

Mental Health Around the World

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Mental health refers to the emotional, psychological, and social condition of a person, and it affects their every action, emotion, and social interaction. There are many kinds of mental disorders, and they stem from a multitude of causes. Mental health awareness has been increasing over the past few years, but it still remains one of the largest medical concerns. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 700,000 people die from suicide annually, and for 15-29 year olds, it is the fourth leading cause of death. Mental health is a problem in every country, but 77% of suicides happen in low and middle income countries.

Mental health illnesses can be caused by genes, trauma, family history, environment, and many other factors. Anxiety disorders, depression, bipolar disorders, eating disorders, and schizophrenia are amongst the more well-known mental illnesses. People living with mental health illnesses can have healthy lives, and treatments are widely available. However, challenges such as stigma lead to a taboo on mental health. Stigma around a topic such as mental health means an unwillingness to talk about it and to treat it as something disgraceful. For centuries there has been a stigma around mental health, which leads to people not getting the treatments they need in fear of ruining their reputation. This is completely preventable, and the first step is breaking down the stigma.

How is mental health handled globally? As stated above, 77% of suicides occur in low and middle income countries. Research shows that in low income countries, low public health funding and a shortage of mental health professionals lead to higher suicide rates because there aren't sufficient resources available, and often people aren't even aware that they have a mental health illness. In India, for example, a study was done showing that depression was recognized by only 29.04% of people, and schizophrenia by only 1.31% of people.

One study showed that in low income countries, community programs are extremely effective in raising awareness. Awareness helps people recognize their symptoms and seek professional help. By increasing awareness of mental health disorders, the stigma is reduced and people are able to understand what is happening and how they can find help. This is done in most countries. For example in the U.S., schools and workplaces have sessions with students and employees to discuss mental health.

The most important thing to do is remember that having issues with mental health is not a bad thing, and to talk to the people around you to receive the support you need. Additionally,

keep an eye out for friends or family who are struggling, and be there to talk to them and encourage them to talk to a professional.

References:

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