



## A HOLISTIC AYURVEDIC APPROACH OF MENTAL HEALTH CARE (JARA MANASA SWASTHYA) IN THE ELDERLY

Jajbir Singh

Department of Ayurveda, Desh Bhagat University, Amlah, Mandi Gobindgarh, District Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab, India

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### ABSTRACT

Mental health is an integral part of the complete health and is regarded as one of the basic factors that contribute to the effective physical health and social wellbeing. W.H.O. defines Health is a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity and an ability to lead a social and economically productive life, in conformity with age old definition given by *Ayurveda*. According to *Susruta Samhita Su.15/49* that *Susruta* has defined Health (*Swasthya*) as inclusive of mental and spiritual wellbeing along with equilibrium of *Dosas*, *Dhatus*, *Agnis* and *Malas*. Recently western medicine has also started emphasizing these aspects of health. Thus, health includes sound and efficient mind with controlled emotions. It means both body and mind should work efficiently and harmoniously. The central Council of Health Programmes in its meeting on 18-20 August, 1982 held at New Delhi for implementation of Alma-Ata Declaration recommended that mental health must form an integral part of total health programme of India and in all training course for medical professionals, mental health education will be an integral part. The programme will have three components as Treatment, Rehabilitation and Promotion of positive mental health. The promotion of positive mental health is main component with focus on elderly individuals.

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### INTRODUCTION

Mental health is the ability to balance feelings, desire, ambition and ideals in one's daily life. It means the ability to face and accept the realities of life. Thus, it is a process of adjustment, which involves compromise and adaptation, growth and continuity or it is the ability of the individual to make personal and social adjustments. Renowned Psychologist K.A. Meninger defines "Mental Health as the adjustment of human being to the world and to each other with a maximum of effectiveness and happiness. It is the ability to maintain an ever temper, an alert intelligence, a socially considerate behavior and a happy disposition". Thus, the greater the degree of successful adjustment the greater will be the mental health of individual. Lesser mental health will lead to lesser adjustments and greater conflict.

#### Mental Health

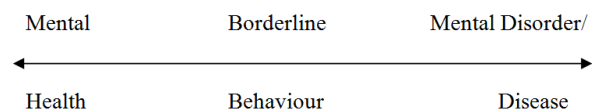
The World Health Organization describes mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community". Mental health is not just the absence of mental illness.

#### Mental Illness

Mental illness is described as 'the spectrum of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral conditions that interfere with social and emotional well-being and the lives and productivity of people. Having a mental illness can seriously impair, temporarily or permanently, the mental functioning of a person. Other terms include: 'mental health problem', 'illness', 'disorder', 'dysfunction'. Examples of these illnesses include schizophrenia, ADHD, major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and autism.

#### Mental Health Vs Mental Illness

The two terms are closely related to one another and are relative terms. It is consider healthy and unhealthy behaviour as part of a continuum or scale, mental health or healthy behaviour is at one end of scale and mental illness or very definite unhealthy behaviour at the other end of scale. Borderline behaviour is in the middle of scale.



\*Corresponding author: Jajbir Singh

Department of Ayurveda, Desh Bhagat University, Amlah, Mandi Gobindgarh, District Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab, India

Unhealthy behaviour is identified, when it becomes extreme for prolonged periods of time and prevents adjustment in society. Anxiety before an interview is healthy behaviour but euphoria is unhealthy.

### **Aspects of Mental Health**

The two aspects of Mental Health as follows:-

#### **Individual**

Person's internal adjustment ability, frustration, conflicts and tension.

#### **Social**

Every society has certain value system, customs, tradition and heritage, through which the behaviour of an individual are controlled or in other words he has to make internal adjustment according to them.

### **Factors Affecting the Mental Health**

#### **Hereditary Factors**

They give the raw material as the potentialities of the individuals. What is the individual inherits from his forefathers affects his growth, intelligence, appearance, mental stamina (*Satvabala*) and health. The development and utilization of these potentialities are determined mainly by the environmental opportunities.

#### **Physical Factors**

People with greater strength, better looks and health enjoy a social advantage in the development personality characteristics. Physical health improves mental vitality, motivation and drive. Continued hunger, overwork or sleeplessness provide fatigue affecting mental health.

#### **Social Factors**

Every individual is born in the society which is responsible for his upbringing and formation of his behaviour through social norms, customs, tradition culture and taboos of the social factors which affect mental health, the most important are home, school and community. A good home provides love, security, shelter, attention and basic needs of the elderly members, this in turn promotes their mental health. On the other hand, the home full of conflicts, economic problems and insecurity has adverse effect on the elderly. The old person in the family should be respected as a person, not neglected and should be given full freedom of expression. School is relevant in case of children and adolescents. The community provides healthy atmosphere, competition, accommodation facilities and securities. This reduces the mental illness and promotes mental health. The society also keeps continuous check over individual's behaviour.

#### **Other Factors**

#### **Satisfaction of Basic needs**

Mental health is also determined by the way our basic needs are satisfied. These needs, safety and security needs, belongingness, love and esteem needs.

#### **Adjustment**

If one can establish a satisfactory relationship with other people or if one can meet the demands of a situation, he can be said to have achieved adjustment. Adjustment results in

happiness because emotional conflicts and tensions are resolved and relieved.

### **Components of Mental Health in Elderly**

- Reality Orientation
- Self awareness and self knowledge
- Self esteem and self acceptance
- Ability to exercise voluntary control over behaviour
- Ability to form affectionate relationship
- Pursuance of productive and goal directed activity

### **Characteristics of A Mentally Healthy Individual**

#### **Self Evaluation (*Atmanam Abhisamiksya / Sameekshya Kari*)**

- A mentally healthy individuals evaluating himself is aware of his limitations, easily accepts his faults and make efforts to get rid himself of them.
- He introspects, so that he may analyze his problems, prejudices, difficulties etc. and reduce them to minimum.

#### **Adjustability (*Samah*)**

- Specially characteristics of mentally healthy individual are the adjustment to new situation with least delay and disturbances.
- Does not try to think of old age when he is young and think of his youth state when a senile crank.
- Makes fullest possible use of existing opportunities.
- Deals coolly and patiently with every novel circumstance, without any fear, anxiety etc. and is aware of the fact that change is the principle of life.

#### **Maturity (*Visada Buddhih*)**

- Mature mind is constantly engaged in increasing his fund of knowledge, behaves responsibility.
- Express his thoughts and feeling with clarity.
- It is prepared to sympathies with another feeling and view points.
- Behaves like a balanced, cultured and sensible adults in all members.

#### **Regular Life (*Carya Palana*)**

Forming proper habits in matter of food, clothing, the normal routine of daily life, Systemic and regular life & Economizes energy and time.

#### **Absence of Extremism (*Madhyama Margi*)**

*Ayurveda* believes that the ideal man lacks excess in any and every direction and the principle that excess of anything is bad is a golden rule for mental health. Extremism should be avoided at all cost.

#### **Satisfactory Social Adjustment (*Visayesvasaktah*)**

Mentally healthy individual maintains good adjustment with social situations and is engaged in some or other project intended to benefit society. Social relationships are a part of life. The greater the balance of these social relationships, the greater their simplicity and the better will be the mental health.

### ***Satisfaction from the Occupation/Profession (Karma Sukhanubandhi)***

It is absolutely essential for mental health that one should find satisfaction from his occupation. It is absolutely essential for mental health that one should find satisfaction from his occupation. If work interests an individual, a proper utilization of time will bring an increase in his pleasure and happiness.

### ***Expression of Emotion in Desirable and Controlled Manner (Ksamavan)***

The description does not exhaust all the components, but it is sufficiently suggestive picture of mental health.

### ***Mental Hygiene***

Mental hygiene is the science which creates the kind of personality in every individual in a society, which involves:-

1. Make for good adjustment with environment
2. Attains a proper synthesis between the intellectual, emotional and physical aspects
3. That is satisfied optimistic
4. That experiences a minimum of tension and conflict in its conduct in its conflict in its conduct with other individuals in society.

### ***Relation with Mental Hygiene and Mental Health***

Mental Hygiene as a way of life in which the individual's adjustment to this environment in maintained. Mental Hygiene is the means or tool which makes the adjustment possible while mental health is the ability by means of which we established our adjustment with the difficult situations of life. Thus, mental hygiene is the means to mental health. It is that science which studies the laws and means of achieving mental health of maintaining it and preventing mental illness. Mental health is the indeed mental hygiene.

### ***Objectives of Mental Hygiene***

#### ***Safeguard of mental health***

Mental Hygiene consistently stresses the development of such qualities in the individuals as optimum, confidence, cooperation, emotional adjustment and maturity, pointing out the means of improving adaptability and efficiency of individuals.

#### ***Development of balanced personality***

Removal of abnormalities of the personality is another important objective since only in the absence of such aberration that the individual can be balanced.

#### ***Prevention of personality complications***

Mental Hygiene attempts to present all kinds of personality disorders since all kinds of mental diseases originate in them.

#### ***Treatment and remedying of mental defects***

Mental Hygiene or Science of mental health is concerned with the prevention of inadequate adjustment or with those processes or methods which adjust the maladjusted individuals. The function of mental hygiene is curing of mental ailments, defects and imbalances.

### ***Necessity and Importance of Mental Health Care In Elderly***

1. In old age when man has passed prime of his energy, his children are busy in affairs of their own families, there

are very few ways in which the elderly can pass his time. He may have plans or desire to do things but his growing age makes him physically unfit to move or carry out his plans.

2. When retired from job, the source of income is blocked, accompanied by loss of social status and much of social work. The mental health is challenged at the most. The loss of contemporaries due to death, illness and migration being not only psychological deprivation but also a void which remains unfilled. The loss of friends is frequently associated with restricted mobility which leads to further social isolation.
3. In such state, if the elderly happens to lose his/her partner, it becomes most disastrous and mentally shocking. With advanced age, he develops poor memory, eyesight, hearing etc. old age health problems like hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and other chronic problems which also affect mental health.
4. Because of above many related factors, mental health care of old aged problem is of paramount importance and is needed vary greatly.

### ***Specific Technique for Promotion of Mental Health in Elderly Ayurvedic Approach***

#### ***Sadvrta (Methods of Right Conduct)***

According to *Ayurveda*, the life must be based upon the rules of right conduct (*Sadvrta*) or the *Dharna* for us to achieve anything real or lasting. These are the natural laws or rules, which should be followed to maintain appropriate social and personal relationships. There is a large list of the conducts and behaviors, which provides a guideline for what is appropriate for us an individual, our role in the society. According to stage of life (Elderly/Young), *Dharna* includes our social responsibilities as well as individual responsibilities. They promote adjustment with our environment and help in attaining a proper synthesis between the intellectual, emotional and physical aspects, thereby promoting the mental health in a large way.

#### ***Acara Rasayana (Methods of Behavioral Rejuvenation)***

*Ayurveda* has mentioned hundreds of single and compound medications for retardation of ageing and modification of the physical and psychological consequences of ageing and also rejuvenation of the old body and mind under the *Rasayana Tantra*. In the end of the description, *Ayurveda* says that all these *Rasayana* are ordinary people but for the really wise persons, the *Rasayana* is to follow truthfulness, never get angry, know your own self, be at peace, do only noble things, abstain from alcohol and excess coitus, be generous in giving, consider everybody equal, do service to the great personalities etc.

#### ***Medhya Rasayana (Nootropics / Cognitive Enhancers)***

These are a separate class of *Rasayana* medication which are extremely effective in promotion of mental health and enhancement of higher mental functions like memory, intelligence etc. It has also substantiated their adaptogenic and nootropic effects i.e. *Brahmi, Asvagandha, Mandukparni, Guduci, Sankhapuspi, Yastimadhu, Vaca* etc. belong to this group of *Rasayana*.

### **Vyayama (Physical Exercise)**

Psychological benefits of physical exercises are of immense importance. Increased social contact may be achieved by group exercise programmes and improved self esteem may lead to other promoting activities. Such social contact and activities help the old people to feel a part of society. Such activity reduces the tension, anxiety, depression etc and promotes the mental health. These psychological benefits may be due to alteration in the level of various chemical substances in the brain.

### **Tatparata Yoga (Practice of Yogic Technique)**

Classical *yoga* describes eight steps to achieve its ultimate aim of reintegration. These steps follow a certain sequence and each one has its specific role in mental health promotion, though all of them are not equally important.

*Astang Yoga* describe as:-

- **Yama** (Rules of Social Conduct)
  1. *Ahimsa* (Non Violence)
  2. *Satya* (Truthfulness)
  3. *Brahmacarya* (Control of Sexual Energy)
  4. *Asteya* (Non Stealing)
  5. *Aparigraha* (Non Possessiveness)
- **Niyama** (Rules of Personal Conduct)
  1. *Sauca* (Purity)
  2. *Santosa* (Contentment)
  3. *Swadhya* (Study of Spirituals)
  4. *Tapas* (Self Discipline)
  5. *Iswar Pranidhana* (Surrendering inwardly to the God)
- *Ashanas* (Physical Posture)
- *Pranayama* (Control of the breath)
- *Pratyahara* (Control of Senses)
- *Dharana* (Control of attention)
- *Dhyana* (Right Reflection)
- *Samadhi* (Right Union)

### **Spiritual Therapy and Sattavajaya**

According to *Ayurvedic* concepts, the psyche is rooted in the spirit or self and the spirituality is the essence of *Ayurvedic* Psychology, which otherwise remains superficial and limited, spirituality is the endeavor to unite oneself with GOD or higher self. It includes ordinary religious activity based on faith, ritual and prayer, but only as initial part of an inner quest for self realization through meditation. The important spiritual practice which are extremely useful for elderly individuals and are also utilized in the psychotherapeutic practice of *Ayurveda* called *Sattavajaya*.

### **Sattavajaya**

- Devotion God in the manifest aspect of the Godhead or absolute (*Brahma*) which rules the time space creation. In the Vedic view, God is an inner reality, our own inner guide. Contacting him is the key to contracting our inner self and source of wellbeing and happiness. Attuning oneself to his will lift one to the summit of the natural world.
- Lack of devotion is the root of many psychological problems. A person who has devotion can not have psychological problems of a significant nature because the divine is never apart from them. It is the very sap that vitalizes the mind.

- Surrender to the will of God is the quickest way to go beyond the all problems. It wins all things, we may have to surrender to the divine through the medicine of friend, a teacher or a form of God.
- Comparison [*Maitri Karuna Muditopeksatam Sukha-Duhkha punya Punya Visayanam Bhavanat Cittaprasadanam (Patangli Yog Sutra sathana 2/33 & 3/2)*]
- Is the quality of feeling together or having a common feeling, regarding the other as oneself. It is merely trying to help others, but recognizing that the suffering and joys to others are also our own. Compression is a recognition of the divine presence in all beings.
- Rituals are major healing practices in themselves and part of the spirituals therapy of *Ayurveda*. They put us in proper frame of mind to receive the energies of consciousness. Rituals also serves to provide positive impressions to nourish and heal the mind. Home or fire rituals is an important example.
- Prayers are supplication to the deity for help, love or guidance, one should learn to communicate with God and can pray to divine and ask for help in dealing with his problems.
- The name is the most important factor in devotional worship. One should result to repeating divine name whenever his mind became upsets.
- *Mantras* are specially energized sounds or words, which are the most direct method to strengthen and heal the mind. They are repeated in regular manner in order to empower them and turn them into the tools of physical and psychological transformation. The *mantra* means "The instruments of the mind" or "What protects the mind". The physical effects of the *mantras* has recently been validated in different diseases including S.L.E., different types of cancers where a reduction in the size of tumors has been noted following *Mantras* Therapy in experimental studies.
- Self knowledge refers to understanding the full extent of our being meaning thereby not only the knowledge of physical and the mental self but the individual soul which persists from birth to death. Self knowledge requires calm and balanced (*Sattvika*) mind and it is the only way to ultimately go beyond all sufferings, which comes from not knowing who we really are.

### **General Advice to Elderly for Mental Health**

- Accept your personal feelings i.e. it is healthier to recognize them and find the ways of the releasing the tensions caused by them.
- Old age should be accepted gracefully and retired life should be planned in such a way as organizing or participating in such activities which keep them engaged partially such as sports, social club, walking, exercising with other elderly persons, social welfare programmes etc.
- Know your weakness, know your fears, what upsets you or hurts you under stress and protect yourself from these situations. Avoid people or situations which hurt you. Work out ways of dealing with them, in case it is unavoidable.
- Share yourself with other persons.
- Recognize unhealthy behavior in yourself.
- Know use sources of professional help.

## DISCUSSION

Mental Health as the adjustment of human being to the world and to each other with a maximum of effectiveness and happiness. It is the ability to maintain an ever temper, an alert intelligence, a socially considerate behavior and a happy disposition. The factors affecting the mental health are hereditary factors, physical factors, social factors and satisfaction of basic needs. The components of mental health in elderly as reality orientation, self awareness and self knowledge, self esteem and self acceptance, ability to exercise voluntary control over behaviour, ability to form affectionate relationship, pursuance of productive and goal directed activity. A mentally healthy individual in old age involves self evaluation, adjustability, maturity and regular life, absence of extremism, satisfactory social adjustment and satisfaction from the profession and expression of emotion in desirable and controlled manner. In elderly provide mental hygiene by adopting preventive measures i.e. safeguard of mental health, development of balanced personality, prevention of personality complications, treatment and remedying of mental defects.

## CONCLUSION

Mental health is the indeed mental hygiene and it involves for good adjustment with environment, attains a proper synthesis between the intellectual, emotional and physical aspects that is satisfied optimistic. In elderly mental health care provide positive health approach. In the *Ayurvedic* Approach to specific technique for promotion of mental health in elderly that are *Sadvritta* (Methods of Right Conduct), *Acara Rasayana* (Methods of Behavioral Rejuvenation), *Medhya Rasayana* (Nootropics / Cognitive Enhancers), *Vyayama* (Physical Exercise), *Tatparata Yoga* (Practice of Yogic Technique), Spiritual Therapy and *Sattvavajaya*. The promotion of positive mental health is main component with focus on elderly individuals. In elderly person mental care by treatment, rehabilitation and promotion of positive mental health.

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