

An Appeal to Celebrities to Use Facebook to Combat Stigma Regarding Psychiatric Disorders

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Rapid Communication

The number of Facebook user has increased exponentially in the developing countries. It had transformed the way of our communication and we are more connected with our beloved celebrities with social networking sites. Facebook has several advantages, based on the free access, facilitating social connections, sharing personal information and following celebrities. It is now possible to communicate with hundreds of friends and follower within a moment by posting a new status in Facebook or uploading a photo.

However, mental illness is still stigmatized even in this era of Facebook in most of the countries even the developed countries are not free from stigma. In the United Kingdom, 70% of people were found to be affected by mental illness and experience discrimination at some time. The scenario is more complicated and problematic in the developing countries due to lack of adequate fund and mental health professionals. Half of all countries in the world have no more than one psychiatrist per 100,000 people and a third of all countries have no mental health programs at all. With so many health issues affecting developing countries, tackling mental health never came to the agenda. People with mental illness are considered as dangerous, violent, aggressive and useless which in turn increases the social distance. This holds true particularly with regards to marriage, marital separation and divorce. Psychic symptoms, unlike somatic symptoms, are construed as socially disadvantageous. Thus, somatization of psychiatric disorders is widespread in Asia. The role of supernatural, religious and magical approaches to mental illness is prevailing among the poor and illiterate people of Asia and Africa. They are more comfortable to seek help from the religious figures and local healers

for mental illness. However, the stigma is not confined among the poor and illiterate the highly educated people including the physicians, social leader, political leaders, teachers, religious figures and celebrities all have some sort of negative attitude and stigmatized view to psychiatric disorders. There is an appalling lack of interest from governments and private sectors in investing mental health. This becomes obvious when we look at the budget or fund for mental health.

It is difficult to involve billions of people without huge investment. However, it is very easy for you our beloved and respected celebrities to communicate millions of your followers within a minute. Facebook may open a new window to connect and communicate to these millions of people to combat mental illness. For example, if a celebrity accept his/her mental illness and share the story or post a status on importance of treatment of psychiatric illness in Facebook. It will convey one of the strongest messages to their millions of crazy fans a moment. It does not need money however needs social commitment. Dear celebrity 'it will not cost your valuable moment you can upload a status while taking a cup of tea or a glass of wine'. Will you not spend these few moments for a better mental health of your fans? These few steps can help to reduce stigma significantly. You should raise your voice to raise fund in mental health. Their Facebook account posts can be a cost effective initiatives for better mental health. These efforts may be highly beneficial for child and adolescents as the celebrity mostly influence them. Frequently they consider the celebrity as their role models. Psychiatrists should try to inspire and encourage the celebrities to raise their voices for mental health.