Vivekananda Institute of Values (VIVA)
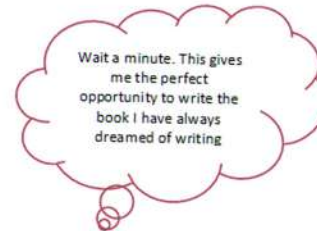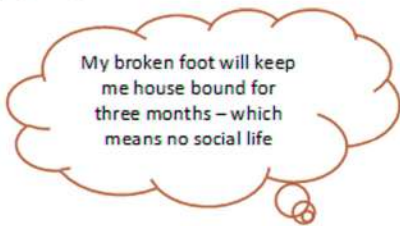
Practical Spirituality for All

"It is our own mental attitude which makes the world what it is for us. Our thoughts make things beautiful, our thoughts make things ugly. The whole world is in our own minds. Learn to see things in the proper light. First, believe in this world — that there is meaning behind everything."

Swami Vivekananda (From a speech delivered in California on April 1, 1900)

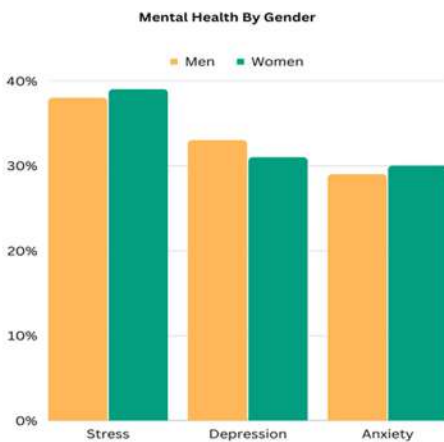### LOOKING INWARDS (Let's pause and take stock)

Every month, through this newsletter, we will gently remind ourselves of how we can lead a happier life. Inspired by Swami Vivekananda's teachings from more than a century ago, we can develop a positive mental attitude by instilling in our everyday life, a right mix of gratefulness, laughter, prayer, awareness, disciplined work, silence and stillness. In this respect, Suresh Srinivasan from Chennai reminds us about the power of pause, "take a pause and a deep breath and look around you, and from that pause let a new thought be born, a new idea, dream or a solution to an old vexing problem".

-The Editorial Team

> My broken foot will keep me house bound for three months – which means no social life

> Wait a minute. This gives me the perfect opportunity to write the book I have always dreamed of writing

Drawn by Swagatha, a reader from Gurugram

MENTAL HEALTH IN INDIA

Mental Health By Gender

■ Men ■ Women

Reference:- India: mental health disorders by gender 2021 | Statista

Mental Health viz. the ability to cope with normal stresses of life, work productively and make positive contributions to the community is critically important to us all. Every seventh person in India, suffers from some form of mental illness (WHO reports), of which 1% of children suffering receive treatment. Largely, especially after Covid-19, the causes of mental health disorders have been forced isolation, loss of a loved one, unhealthy lifestyle, lack of nutrition, financial stress, inequality and so on.

Mental Disorders in Different Groups

0-3 years old 13.8 % effected

4-16 year old 12 % effected

Industrial Workers- 14 - 37 % effected

Reference: - MENTAL ILLNESS: OVERVIEW & STATUS IN INDIA | Health Minds Blog

To enable children to overcome any mental illness and meet their highest potential, schools, peers and family members have a major role to play. VIVA conducts programs to help schools in promoting mental health by encouraging open dialogue between the students and teachers. This equips children to cope with low self-esteem and improves mental health.

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TECHNOLOGY USE AND MENTAL HEALTH

In this age of Artificial Intelligence and advanced digitization, most people believe that technology usage by students can be problematic. They view technology as a problem.

Let's explore how value education programs like Awakening and the Awakened Citizen Program enable students to creatively and positively engage with technology. Such programs encourage discussions in the safe and intimate environment of a classroom, in a manner that is non-judgmental, respectful and affirmative, for students to collectively gain self-awareness of their existing habits and reflect on how these habits affect their character.

With the underlying idea that each of us possesses an infinite mine of strength and goodness, students can awaken their self-belief to address their personal challenges and also support peers in this journey. Instead of being dependent on technology they can choose to master it.

Students can also awaken reverence for each other and enjoy their traditions and culture through open discussion, where body language reveals more than words do. They can understand the immense advantages of enjoying Mother Nature, going to new places, making new friends (other than through virtual media). In short – they can understand that experiential learning by actually doing something new, can give lasting happiness. The discussion format of our programs enables a spontaneous flow of ideas, while also moderating the discussion to bring out the value of human experience.

OUR VALUE EDUCATION PROGRAMS ENABLE STUDENTS TO CREATIVELY AND POSITIVELY ENGAGE WITH TECHNOLOGY

Technology as a problem
- Denial that it is a problem
- Inability to use it productively
- Prolonged usage leading to social isolation
- Information overload that leads to "merely echoing of others"
- Weakened family support systems
- Cyber bullying, pornography and other influences

Technology as a solution
- Gain self-awareness of existing habits
- Reflect on how these habits affect our life
- Awaken self-belief to address personal challenges
- Support peers so that people can collectively strive to master technology
- Awaken reverence for each other and enjoy traditions and culture through open discussion

ASK SWAMI SHANTATMANANDA

A reader writes "A friend of mine refuses to accept the fact that her son is autistic. We have appealed to her repeatedly to get medical advice for her son. Though highly educated and otherwise rational, she insists that it is a case of black magic and spends a lot of time and energy conducting all sorts of poojas and rituals. How can we help her?"

Swami Shantatmananda replies: One way to express yourself to her would be to write her a loving message and tell her to read it when she is calm as you are writing the letter because you love her. In that letter, you can mention that her son deserves the best of what science and spirituality can offer. Instead of focusing on why the child has autism, she could focus on how to help the child. Autism is not an uncommon problem and she can get the best diagnosis available. In addition, she can spend time in deep prayer which will calm her and give her the right guidance. Above all, she can try to develop the self-esteem of her son by enabling him to increase his confidence to respond to life.

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ANSWER TO READER'S SECTION FROM PREVIOUS ISSUE

ABOUT THE PICTURE: The mahouts or trainers tie the elephants to a stump with a chain when they are very young. The young elephant does not know how to break the chain and it sees the mother elephant also tied to a chain. Resigned to its fate, it remains miserable watching its mother in the same predicament.

Bharani from Hyderabad writes: Most of the time our mind is conditioned to think, and believe that no matter the effort, we will never be able to achieve few things, this may be mainly due to past experiences, or few externally imposed thoughts. Looking at this made me reflect on how much we are bound by the past experiences without realising that the conditions and situations were different, which sometimes maybe a hindrance to growth and how liberating it feels to break away!

Suresh Srinivasan from Chennai writes: We allow our minds to be programmed to external thoughts and environment. Just like the elephants, despite our enormous power within, and being influenced by each other's inabilities, we remain shackled. Do not let others decide your fate. Unleash the infinite potential within your own self and free yourself from all the shackles in your mind.

READER'S SECTION

We invite our readers to look at the picture below and share with us what they feel. Please title the email 'Answer to Reader's Section'.