

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO CONSULT A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL



Many young adults delay/do not consult a mental health professional due to various reasons which prevent them from getting the help they need. Let's take a look at some common concerns and how they can be addressed.

I AM MENTALLY STRONG, SO I CANNOT DEVELOP A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION.

A mental health concern can affect individuals from all backgrounds irrespective of their gender, age, education, occupation, religion, race, socio-economic status, urban/rural residence around the world. Although, using your inner strengths can help you deal with your challenges, people who are seen as mentally strong/who see themselves as strong can also develop a mental health condition.

I CAN MANAGE MY DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES, SO I DO NOT REQUIRE PROFESSIONAL HELP.

You may be able to carry out your daily routine despite experiencing distress, especially if it is mild. However, it may impact the quality of your functioning. As the severity increases, the same tasks will require much more efforts, thereby reducing your functioning.

I DON'T WANT TO BE LABELLED/RECEIVE A DIAGNOSIS FROM THE PROFESSIONAL.

Not everyone who consults for mental health receives a diagnosis. Sometimes, naming a problem could be a relieving experience to understand why someone is feeling/thinking/behaving in a certain way. Even if a diagnosis is made, it is only for the communication between the professionals and to draw the best treatment plan, just like a physical illness. A diagnosis doesn't have to shape your whole life and identity.

I DON'T WANT TO TALK TO A STRANGER ABOUT MY PROBLEM. THE PROFESSIONAL WILL JUDGE ME.

Though it can feel uncomfortable to talk to a professional initially, they are trained to create a safe and non-judgmental space for you and accept you irrespective of any life situation. They are also trained to provide you with objective and unbiased perspectives of your problems. The professional can help you feel comfortable so that you can choose to disclose difficult matters as & when you are ready.

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PEOPLE WILL JUDGE ME IF THEY COME TO KNOW THAT I'M CONSULTING A PROFESSIONAL.

You can always choose whether you want to disclose, with whom to disclose and what exactly you may/may not want to reveal about your concerns and the consultation.

You do not have to explain your whole situation to everyone around you.

You can consider sharing it with someone you trust and feel supported with.

MY FAMILY/FRIENDS WON'T SUPPORT ME IN CONSULTING A PROFESSIONAL.

It's understandable to feel concerned about how your family/friends will react and how it will affect your relationship if you tell them about consulting a professional. You can choose a trusted and supportive person to speak to. Find a suitable mode of communication, time and place to talk to them. Being honest and open may help them understand your concern.

Practice what and how much you want to say and give examples of experiences that you may be undergoing. Suggest things that they could do to help you.

Understanding mental health problems can take time, so give them time to process.

IF I TAKE PROFESSIONAL HELP, THEN I'M WEAK AND A FAILURE.

Experiencing psychological distress is not a sign of personal failure or incompetence, but can occur due to various reasons, just like a physical illness.

Seeking professional help is a sign of strength, courage and wisdom.

It is the first step towards getting and staying well.

I'LL BE GIVEN MEDICATION WITH SIDE-EFFECTS MAKING ME DROWSY AND DEPENDENT.

All mental health concerns do not require medication. The need and duration of medication depend on the problem severity, and the professional will consider your preference for the same.

Mental health conditions involve chemical imbalances in the brain. Medication can help in restoring this imbalance, thereby reducing the symptoms, and help you feel better.

Like any medication, some people may experience some side-effects, however, they are expected to be short-lived and can be managed.

The likelihood of having a side-effect varies with the individual and the type of medication.

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IF I TALK ABOUT MY CONCERNS, IT WILL MAKE ME FEEL WORSE.

Discussing the problem can be initially difficult for some. However, brooding over your painful moments without seeking help is more problematic in the long run. Talking about your concerns with the professional can help you process difficult experiences and manage them better.

I CANNOT AFFORD MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT.

Government and teaching hospitals charge a nominal fee for the treatment of mental health concerns. Some private practitioners are open to negotiating the charges. Various helplines provide telephonic support at no cost. You can contact the researcher for information on affordable services available near you.

I DON'T HAVE TIME TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP.

Prioritizing mental health is as important as physical health as both are inter-related and can impact your ability to function at your best. You can discuss a mutually convenient time with the professional for the consultation. Depending on the severity of your concern, the appointments can be spaced out.

I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO PAY SOMEONE JUST TO TALK. I CAN DO THAT WITH MY FRIENDS/FAMILY.

A professional undergoes specialized training to deal with mental health problems effectively. You could explore the problematic areas with them that can be uncomfortable to share with your friends/family. They use research-based methods to help you work through difficult times.

These are some barriers young adults face that delay/stop them from getting the help they deserve. We hope that these pointers have encouraged you to care for your well-being and move towards mental wellness.