

# MIND OVER MATTER: THE CRISIS WE CAN'T IGNORE

In today's fast-paced world, mental health matters more than ever—calling for greater awareness, empathy, and action to protect one of the most important aspects of our well-being.



**Dr. Nishan Ajay Mathew**

In a world that prizes productivity and constant motion, mental health has emerged as one of the most pressing yet overlooked pillars of well-being. Once a hushed topic, mental health challenges now affect individuals across all walks of life, urging a global call for awareness, support, and action.

## **A global concern**

Nearly 970 million people worldwide are living with mental health or substance use disorder. This staggering figure includes conditions such as depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia issues that touch every age group, profession, and community. Mental health is no longer a niche concern but a public health priority that can't be ignored.



The COVID-19 pandemic served as a wake-up call. It intensified social isolation, grief, and economic anxiety, pushing emotional well-being to the forefront of global dialogue. Now, as we contend with the pressures of climate change, conflict, and technological overload, the need for mental health support is more urgent than ever.

### **A heavy toll on society**

Unchecked mental health issues come at a cost. The World Health Organization estimates that depression and anxiety alone cost the global economy over \$1 trillion each year in lost productivity. Beyond financial setbacks, poor mental health strains relationships, burdens healthcare systems, and chips away at our communities' resilience.

Fortunately, change is underway in the workplace. More employers now recognize that mental well-being isn't just a personal issue, it's a business imperative. From mental health days to employee assistance programs, organizations are beginning to take proactive steps to support their teams. But broader and more consistent efforts are still needed.

### **Young minds at risk**

Youth mental health is perhaps the most urgent frontier. Among those aged 10 to 19, 1 in 7 experiences a mental health condition, with suicide tragically ranking as one of the leading causes of death. This crisis is compounded by the pressures of social media, where comparison and constant



online exposure can fuel anxiety, loneliness, and low self-worth.

Today's young people are digitally connected but often emotionally isolated. That's why school systems, families, and communities must prioritize emotional education, counseling services, and safe spaces for open dialogue.

### **Tearing down the stigma**

Despite growing awareness, stigma remains a stubborn barrier. Many still hesitate to speak up or seek help due to fear of judgment, discrimination, or misunderstanding. But that's changing. Public figures, from athletes to artists, are bravely sharing their mental health journeys, helping to dismantle outdated stereotypes and make space for empathy.

This shift in mindset is powerful but it must be matched by accessible resources and inclusive policies. Mental health care should be as routine as going to the doctor for a physical wellness checkup.

### **Where do we go from here?**

Transforming the global approach to mental health doesn't require sweeping overhauls, it begins with

simple acts of compassion. It's checking in with someone. It's listening without judgment. It's pushing for legislation that supports affordable and accessible care. And it's encouraging conversations at home, in classrooms, and in boardrooms.

Governments, schools, healthcare systems, and communities must work in tandem to prioritize mental health the way we do physical health. The benefits are far-reaching: more resilient individuals, stronger relationships, and a more innovative and empathetic society.

In the 21st century, mental health is not a luxury, it's a necessity. Treating it with the seriousness it deserves will help us build a world that values human dignity, fosters connection, and equips people to thrive, not just survive. ■

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