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**HANDLING MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE  
DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC: SWEET ARE THE USES OF ADVERSITY**

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**INTRODUCTION**

In a domain of infectious diseases, a pandemic is the most dreadful case scenario and when an Epidemic troll out a country's border, that's when the disease is officially declared as a pandemic. In the present day, the world is clenched in the hands of coronavirus, but it's not the first time the whole world is caught in the grip of an epidemic. Many epidemics have challenged the whole world but together, we've conquered them all and made ourselves better and stronger than ever before. These include The Black Death(1346-1353), Flu Pandemic(1889-18901), Spanish flu(1918-1920), Aids Pandemic, SARS in 2003, Ebola in 2014-2016 and H1N1 in 2009. As humans have spread across the world, so have the infectious diseases. But these epidemics also provide a great window to see all the deficiencies within our society and they reveal our weaknesses. They also show us how intense, kind and sympathetic we are as a society. Therefore, we have a great deal to learn from such situations and also implement those measures in our daily, post pandemic life.

Even during this era, outbreaks are virtually persistent, though not every epidemic reaches the pandemic level as COVID-19 has. On 30 January 2020 the World Health Organisation declared a public health emergency of international concern as it was found out that all 34 regions of China had infected patients, where the total case count exceeded by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome(SARS) of 2003. It was reported that the virus has originated in the late December 2019 from a wholesale seafood market in Wuhan city of Hubei province. The world has witnessed an exponential growth in the number of cases since then and the WHO has worked around the clock to support the countries hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Doctor Hans Henri Kluge who is WHO Regional Director for Europe, said "Through transparent knowledge sharing, tailored support on the ground and steadfast solidarity, we will beat COVID-19."

History has been a witness to the times when an Epidemic has occurred and it has greatly affected the lives of people and their ways of living. But here the question arises whether these epidemics have prevented us from living our lives or prevented us from progressing further? We have faced many epidemics in the past and today life has come to a full circle and we still stand at the same spot. History repeats!

However, there are always two aspects for everything in life, the positive and the negative, and it depends solely on one's perception. But it makes much more sense that we always choose the positive aspect, instead of the negative because nothing comes out from choosing the negatives. We can't deny from the fact that COVID-19 has brought great socio-economic uncertainties, stress, fear, anxiety, depression but it is also true that no matter how horrific Corona Virus is in comparison to past pandemics, we have a kick-start in handling it, as it is the first pandemic of this sweep where we have known what the bacillus is from the very dawn. What we all need to do at present is to be strong, patient, and mindful. Though we have to face new challenges like work from home, temporary unemployment, social distancing, online teaching, lack of physical comfort by family members, friends and colleagues resulting in, people, feeling isolated and lonely. We can't ignore the fact that these actions have proven to control the spread of the virus. We should also understand the fact that we have to accept these new realities and take all the necessary measures so that we can get rid of this adverse time as soon as we can.

During the time of the pandemic, when menace to one's endurance and that of others become one of the most vital issues of our daily lives, many assume that mental health care can wait while one strive to preserve their lives. Mental health is one of the most important aspects of one's overall health. It affects each and every activity of ours. It may also affect how we handle stress, how we make choices to survive this latest pandemic and reconstruct a-post-pandemic society. Taking care of our physical and mental health should go hand in hand.

Driven by the perturbation and malaise initiated by a pandemic, thousands of people have immersed the health system, while others have hurtled to supermarkets in an attempt to obstruct future shortages of essential supplies . We do not know yet the acute or long-term consequences of the COVID-19 but what we know and we can pursue is to take some simple measures to reduce the impact of this pandemic. Following are some of the ways to control anxiety in these challenging times:

- The first and foremost is to seek accurate information from legitimate sources: The more you know about a certain issue, the less fearful you may feel. We should read information from authentic and reliable sources such as the World Health Organization (WHO) or the primary health care of the nation. Do not follow sensational news or social media post which may impact the mental state. Along with these, set limits to the news on COVID-19. Keeping a constant check on news updates and social media posts on COVID-19 could stimulate stress and worry. We should set a limit on how much news we want to watch and read during the day so that we can have a control on our lives and action. WHO has also advised to seek factual information for a healthier life.
- This takes us to the second measure that is to look after ourselves: You can't pour from an empty cup so we should take care of ourselves first. We should incorporate

simple habits like eating healthy meals, taking a sound sleep, and doing recreational activities. We should opt for a routine those priorities our wellbeing and positive mental health. We should focus on the things that we can control instead of those we can't. We should indulge in activities like walking, meditating, exercising, eating healthy, reading positive and good content. In this sense, COVID 19 will help us realize the importance of a healthy mind as it is said, "Healthy mind lives in a healthy body".

- The next thing we all might do is to reach out and support people around us: Just as we take care of our physical and mental health, in the same way we should be sensitive towards others too. Now, this doesn't mean we should oppose Isolation or quarantine. We can also take care of our loved ones by maintaining a safe distance from them.

Staying in touch with our friends and family might ease the anxiety caused by the virus. If we assist other people in their time of need it might be beneficial to both, the person receiving it as well as to you and in today's time when technology has made the impossible, possible, we can reach out to our friends, family, colleagues or even an acquaintance just on a click of a button. We can talk with them, chat with them, or we can even look at them over a video call. We can connect with them through so many digital platforms. So, we must do that instead of just worrying.

- The next important issue that warrants some attention is to stay hopeful and think positively: Life is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you react to it. WHO also suggests us to look out for new opportunities and listen to positive stories of people who have suffered from COVID19 and have recovered, or to the friends and family of these patients. Doing so, will not only increase our courage but will also help us find out the right way by which we can beat COVID-19.
- Another vital point to take care of is to acknowledge your feelings: In today's unpredictable environment it is obvious that we might feel overwhelmed, stressed, confused, or upset but what we have to keep in mind is that we should be our own best friend before anyone else. So, we should allow ourselves to introspect and communicate our feelings maybe, by writing down our thoughts, speaking to a loved one, doing something creative or by practicing meditation because knowing ourselves is the beginning of all the wisdom and it will help us to live authentically.

So, there is an extensive array of measures to tackle the anxiety caused during this outbreak and to shield your mental health. But the foremost thing to keep in mind is that just as a coin has two sides so does any situation and we should always look at the positive side and focus on the positive aspects. And if we do so then we will realize that it helps us to acquire the importance of a healthy mind. While the sanitizer, disinfectants, and masks may keep the infection at bay, it's our calm mind and optimist attitude that will fight the feeling of uncertainty and help us to sail through this thorny time.

However painful they are, the difficult times, setbacks or tragedies have always been a part and parcel of life. They must be taken as brief moments that will pass soon. Literature spot each individual with compassion and goes deeper than what historical records can tell us. Writings may not drive away issues such as Pandemics but it does turn out to be a source of solace and endows the inherent and devious details of the events, in which even the modern science fails at times.

These kinds of outbreaks had impacted many major writers like Tagore, Premchand, T.S Eliot, Virginia Woolf, W.B Yeats, provoking them to channelize the zeitgeist of those moments by writing upon them, would we have been able to read such enriched books written by them? Probably not! Books such as 'And the band played on: Politics, People, And the AIDS Epidemic', by *Randy Shilts*. 'The Hot Zone: The Terrifying True Story of the Origins of the EBOLA Outbreak' by *Richard Preston*, 'A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14<sup>th</sup> Century' by *Barbara Tuchman*, 'Twilight in Delhi' by *Ahmad Ali*, Premchand's 'Eidgah', Tagore's long poems and numerous others, illustrate us a sketchy delineation of the social order and encourage us to combat the challenging times.

This is an adverse time no doubt but it has given us the opportunity to bring out the best in us. We may probably not get this ample of time again. So, we should utilize this time in becoming the best version of ourselves by pursuing all creative interests we have set aside. And by taking these difficulties in a positive way we should learn new things which will help us in the future. Adversity in a way is a teacher that teaches us to be patient, strong and courageous. One has to go through the vigor of life to become a better individual. By keeping a positive attitude, we can overcome any difficulty.

The coming months will no doubt be a bit painful and a little more anxious but with following the norms of social distancing, by building strong immunity and following all the suggested measures we will get through this adverse time and luckily people are more aware that nothing matters more than a healthy soul and that is the only driving force towards a better and a healthier tomorrow. Remember good mental status might increase your chances to win the battle easily and rapidly. These adverse times might give us a fresh perspective to our existence and help us to evolve into a better version of ourselves.

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