

PSYCHIATRIC HELP COMES OUT OF THE CLOSET AT THE ADDLIFE CARING MINDS

Matters of the mind

Social stigma prevents people from seeking help for emotional, psychological and psychiatric difficulties," says Minu Budhia, founder, Addlife Caring Minds, a mental wellness centre in Kolkata. "We desperately need to remove the label *pagal* from the Indian social vocabulary, since most mental conditions can now be clinically treated at home. Also, mental wellness research has shown a great variety of disabilities and conditions like autism or learning disability, which must be addressed rather than pushed under the carpet," she adds.

Addlife Caring Minds tries to bring all the tools and fields under one 4,000 sq ft facility on central Kolkata's Lansdowne Road. This was made possible also because of corporate patronage for the project. Minu Budhia's husband Sanjay Budhia, prominent figure in the Indian Chamber of Commerce and popular on the national social circuit, has been of help here.

Minu Budhia wanted to be a doctor but her Marwari background, her childhood in a politically tense Assam and the pressure to get married put her ambition on hold. She took formal training in child brain development at Philadelphia in the US and focussed on development of her counselling skills, when confronted with the issues of differently enabled children. A student counsellor and therapist at St. Xavier's College, J.D. Birla Business College and Belle Vue Clinic, Kolkata, she realised that the city needed a dedicated facility with a wide base of competencies in the psychological and psychiatric fields.

The centre seeks to bring together expert practitioner psychiatrists, psychologists, development paediatricians, neurologists, speech therapists and nutritionists for a holistic approach to treatment. In addition, Addlife Caring Minds also has a strong training and development vertical for institutions and corporates. "Early intervention therapy can reverse the



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Budhia: towards emotional well-being

initial setbacks," says Minu Budhia. "Our centre provides guidance for overall emotional wellbeing."

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), today, nearly half the world's population needs some sort of intervention to impact their self-esteem, relationships and ability in order to function in everyday life. An individual's emotional health can impact his physical health; also, poor mental health can lead to problems such as substance abuse. The centre has a screening programme available for a fee of only ₹1,000.

"It is a one-stop solution for all problems related to psychological well-being in the eastern region," says Anjan Bhattacharya, a renowned development pediatrician in the city, who is attached to the centre. Many NRIs are coming to the centre, because the facilities for old people and children are modern and costs are lower than abroad, he says. There are clinics for dementias and geriatric counselling, as well as a host of clinics for play and speech therapy and other offerings, which include counselling relating to gynecology and child birth. "It is a good attempt by Budhia. City needs more such centres," says Alok Roy, chairman, Medica Superspecialty Hospital.

The training and development wing of the centre has a portfolio of

seminars, as well as career counselling workshops for students, parents, teachers in the education institutions. "Stress-related distress is becoming common and effective early intervention stops it from spiralling out of control," says Preeyam Budhia, who heads this wing. Addlife creates tailor-made programmes for organisational behaviour and culture, anger and trauma management, skill enhancement, work-life balance. A number of schools are also taking up seminars for students and training of their own teachers and counsellors. Sri Sri Academy and Asian International School are among those on the client list. Corporate clients include Mjunction, Ambuja Neotia, T.M. Logistic besides Patton India.

Addlife recently conducted a number of workshops for team building and stress management workshops for the Kolkata police department as part of its CSR function. "Addlife conducted a workshop for our mid-level managers last month on the role of mood and personality in intra-organisational communication. The method they used was motivating," says Devansu Chakraborty, deputy general manager, HRD, Ambuja Neotia group.

With such portfolios, Budhia is trying to reach out to the north-eastern states and neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Bhutan to do similar workshops for children of schools and colleges. She has begun a seeding experiment among the schools in Darjeeling this summer and hopes that the experience will allow her to develop a product that addresses this segment. It is her fervent hope that she will be able to create a process that allows a pan-India franchise model with Internet connectivity.

Addlife Caring Minds starts with the advantage of Budhia being a psychology professional and having a deep pocket. If she manages and retains her ever-growing group of colleagues and professionals, her easier access to capital could give her the winning advantage.

♦ SAJAL BOSE