understand how you feel

BUT

Unable to communicate with people you know

Why do I feel suicidal?

If you are feeling suicidal it is possible that you have been feeling hopeless and worthless for a while now. There are many situations and emotions that can build up to suicidal thoughts and feelings:

Loneliness or Isolation	Breakdown of an important relationship	Being bullied at home, work or school
Bereavement and grief	Unemployment or difficulty with work	Adjusting to a big change – retirement or moving
Financial problems	Being in prison	Cultural pressure
Pregnancy, childbirth or postnatal depression	Doubts about sexuality or gender identity	History of emotional, physical or sexual abuse
Facing discrimination	Long-term pain or illness	Mental health illness

What do I do if I'm having suicidal ideas?

Remove means of killing yourself



Avoid any accidents. Purchase smaller prescriptions of tablets or if you feel the tendency to ride or drive recklessly, use public transport for a while.

Take a break



Take a break from your distress. Look for a new hobby or find yourself something new in the world to distract you.

Do some physical exercise



Regular physical activity can uplift your mood and also help you sleep better. Take a walk or run around or play with a skipping rope. Even a short amount of exercise of 10 minutes can help.

Eat Right



Eat right and stay away from alcohol and drugs. While they might give you temporary relief from your distress and suicidal thoughts, they actually have an adverse effect and can worsen your mental state.

Express yourself



Do not be afraid to cry and let it out. Write about your feelings. You are not compelled to share your thoughts with anyone. Express your anguish in other creative ways: artwork, a blog, photography, etc.

Meditate



Yoga and meditation can ease the tension that you are feeling and energise you. If conventional meditation does not work for you, try an activity that demands great concentration like drawing, colouring, solving puzzles, etc.

Common Misconceptions

There is no research that proves that **people who commit suicide never talk about their tendencies**. If somebody has confided in you about their suicidal thoughts, take it seriously and offer them support.

Suicide is often seen as **a coward's way out**. The statement is thrown around every time a celebrity takes their own life. Suicidal tendencies are terrifying and crippling to a point of insanity where there is no sense of courage. The viewpoint that suicide is a weak thing to do only takes away the seriousness of the issue.

Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. While this may seem true, it also implies that if the problem is permanent or there is no solution and there is no way out.

“ But in the end one needs more courage to live than to kill himself. ”

Albert Camus

How to be a good support system

Dos & Don'ts

Encourage them to talk to you when they are feeling low or having intense suicidal thoughts and feelings.

Listen to them openly without judging their feelings and reasons for their thoughts.

Offer to help them out with whatever is troubling them. If it is a problem, you cannot solve, seek out someone who can help them solve it.

Take them out and introduce them to new places or interests that can help distract them from their situation.

Encourage them to discuss their feelings no matter how morbid they are or how uncomfortable they make you feel.

Do NOT show them that other people have it worse. Suicidal thoughts or situations leading up to them are very real and crippling.

Do NOT try to advise them on their problems unless they ask you for it themselves.

Do NOT emotionally blackmail them to feel otherwise for your sake.

Do NOT remind them of how strong they are. That may make them feel weaker knowing that they are not able to pull out of this episode.

Do NOT think that a person expressing suicidal ideas is doing it for attention.

If suicidal thoughts are a recurring issue with a loved one, do NOT take their anguish for granted. Instead, find them psychiatric help.

It gets better

Everybody has issues

You can get out of this. You've done it before

You have so much to live for.

Someone loves you. Stay alive for them.

Do NOT use clichés. While you may feel they sum up the way you feel about your loved one's feelings, they may have a negative effect on their thoughts and feelings.

God doesn't give you more than you can handle.

I didn't raise you to be this weak.

Self-harm

Self-harm is a mechanism that many use to deal with intense emotions, difficult memories or overwhelming situations. There are obvious ways in which you could be self-harming, like cutting yourself and there are also those that are less obvious like putting yourself at risk or not looking after yourself well.

Self-harming may provide a temporary sense of relief while coping with emotional stress. However, it offers a vicious cycle where feeling better after self-harming yourself can produce more emotional stress.

What is self-harm?

Am I self-harming?

If you are doing any of the following things, you could be self-harming as a way to deal with emotional stress.

Slapping yourself	Scratching yourself
Cutting yourself	Pulling your hair
Burning yourself	Exercising excessively
Banging your head or throwing yourself against something hard	Sticking objects into yourself
Hitting or punching the walls	Swallowing things
Punching yourself	Starving yourself or overeating
Taking too many tablets or trying to overdose	Drug and substance abuse Alcohol bingeing
Pinching yourself	Having unsafe sex

What causes self-harm?

Situations

Emotions

Depression

Anxiety

Low self-esteem

Feeling that people don't listen to you

Financial problems

Feeling defeated

Unemployment or difficulty with work

Feeling isolated

Bullying

Helplessness

Problems with inter-personal relationships

Feeling guilty and the need to be punished

Sexual, emotional or physical abuse

Hopelessness

If you self-harm, you may attach a certain sense of embarrassment to your actions. You may feel that people will judge you and not understand the emotions behind your actions. Most people who self-harm like you probably keep it a secret. But the best way to address this issue is to accept that it is a problem, talk about it and seek help if necessary.

Talk to someone



Confide in someone who is close to you
Call them and talk to them when you
feel the need to self-harm.

Talk to someone



There are plenty of groups and
communities online that offer
therapeutic support for self-harm.

Consult leaflets



Consult leaflets online on self-harm when you feel like you are about to self-harm.

Consult a psychiatrist



Consult a psychiatrist who will help with underlying issues that lead to self-harm or depression.

How to be a good support system

Dos & Don'ts

Encourage them to talk to you when they feel like self-harming. Try to understand their feelings and then move the conversation to other things.

Do NOT try to be their therapist. Therapy is best left to professionals and they need you to be their friend, partner or relative.

Listen without judging them or being critical of their actions

Do NOT expect them to stop overnight. It is difficult and will take time and effort.

Help them realise that self-harm should not be considered as a shameful secret.

Do NOT react with anger or hurt. Be honest about how it affects you but do so with a calm approach that shows how much you care for them.

Share information on self-harm with them. It helps to know that they are not alone in solving their problem.

Do NOT struggle with them when they are about to self-harm. It is better to walk away and suggest an open non-judgemental conversation instead.

Find out about getting help and accompany them to see a GP, counsellor or psychiatrist.

Do NOT make them promise to never do it again or give them ultimatums like you will not see them until they stop.

The most **common misconception** is that self-harm is done as a way to attract attention and most people suffering from self-harm are passed off and crying wolves.

Do NOT feel responsible for their self-harm or take on the role of being in charge to stop them. This will make them feel like a burden and increase pressure and turmoil.

Anxiety

Anxiety is a familiar concept for most people. It is the body's reaction to a trigger of any fearful event. You may have experienced anxiety right before an exam or before getting on stage to give a speech or sing a song.

Those feelings of butterflies in your stomach and jittery feet are what constitute to anxiety. Anxiety is a sensation that normally occurs in all animals to prepare them for flight (escape) or fight (confront) situations.

What is anxiety?

Flight or Fight Response

In a dangerous situation, your body produces an excess amount of adrenaline to help you deal with the threat at hand. This was extremely important for the human body when mankind was living in jungles and was regularly faced with plenty of predators.

Now, Imagine being confronted by a tiger in the jungle



To prepare your body to for this situation, your body releases hormones like adrenalin and cortisol



Heart rate increases
Digestion slows
Blood flow to major muscle groups increases
Other nervous functions change
A burst of energy runs through the body
Strength and stamina of body increases



Thanks to these bodily changes, you can either run from the tiger (flight) or battle it (fight).

These days, since we don't have to face any tigers in our urban areas, we develop fight or flight sensations when we have to give a difficult examination or have to get on stage and sing.

When does anxiety become a problem?

There are many demanding situations that can trigger your flight or fight response to act.

However, sometimes something may trigger you to become anxious even when it isn't a real threat to your life. This can be a sign that you are suffering from an anxiety disorder.



If you are facing any of the following situations, you could have an anxiety disorder:

Worrying becomes a common activity; you worry about things that are a regular part of life or you get caught up in worrying about things that are most likely not to happen. You even find yourself worrying about how much you worry.

You are experiencing unpleasant physical or psychological effects of anxiety of which there are over a 100.

Since anxiety is a normal occurrence in people's lives, it can be hard to identify if you have a problem or not.

Types of Anxiety Disorders

Generalised
Anxiety
Disorder (GAD)

Panic
Disorder

Obsessive
Compulsive
Disorder (OCD)

Phobias

Post-traumatic
Stress Disorder
(PTSD)

If you do have an anxiety disorder, you will be diagnosed depending on the nature of your anxieties.

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

Long and frequent periods of anxiety

Triggers include mundane activities of everyday life

Triggers vary for different people

Panic Disorder

Panic attacks that come out of nowhere

Triggers are unidentifiable

A vicious cycle where panic attacks are triggered by the fear of panic attacks

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Sufferers experience obsessions & compulsions

Obsessions are recurring un-welcomed thoughts, images, urges or doubts.

Compulsions are repetitive activities one is compelled to do

Phobias

Intense fear triggered by specific situation or object

Trigger is unlikely to be dangerous or occur

Sufferers indulge in avoidance behaviour

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Triggered by experiencing or witnessing trauma

Flashbacks and nightmares cause sufferer to relive the event

Has a crippling effect on life

What is a panic attack?

A panic attack is an experience where your body's normal responses to fear, stress or excitement are exaggerated.

It is a rapid progression of overwhelming physical sensations like

Increased pulse

Pounding heartbeat

Feeling faint

Sweating

Nausea

Chest pains

Difficulty in breathing

Shaky limbs, feeling like your legs are turning to jelly

Feeling like you're not connected to your body

A panic attack can cause your thoughts to race and it may feel like your mind is bombarding you with many fears. These can include feelings like

You're losing control

You're going to faint

You're about to have a heart attack

You're going to die

It is important to remember that you may not experience all of these symptoms during a panic attack.

“ I cry alone in the shower where I can't even tell if it's the water that's cleansing me or my tears watering down the fears. I feel them run down my body, to my feet and fear that I'm going to slip and fall and no-one will find me because no-one will care. And while I began to un-exist in this dark and smelly bathroom... the last thing, the last thing I will see before I cease to exist will be the ugly diseased ceiling, the peeling paint hanging off from it, teasing, to fall down and make me feel just one last time. ”

Written during a panic attack

A Panic Attack Explained



Let's go back to the earlier scenario of flight or fight. Only this time we add an X as a trigger.

To prepare your body to for this situation, your body releases hormones like adrenalin and cortisol

Heart rate increases
Digestion slows
Blood flow to major muscle groups increases
Other nervous functions change
A burst of energy runs through the body
Strength and stamina of body increases



Unfortunately, your body has exaggerated this reaction.

which could be

Successive panic attacks

Remaining anxiety post the panic attack.

Sometimes, you may experience symptoms for over an hour before it comes to an end.

You begin to experience physical and psychological symptoms of a panic attack which progress quickly.



The panic attack peaks at about 10 minutes

The symptoms begin to come down and finally end. A panic attack generally lasts only 20 minutes.

You may experience a panic attack in your sleep as well. This occurs when your brain is extremely alert (due to anxiety) and interprets small changes in your body as a sign of danger. These are especially frightening as they cannot be predicted and can cause a lot of confusion and stress.

After a panic attack, you may experience a period of numbness or depression. You will also feel extremely exhausted as your body has just gone through an overload of activity. In a while (a while ranging from a few hours to a few days depending on the intensity of the attack), normalcy will resume.

What causes a panic attack?

The triggers for panic attacks are different for different people. You may have a good idea of situations or places that may trigger an attack for you or you may feel that your attacks come out of nowhere and without warning and without reason.

How often do panic attacks happen?

The frequency of panic attacks also differ from people to people. You may experience one panic attack and never have another one. Or you may have panic attacks once a month or maybe even many times a week or a day.

What to do if you're having a panic attack?

When panic attacks become frequent, you may identify certain places or situations as triggers. It is a natural instinct for you to avoid those places. But this may not only make life inconvenient but also doesn't solve the problem at the root. It may be better to face the anxiety and understand the root of it. If you are experiencing anxiety or a panic attack, you can do the following:



Talk to someone you trust about what is making you anxious

Sometimes your confidante may be able to help you deal with your specific trigger and at other times, a familiar voice will help reassure you and reduce your anxiety and panic attack symptoms.

Breathing exercises

Breathe in



Hold your breath



Count to 5



Breathe out



During panic attacks, you tend to start taking shallow breaths disturbing the balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide leading to feeling faint or out of control. Consciously taking deep breaths can address this and bring about immediate relief.

Muscle relaxing



Relax your muscles one by one. Start from your toes and work up towards your head thinking of each and every body part separately and relaxing it.

Distract yourself



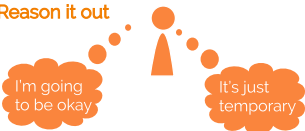
If you are travelling, observe the tiniest details of the vehicles close to you or count the number of trees you see. If you are stationary, take a look at something around you and grasp its details with all your senses. Carry a book that you can get lost in when feelings of anxiety creep in.

Listen to music



Listen to music that you find peaceful. You can also try ambient sounds like the sound of the rain or ocean.

Reason it out



Reassure yourself by reasoning out the situation. The symptoms you are feeling will go away. They are momentary reactions of anxiety in your body and are NOT permanent. They will not cause any danger to your body and will pass.

Do some physical exercise



The excess adrenaline in your body causing the strange symptoms can be exhausted with any form of physical activity. Take a walk or run around or play with a skipping rope. Even a short amount of exercise of 10 minutes can help.

Eat right



Eating healthy can revolutionize how your body deals with stress and anxiety. Seeing a professional can also help identify dietary triggers like excess intake of sugar, caffeine, nicotine and alcohol that can cause anxiety and panic attacks.



Meditation is most commonly suggested for anxiety and panic attacks. Do not worry if conventional meditation does not work for you. An alternative way of meditating could be doing an activity that demands great concentration like drawing, colouring, solving puzzles, etc.



If you are suffering from anxiety or panic attacks and are unable to deal with them on your own, please do seek help from a psychiatrist. Anxiety disorders are one of the most common mental illnesses in India and treatment with therapy and medication can drastically improve your life.

How to be a good support system

Dos & Don'ts

Encourage them to give you a call when they are feeling troubled.	Do NOT tell them it's all in their head. Triggers of anxiety and panic can feel very real and crippling.
Listen to them openly and assure them that they can tell you about their anxieties no matter how irrational they are.	Do NOT judge their triggers. Something that is fearful for someone else may not necessarily be frightening for you.
Reassure them that their symptoms will go away and that it will pass.	Take some time to understand how they are feeling. Do NOT react with anger or hurt as this may cause them to feel more overwhelmed.
Talk them through techniques mentioned in this booklet	
Make plans with them to distract them from their symptoms of anxiety and panic.	Do NOT force them to face their triggers. This may cause them to avoid you while facing anxiety or panic attacks. Wait for them to take the decision to confront their fears themselves.
Rationalise with them about what's troubling them. If this aggravates their fear, stop immediately and try one of the other things.	
If you are very close to this person, offer some kind of physical affection like your hand or a hug.	Do NOT give them ultimatums to overcome their anxiety. They are probably already finding it quite hard to function daily with symptoms of anxiety and panic.

The most **common misconception** is that anxiety and panic is associated with conventionally fearful situations. But it is completely possible for a performer to be calm in front of a large crowd but find it difficult to cross the road or buy groceries at a store.

Alcohol Addiction

Alcohol, the ubiquitous! An apt nickname for what is perhaps the sneakiest of all substances. There are a variety of aspects that play into the consumption of alcohol: social, physiological, for the sake of entertainment etc. Never has there been a substance that is so validated that it fills our day, the airwaves and our TV streams. Filled with the promises of "good times", it is a substance that has historically taken consumers down paths that they will potentially regret.

Alcohol itself is just a colourless chemical. It can be made from almost anything that has sugar in it. Depending on what they are made from and how they are made, different drinks have different amounts of alcohol in them.



Beer

from barley
2 - 7%
alcohol



Cider

from apples
2 - 7%
alcohol



Wine

from grapes
9 - 15%
alcohol



Whiskey

from grain
40%
alcohol



Vodka

from potatoes
40%
alcohol

These percentages are 'Alcohol by Volume'. On bottles you may see this shortened to 'ABV' next to the percentage number. The bigger those numbers, the higher is the intended effect.

Alcohol dissolves in your bloodstream and when absorbed thoroughly, it unleashes a part of you that you didn't know existed. It lowers inhibitions to a point where you feel that this is what you were all along. As a substance, it opens up a gateway to what you feel and provides a better understanding of yourself and that is the very reason why this specific substance is so frequently abused.

What is alcohol?

What kind of drinker are you?

This is usually answered via a questionnaire. So now, ask yourself these questions:

- 1 Why do you drink?

- 2 What are 6 drinks doing that 1 didn't?

- 3 Do you wake up with regret?

- 4 Do you notice a difference between days when you wake up after a night of drinking as opposed to waking up after a night of not drinking?

- 5 Guilt is not good to wake up to and a hangover is hell-spawn, we all know. Why do you still drink to the point where you know it will lead to one?

- 6 Do you feel that you are a different person under the influence of alcohol?

- 7 Has anyone close to you, friends or family, ever stated/complained that you drink too much?

IF you answered the first question and cringed inwardly while answering any of the others, you may need to rethink your relationship with the bottle.

The big question: What you need to do about your drinking habits?

At this point, you have a moderate understanding of your drinking habits: how much you drink, when you drink and why you drink. Now you should try and figure out what you will gain by reducing or stopping your drinking.

1

Do you want to continue drinking alcohol, but less of it and less frequently?

2

Or do you want to stop drinking alcohol altogether?

3

While you are at it, think about the consequences of continuing to drink in the way you do now.

4

What is good and what is bad about that?

5

How do you see your life six months into the future?

Now, you can make an informed decision about reducing or quitting drinking alcohol.

How to reduce your alcohol intake

Keep a journal



Identify your drinking patterns and times during the day when the urge to drink is high and plan alternate activities accordingly.

Sober days



Pick at least two days a week when you will not drink any alcohol. This will help you boost your morale and understand that it is not impossible to retain control over alcohol.

Keep a track of how much you drink



This could potentially help you with the "one-for-the-road" syndrome we all have come to know and love.

Eat first



Try to eat before drinking alcohol. You will probably drink less if you are full.

Set a deadline for your last drink



Start drinking later in the evening, whether you drink at home or go out to drink. Set a time before which you won't have an alcoholic drink.

Dilute your drinks



If you drink spirits, dilute them with a mixer (tonic, soda, ginger ale, lemonade etc.) and increase the amounts of the mixer to make them 'long drinks'.

Small is good



If you drink wine, buy small glasses rather than large ones and try 'spritzers' (mixing your wine with soda or lemonade). Try to drink lower strength wines. If you drink beer or lager, stick to standard strength and avoid extra-strength varieties or premium varieties.

Look forward to the next morning



Plan important or exciting duties for an early morning to avoid drinking the night before.

“Whether I or anyone else accepted the concept of alcoholism as a disease didn't matter; what mattered was that when treated as a disease, those who suffered from it were most likely to recover.”

Craig Ferguson

For the heavy-lifters

The body, especially the brain, will try to adjust to cope with large amounts of alcohol if the alcohol is present in the body all the time. That means that the body has to re-adjust if the alcohol is taken away.

If your body has adjusted to coping with continuous large amounts of alcohol and then the alcohol is suddenly stopped then you may experience the following:

Shaking or tremors all over

Feeling very confused, not knowing the time or where you are and having very poor concentration

Very heavy sweating

Extremely high blood pressure and looking very red in the face.

Short-term memory where you cannot recall what happened recently

Vomiting and diarrhoea and the only way to keep down any food will be after drinking more alcohol

Hallucinating: you may just 'sense' that bad things are happening or you may actually see or hear things that aren't there; typically, people in this state 'see' spiders, rats or snakes

Very tense and agitated, being unable to settle down or do anything

You may suffer 'fits', during which you lose control of your body, collapse and become unconscious

These are symptoms of physical withdrawal from alcohol. The symptoms are very dangerous. They can be fatal. They can also lead to permanent brain damage. Continuing to drink heavily however will eventually lead to serious health problems. Although your body tries to adjust, it gradually gets worse rather than better at dealing with the damage alcohol causes.

If you feel that the physical effects of not consuming alcohol are more severe than the physical aspects of constantly abusing it, then, please consult a psychiatrist or your family physician.

What happens if I relapse?

We are at the point where the preaching needs to stop. Let's address potential apprehensions you have about quitting and relapse.

You might not have a relapse! But if you do have a set-back it is important not to give up on the goals you have set yourself.

A relapse can also be a good thing. It can be something you can learn from. So if you do have a set-back, think about it afterwards.

- 1 Was it a difficult situation you found yourself in?

- 2 Was it something you were thinking about that caused you to feel bad?

- 3 Or maybe you were using alcohol to celebrate an event?

- 4 What was it that caused you to have the set- back?

With introspection of this nature, it is possible to get a better handle on your drinking or stop drinking.

If you believe that there are things that you are unable to control, remember that there is absolutely no shame in consulting with a psychiatrist or a physician. It would be best to rise above societal stigma and seek help as it would aid you substantially in the long run.

The **most common misconception** with alcohol addiction is that it is related to willpower or is a moral dilemma for those suffering from it. Addiction is a disease; when you are sick you take medication or see a doctor. You do not just will yourself to feel better. This view of alcoholism that it is the fault of those abusing alcohol leads to the abandonment of sufferers rather than rehabilitation.

How to be a good support system

Dos & Don'ts

Intervene. The results will not be immediate. There will be resistance, denial and possibly vehement retaliation but persevere with calmness.

Do NOT be negative or scoff or frown at their decision to reduce or quit.

Include them in your activities that are not drinking related. This helps them feel wanted and could fill the void that alcohol currently does.

Do NOT cite the numerous times they have tried and failed. They are failing for a reason and your condescension will not help.

Listen to them. Their problems may not be things you can associate with and while you feel the need to enlighten them with your wisdom, let them go through the entire maze of feelings. Expect to feel uncomfortable but try your best to understand what they feel.

Do NOT tell them to have "just one drink". There may not be a difference between one drink and ten for you; but asking them to have even one drink can cause more problems because they may have a hard time stopping once they start.

They have the same feelings, aspirations and motivations that you do. It's just that the walls they have to climb are higher. When you keep that in mind, it humanizes them and makes them more than just 'that drunk' you met at a bar.

Do NOT resort to emotional blackmail. Reminding them of a family, society or a god to answer to will not help. It may only make them try and hide their drinking which will lead to a plethora of other problems.

Remember, it may not always be appropriate to intervene but try to breach it when you think you have a better understanding of them.

Do NOT tell them they are weak and lack will power. It is possible that the reason they drink is due to a much deeper emotional issue including one that might involve low self-esteem. You pointing to their character flaws of lack of will power will not help.

Love goes a long way. Remember, that whoever this person is, you love them and they are suffering due to reasons you cannot associate with. Help them out remembering who this person was and why you loved them in the first place.

Team Turning 30



Meet Team Turning 30. The psychiatrist who provided guidance and the writers and designers who made this booklet possible.

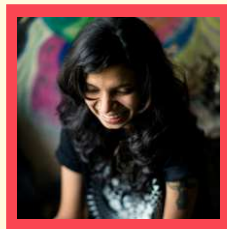
Dr. Sandip Deshpande, *the psychiatrist*

A gold medallist in Psychiatry (MD) at KMC Manipal, Dr. Deshpande has had extensive experience in the fields of self harm, suicide prevention and psycho-sexual medicine. His special interests are sexual medicine, relationship therapy and management of mental health crises. Following a one year research post at NIMHANS Bangalore and over 8 years of work in the UK, Dr. Deshpande now practices in Bangalore at his clinic based in Malleswaram.



Aditi Surendra, *writer & graphic designer*

Aditi Surendra, a freelance writer and graphic designer, lives in Bangalore, loves karaoke and lives for music, puzzles, trivia and soup. She has a keen interest in activism and ran a creative activism firm called 'I'm Still Thinking' for 2 years. An avid bird watcher, you can spot her around Malleshwaram with her head turned up trying to spot the golden oriole.



Team Turning 30



Meet Team Turning 30. The psychiatrist who provided guidance and the writers and designers who made this booklet possible.

Punith Prasad, *writer*



Punith Prasad loves to sing, as long as it's not falsetto. He dreams of being a writer and is enthusiastically working on his first book. He is an information sponge with an eidetic memory for everything interesting. Professionally, he's a senior consultant at ThoughtWorks, a job that fulfils his passion to do more for society.

Natarajan Chandrasekaran, *writer*

Natarajan Chandrasekaran likes to read, quiz and occasionally break into a Beatles song. An encyclopedia on the Indian Freedom Movement, he is a freethinking rationalist who takes his own time to make a decision about something by gathering all the facts. An informed debater, he never misses an opportunity to discuss pertinent issues. He runs A Slice of Digital, a digital marketing company based out of Chennai.





This booklet costs a minimum of ₹30 (you can donate more if you like). The proceeds will be donated to Department of Psychiatry, Kasturba Medical College, Manipal. The donations will be utilized directly for funding medicines and nutritional requirements of the underprivileged.

If you would like to directly make a larger donation, you can use the following account details:

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More information on this campaign and Team Turning 30

Contact us on turning30mha@gmail.com

