



Session	Addressing Mental Health – Why the Time to Act is Now
Speakers	Kapila Jaykumar, Manoj Chandran

Kapila	<p>Hello everyone. Thank you for joining. Before we begin I like to thank our corporate sponsor Northern Trust for sponsoring the session addressing mental health - why the time to act is now. My name is Kapila Jayakumar and I am Program Manager at Community Business. I will be the moderator for today's session. At Community Business, we understand the importance of addressing disability at the workplace however one aspect of disability which often gets overlooked is mental health. While mental health issues are such a significant problem in India our community's educational institutions and workplaces are not yet equipped and they should be to support mental health. In today's session, we seek to provide useful information about mental health why it is such a sizeable problem in India and the factors contributing to it. We will also talk about how companies can begin addressing mental health in the workplace. To help us understand this issue we're excited to have with us today Mr. Manoj Chandran, CEO of White Swan foundation. Manoj has been instrumental in developing India's largest knowledge repository on mental health of the public. He has more than twenty-four years of experience in a wide range of areas that include journalism, communication, marketing, strategy and leadership. Earlier Manoj served as leadership group member of Ashoka Innovators for the public a leading social entrepreneurship organisation. We would like to make this Session informative as yet interactive and as Manoj shares his perspective we encourage participants to post questions using the live chat function. We will be sure to address your question during the dedicated fifteen minutes allotted for Q&amp;A at the end of the session, so over to you Manoj.</p>
Manoj	<p>Thank you Kapila. Ladies and gentlemen, it is a privilege to speak with you today at this community business in India conference. I'm here to touch upon a topic that seems to be</p>



sometimes the elephant in the room that is in fact growing in size. To begin with and it is important for us to look at why are we discussing this today, why is mental health an extremely important subject given the increasing visibility the topic is getting in media these days. There is no denying that mental health problems are increasing coming closer to us ever closer to us than earlier. Today we know of someone who has had a mental of the issue in our circle of influence and we're aware of the way these issues are wrecking the lives of the people and their families adversely impacting the institutions they belong to and society they are part of. And we also know that there are a lot of efforts being put in by various big institutions like the government. However, another big reason why we are discussing this issue today is that we are yet to find a solution, a solution that can help us address the bigger much larger social nature of problem that mental health issue is throwing at us and we need to really find a solution fast. We have a lot of solutions around technology services but as we look into the presentation we realise that we need a solution that is far more inclusive than that.

Let's just do a little reality check of a service infrastructure on mental health care in India and we all know that many of us would know that a lot of this data of our population of 1.3 billion people it is said that we have about slightly more than four thousand psychiatrists and if you put all those mental health professionals together which would include psychiatrist's psychologist's psychiatrist social worker psychiatric nurses it would be not more than ten thousand we are told. And there are no more than fifty mental health hospitals in the country. Nearly fifty mental hospitals for 1.3 billion people twenty percent of whom I suspect to have a mental issue is in their lifetime and 0.2 psychiatric beds for a population of one lakh for every 1 lakh that population that we have. Predominately and this is only opening up only recently predominantly most of the mental health services being



offered in the country are government run and we have only recently begun to see private entities, private practitioners as independent the institutions coming into the space. However, it is important to understand that when comes to mental health issues as against physiological health issues that services infrastructure is not enough. There is a need for us to look at social infrastructure which plays an extremely important role in influencing the decisions that we make and we all know that mental health care issue or mental health that mental illnesses are plagued to be deep seated stigma across the communities across all kinds of segments in the country. There are a lot of wrong notions that we carry, a lot of baggage we carry, in terms of perceived notion perceived understanding of what mental illnesses are about and our attitude towards people with mental illnesses. We carry a lot of myths. And we also see these problems largely that are of serious in nature so when we speak about mental health we speak about serious mental health issues. Many a time disregarding the common mental health issues that a volume of people go through and struggle with, their mental health issues which are common in nature and which we believe people should cope with these problems by themselves and need not necessarily require professional intervention. It is also interesting to see that because of the wrong notion that we carry most of the time we see a mental issue in black or white we think that either there is existence of mental issue or there is an absence of mental health issue. And the fact remains that no there are intensities of mental health issues and we many a time we are not able to accept and which again creates adverse situations for those who go through these problems. What does this kind of numbers result in? They result in many data in fact but one data which constantly bothers us is that eighty five percent of people who would have had mental health issue won't come up to a mental health professional for treatment and we all know that a lot of, most of the mental health problems that we suffer with has a solution in place from clinical point of view we can address them they are treatable but however eighty



five percent of people don't come out for treatment to a mental health professional. Imagine if that was to happen to any other illnesses any physiological illness, take malaria for instance, if eighty five percent of people were not to be going to the doctors for treatment of their problems it would be catastrophic but we somehow accept that this is ok but when it comes to mental issue. There have been a lot of programs and of late particularly government has been doing a lot of work. The first national mental health program was set in 1982 and I really want to touch the salient objectives of the mental problem program because there are a lot of words that are very important from a social infrastructure point of view it mentions that in the program should ensure availability and accessibility of mental health care to all particularly to most vulnerable and underprivileged sections of the society. It should encourage application of mental health knowledge in general Health care and social development and should promote community participation in mental health services in mental health services development and simulate efforts towards self-help in the community. There are mental health issues across communities. There are mental health issues among children there are women mental health issues there are geriatric mental health issues. As an illustration that I would like to pick up and which I'm sure all of you would relate to would be work place mental health. I'm sure you would have come across this phrase many a time and we all wonder work place mental health. What is it about? Is it about mental health issues at workplace or work place as a cause for mental health issues? Whatever be the definition the important thing is that we need to address this among many other segments among many other communities where we see mental health issues really becoming prevalent, rampant and need solutions very urgently. Now just take a look at some of the data. Last year Assocham did a study of various health issues among their member companies. And data came out stuck. Pointing out the urgency of addressing mental health issues, 42.5% employees in private sector from



depression or general anxiety disorder, 38.5% employees sleep less than six hours a day due to work related stress and 48% nearly half of them said that they feel fatigue regularly due to general anxiety. These are huge numbers. If you look at the number of workforce that we have in India it translates to a huge number. An Internet based study at white swan foundation to really understand what employees at various workplaces feel about mental health care and 58.1 % of the people who have taken the survey so far have said that they have had a mental health issue. 68.6% say that they know of at least one colleague in their organisation who seems to have a mental health problem. And 61% said that there is rarely or never an open discussion on mental health in their work place. I was looking at work place more from an illustrative point of view and similar numbers could be could be seen when you look at the numbers or the prevalence of mental health issues and perceptions across communities. Now what we need to understand is that from a work place point of view the high rate of existence of mental health care will translate into the burden of disability or burden of diseases as world health organisation point out. It says that 'depressive disorder is the leading cause of disability and the major contributor to the global burden a diseases. In fact, it mentions depressive disorder but if you really put all of the various illnesses all which come under the gamut of psycho social stresses and mental illnesses chances are that psycho social distresses will be among the top 3 reasons for the global burden of diseases among stroke and other areas. SO, it is really important area for us to begin to look at. Find solution before we begin to see businesses getting impacted by mental health issues, economy getting impacted by mental health issues. Now we have been looking at the problem statement. We all agree that the problem is right here and that they are front of us and require to be attended to. Let's look at the solution space. And again, as we said that there is a lot of effort in the services infrastructure people understand that there is a need for us to provide services and we are increasing the seats, capacity of



mental health professionals being built and we need to do that and it's not enough that we have four thousand two hundred psychiatrists. We need hundreds of, multiple times that number. We also see that there is an increase in mental health care infrastructure needs such as hospitals and other facilities that we could offer and closer to where people are and not just in the urban cities only. We also see the need for integrating mental health care with the primary health care facilities in the country, only then we will be able to intervene at a very early stage providing solutions to mental illnesses. We also see the need for capacity building by providing training to health care professionals like general physicians and we also see that emerging technologies are extremely important. In the last couple of years, we are seeing a lot of new solutions. A lot of new and innovative solutions are being experimented with. We are requiring having more emerging technologies to deal with the problems and aid recovery. However, would services infrastructure be enough, this is the question that we always ask ourselves. Would it be enough if we put together all the services which typically have to be the solution that we have looked at for providing physiological health issues in the past? For physiological solutions, we have said that Yes, we need service professionals and infrastructure like hospitals provide that, but when it comes to mental health issues we have to accept that no it is not enough. Why it is not enough? Can you guess the largest institution in the country which provides support & services to people with mental health? It is the family and the dear ones. It is not institution. 75% of the people who suffer from mental health issues in the country are provided for and supported by families and dear one which means they play an extremely important role in making sure that people with mental health issues are getting some attention and help. So, which clearly indicates that a better service infrastructure does not necessarily guarantee improved treatment rate. Therefore, we clearly see that there is a need for us to look at different perspective to solutions. Solution is not necessary therefore



restricted to being looked at from service infrastructure point of view. We need to understand that recovery from a mental health problem cannot be seen from the same lens that we use to define recovery from a physiological problem. It is very clearly an observation we have been repeatedly seeing. We also see that most physiological problems could be dealt with by individuals and recovery process could involve just the patient and the closest member in the family which has been the case in most physiological cases. But when it comes to mental health issues we cannot assume this will hold true. It cannot because, there is a much larger sphere of influence and we need to therefore take them into account when looking for creative solutions. Because when it comes to mental health care and when it comes to treatment it is about decision making and decision making across all the stakeholders. I would be making a decision on whether I would be seeking help from somebody for my depressive symptoms. My family members will be taking a decision whether they should be taking me to a professional or not. And who do these decisions depend on? Very important it depends on not just the self, dear ones but also depends on the larger sphere of influence friend's colleagues and neighbours, society, community, which means they are all extremely important pivotal stakeholder in the decision you all make in seeking help. And we are not seeking help. We have this dismal treatment gap in the mental health care because the larger section of society is not included in the solution that we have to look for mental health care. Why is it so important? Because there is a deep-seated stigma and preconceived notions around mental health care and attitude towards people with mental health issues.

We therefore need to influence right decision making. How do you do that? How do you ensure that everybody, each stakeholder in the system is making the right decision? By just not providing access to services, Make sure there is access to



right knowledge. We need to help people to unlearn and relearn what is right about mental health. What is their role? Because we all have an extremely important role to play. Sensitise people about the impact of their decisions. As a bystander, as a colleague on the company who see that in my cubicle I have colleagues who have mental health issues. What could my view on mental health, what could my attitude towards people with mental health make an impact on my colleague who needs to make a right decision on whether to seek help or not. By engaging the larger society to eliminate stigma. By helping create a supportive environment that encourages right decision making. Supportive environment is key. We have to be conscious of the fact that it is about creating a supportive environment. And the first step in creating supportive environment is key by making sure that we all have the right information knowledge so that we all make the right decision.

Just a look at what the World Health Organization points out. The World Health Organization points out 10 recommendations for improving the gap in mental health care, I want to draw your attention to three of these 10 recommendations. If I can read out the 3 points highlighted here, we need to shift care away from institutions to community care. Again, it is not about providing institutions that give care; we need to ensure there is community care. To ensure that treatment rate improves in mental health care. We need to educate the public. We need to involve family community and consumers to influence right decision making.

This is what we find in the solutions space we need to look at, which means that clearly, we have to involve the much larger sections of the society. What does it translate to from an organisation point of view? Organisation is nothing but a community. Perhaps the most efficiently running community that we have because it has the most close-knit relationship





bonding among the people that we can see. We need to therefore leverage this. How do you do that? We need to enable right decision making and that can only happen when it come from mental healthcare as you know it has to start from the top. There is an extremely urgent requirement that there is a leadership intent. An acceptance that we need to start making this as part of the leadership culture across all stakeholders of mental health care in the organisations in the top. We need to address mental health care problems in a more supportive environment and not just providing access to services. Most organisations understand that they have a role to play in making sure that their employees get access to mental health care services. What do we do? Make sure we have tied with employee assistance program and bring on board a partner who will make sure that if there is an employee who needs services related to psychosocial distress or mental health illness they could make an anonymous call to these service providers and access is provided. But we all always know that we are not always happy with the number of people who reach out to these organisations. We always wonder why is it that the number of people who reach out despite the knowledge that there is huge prevalence of mental health issues in my organisation. Number of people who reach out to these partners are very low. Because of the points that we looked out earlier. That the kind of employees that we have, that the kind of colleagues that we have may not necessarily have the right perception right attitude towards people with mental health issues. Therefore, the absence of a supportive environment that we are able to create in the organisation so that they look at mental health issues like any other physiological problem and are encouraged to seek help from these partners that we have on board. This requires us to have an extremely important mindset shift in an institution that can only be achieved once we create it from the top leadership. Empowering people to make right decisions. Empowerment is required. If I am seeing a colleague having mental health issue I need to be empowered to make



decisions that help him or her reach out and seek professional help that they require.

In the concluding slide I want to point out that what we see in mental health care from an organisation point of view is that Like World Health Organization recommendation came out that community is the perhaps first place that we have to create empowerment, we have to create education. Organisation must be seen as the most pivotal of all communities that we have because we need to accept that mental health problem at workplace is a serious and urgent issue that can potentially impact businesses. And we have begun to do that. Last year for the first time WHO and World Bank came together to discuss the economic impact of mental health care. As we go along we will see a lot more discussion on the economic impact of mental health care in the organisation and nations' economies. Mental health problems at workplace cannot be addressed the way we do physiological issues. We therefor need to make sure that when we put a mental health care strategy at workplace when HR departments begin to look at it they must say that we need to look at it from a fresh lens which is inclusive in nature, which brings in the social inclusion programs that organisations that put together among their employees. We need to create a supportive environment at workplace for those with mental health issues. That is a necessity and not an option anymore. We need to accept the decision-making power in mental health issue does not i.e. with the one just suffering. We have been assuming this. We have been giving them the decision-making power. They call up the ELP partner and seek help. But we know that it is not easy as that. We therefore need to make sure that much larger section of the employee force has been provided with the decision-making capability by empowering with the right knowledge. We need to provide access to right knowledge and engage employees in mental health education and that is the first step towards



	<p>any strategy that you can out together towards any mental health care at workplace. So, this is the message that I wanted to bring to you and I also want to briefly touch upon what is White Swan. What is this organisation about? White Swan foundation is an NGO that was started about 3 years ago with just an extremely specific mission statement that we want to deliver knowledge services for mental health and wellbeing. We understood very early on that there is one component in mental health care that is the most fundamental of all needs. It is access to knowledge. We need to of course provide services and other infrastructure to people. But if don't provide knowledge to people it is very difficult for us to take right decisions, and we therefore created an organisation that focuses on creating disseminating knowledge on various forms to various communities. With that intent, we began India's first online knowledge repository on mental health and wellbeing which is not available not just in English but in 5 different Indian languages also. Today it has more than 600 pieces of content. It covers the whole gamut of areas and topics of mental health care. Looking at work place mental health, in fact even as we speak with you today we would be launching our exclusive section in workplace and mental health care on our portal. We have huge amount of content on geriatric mental health child and women mental health. We realise that we need to take the content where people are because we can't expect people to come to our portal and consume information and make right decisions. So, we have extremely strong community engagement programs which takes our content and knowledge to various organisations. With that I conclude my presentation and once again thank you for rapt attention and I look forward to taking your questions.</p> <p>Thank You!</p>
<p>Moderator</p>	<p>Hi Manoj. Thank You so much. So, we have a few questions that have come in. The first one is: Is mental health the same as mental illness or are they different?</p>



Manoj	So, from what I understand Mental is a larger landscape under which mental healthcare mental wellbeing and mental illnesses will fall in. Like any other health, health would mean preventive and promotive and curative element. Mental element is where you have to look at the curative element. There are illnesses coming and you have to get curative treatment for that. Mental health would be much larger picture.
Moderator	Second question that has come in is: If we need to encourage our business leaders to address mental health what can we say on terms of cost of the business?
Manoj	The cost of the business will completely depend on how you look at the benefit you accrue from the effort you put in. If you integrate your efforts and strategy towards mental health with the HR Employee wellbeing program and the social inclusion program it will be extremely incremental cost if at all there is any to the investment that you have already made. But you need to look at the cost from the kind of impact that you will benefit you will begin to see. Just to give an example if you see there is a higher rate of people reaching out to you're a department over phones seek help by doing employee engagement programs by awareness programs on mental health care. You will clearly see the results from the investment you put in.
Kapila	Hi Mr. Chandran Kapila again here. We have one more question. What should line managers do if they think someone in their team might be struggling with mental health conditions?
Manoj	So, one important thing is that the line managers are the middle management, one of the most important communities that need to be empowered with the right knowledge. Why? They are the people to whom a volume of employees report to and they are the people who don't know what exactly mental health illnesses are about. So, the first thing that must happen is how I am empowering the line manager about the right knowledge of mental health. What is mental illness and what



	<p>can we do. How do I provide mental health first aid? What kind of communication can I make with the person? How can Line managers begin to appreciate that there is an existence of a stigmatic environment in the team and how do we eliminate that. If they have this knowledge they will know exactly how to intervene. Just to give an example. If there was an employee or staff in the team and line manager identifies that person has depressive symptoms. He/she has exactly the right knowledge how to speak. What kind of statements can be made to the person? And what is expected of the person with depressive symptoms from an action point of view. How do I encourage the person to seek professional help? Because there is a lot of denial in the person in the early on symptoms of depressive disorder. How do I make sure the person has removed the denial phase and immediately been encouraged to seek professional help?</p>
<p>Kapila</p>	<p>We have one more question: What is the kind of support employers can give their staff if they are diagnosed with mental illness such as bipolar disorder. What should they do?</p>
<p>Manoj</p>	<p>Once again, I say that from an organisation point of view and from line manager and immediate bosses and colleagues point of view first thing that must happen is that recognise that fact that the person has the right to his or her decisions that they make. It is like any other disability. If a colleague has a certain disability permanent or temporary, we know what that disability can entail, what does it mean and what way it can impact the work or the role the person is playing. Similarly, when I know what bipolar means what can I expect from that person from a productivity point of view how do I make sure that the person continues to be productive in the realm of what she can produce. We should encourage that person to be productive but that does require us to have the right knowledge. The moment I see bipolar as any other mental issue and say that person is disabled completely then I will not</p>



	be doing justice to that person's abilities against disabilities that particular illness can bring.
Kapila	Are there any implications for companies to legally, do health policy providers cover mental health?
Manoj	From what we know, there is no such legal implication, no legal norm that forces organisation to have mental health care strategy. As you said it is more business sense that we have that sooner.
Kapila	We all hope so. This is such a delicate topic and it's personal as well. How do HR or line managers approach individuals when they feel that they are on that radar and that how can they offer help?
Manoj	Good Question. We need to understand what is the first thought process that goes into the mind of the person when an employee begins to show symptoms of a mental issue. First thing that comes to my mind is I will lose my job. The moment that somebody comes to know in my organisation I'll lose my job. Why is that notion or belief there in the first place? The belief is there because the employee believes people around me don't know what mental illness is. They don't have the right attitude toward me. They won't know how to encourage me as a person who has begun to show early symptoms. The moment they know that My HR team has the knowledge about mental health issues require they should encourage me and they should see wonders. Just as any physical illnesses I would encourage to go tell my HR professional for that matter my boss, that I need leave tomorrow or for a week and I'm entitled to because I think I have this problem. Be rest assured that I will come back after my treatment and be as productive as I have been because treatment can bring me back to normalcy.
Kapila	When mental health sufferers are dealing with their own mental health issues is it very difficult for them to manage their social relationships, relationships with their colleagues. What



	are the tips/advice you can give mental health sufferers in that situation?
Manoj	Very important one again. Part of the answer to this question is also specific to the illness that people go through. The decisions that people with mental health issues make, common mental health issues not serious mental health issues like schizophrenia or bipolar are born out the social infrastructure that we have and not necessarily symptomatic to the problems that they have. So, whether I am going to be closing myself away from my colleagues because I have a mental issue in huge way because of the kind of social setup that I am living in that as a symptom that I have. Of course, depressive symptoms will probably push me to close myself be removed from being much more social in nature. But the much bigger reason that I will be like that is because I don't have the supportive environment. I don't have people around me who know the right things about mental health issues. This can be changed. When we begin to reverse that we find that the symptomatic elements which are also contributing to the absence of social personality traits can also be addressed. We begin to see that the person is becoming more isolated. We can early on detect if we have the right knowledge.
Kapila	Yeah so true. In many D&I topics we often have champions in a company to be the face of our campaign. As mental health issues are still being untouched how effective do you think that if a company is having an employer as a champion for its mental health campaign considering the pressure that individuals may have to undergo. What would your advice be?
Manoj	Lot of the nature of the problems that we are talking about has a social bend to it a champion in the cause really helps. If you look at any other social issues that we deal with we try to look for a champion for examples. And people who we can look up to. It's most important to include leaders. We keep bringing this up and when we have lot of celebrities coming out and speaking about their problems which has encouraged a lot of



	<p>people to talk about their mental health issues. But imagine if we have leaders coming out in the organisation in the communities. Because in an organisation I relate to my own leader far better than a celebrity. With due respect to the celebrities that we have, but I do connect with my leaders with my managers because I work with them on a daily basis. They champion the cause. They begin to speak about the notions about mental health issues and what the attitude towards people with mental health issues are. It would completely transform. It will help us reach the tipping point in mental health awareness.</p>
<p>Kapila</p>	<p>You mentioned that we need to realise that the decision-making power can lie with the person impacted so could you just elaborate a bit more on that.</p>
<p>Manoj</p>	<p>Just to give an example, If I have an employee in an organisation and if I need to go and talk about my mental health issue to my boss or my colleague, first thing that happens to me is that I should deny it that I have a problem. Why should I deny it? I won't deny if I have a physical problem, isn't it? But I deny to myself that I could be having a mental health problem. Because that is the best defence for myself. I don't want my colleagues to know about it why? Because I know they don't have the right knowledge about what a mental health issue is and simple knowledge like mental health issue is curable. It is treatable. Mental health issues like depression are extremely treatable require early on intervention. I know that they don't have that knowledge, their belief their notion is helping in making a certain decision. Today because their belief is not right, the decision I make is that I will keep my problem to myself and try to cope with it. Try to look for mechanisms to hide my problems from my colleagues at work place from my dear ones at home many times. If they have the capability to detect that I seem to be having some kind of problem as I begin to ask the right questions they will encourage me to go seek professional help. So, today we are told professionals that it takes an</p>





	<p>average of 6-7 years from the point when symptoms of depression open up to when person with depressive disorders to seek professional help. So, they deal with the problem deny it and cope with it for 7 years because there is a huge pushback from the society that they live in. This is why the decision-making ability is completely tied to the notions we as bystanders we as colleagues as communities begin to make.</p>
<p>Kapila</p>	<p>Thank you so much Manoj, thank you so much. Unfortunately, that is all the time we have for Q&amp;A today. I'd like to thank all of participants for the interesting questions and I hope they've all been answered. Thank you so much Manoj Chandran for your time for those of you who have further questions about disability in India we'd encourage you to log on to our ask the expert live chat session at three pm with the featured expert Prateek Kaul from Giftable. We also have Mr. Manoj Chandran 's organisation White Swan foundation having their virtual booth. Also, Community Business is looking forward to the launch of our latest addition of the DIAN India insight series on the topic disability impacts us all in which we will also address matters of mental health so be sure to look out for more information on the publication as we get closer to the launch date in early December with that I'd like to thank you again Mr. Manoj Chandran for sharing your time and expertise with us today. Thank you also for all our participants attending the session. A recording of the session will be available for download for the next thirty days. So, if you found it useful we encourage you to share this with your network thank you again and goodbye.</p>