

t2 CAUGHT UP WITH THE JURY OF LOVYOUZINDAGI AHEAD OF THE FINALE NEXT MONTH

LovvYouZindagi, an initiative by Caring Minds, has started a silent movement among the youngsters in the city who have participated in large numbers in the contest and expressed themselves freely through it. The external jury for LovvYouZindagi includes US consul general Melinda Pavek; British deputy

high commissioner — East and Northeast India, Nick Low; Professor Suranjan Das, vice-chancellor Adamas University; actor Rituparna Sengupta; actor and MLA June; and Sudha Kaul, founder, Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy. Before they meet for the evaluation next week, t2 caught up with them to hear their views.



With the buzz around LovvYouZindagi growing exponentially, we caught up with psychotherapist MINU BUDHIA, the lady behind the newest campaign to mark the decade-old journey of Caring Minds. Excerpts:

Your novel initiative is creating quite a buzz. How are you feeling?

I cannot express how overjoyed I am to see the quantity and quality of entries from both high school students and young professionals. I did not expect LovvYouZindagi to be a success in the first year but it has surpassed my expectations. The enthusiastic participation across all six categories has shown me how truly talented our youth are and how much they want to express themselves.

Each entry is a unique story, a key to unlocking the mind of the creative individual who has put in their heart and soul into their submission. My team and I are learning so much about what the youth wants and what the youth needs in terms of emotional and mental well-being. We have started our internal round of judging and soon it will be time for our celebrity judges to choose from the best of the best.

Can you tell us a little more about the kind of themes you have seen in the submissions?

While many have taken a specific approach, focussing on mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and several others, others have taken an umbrella approach emphasising why mental health is important. Another sizable section has shared their personal battles with stress, loneliness, body image issues, bullying, fears, and their hopes and dreams to turn their personal challenges into victories.

Do you feel that your aim with LovvYouZindagi, to make more youth aware of mental health, is already being fulfilled?

Definitely. Every entry reflects the amount of research that has been done along with how deeply each applicant has looked into their own heart and mind. The simple act of creating has not only taught them about mental health, but also will make their families, friends, and loved ones aware too. Each applicant is now a vessel of awareness who will help break the stigma in their own circles. Every person counts, and every conversation counts. That is how we create a world where mental health no longer requires awareness because it is a part of our daily lives.

Pictures courtesy: Caring Minds



"I am really excited to be a part of it and looking forward to read the shortlisted entries. I think it's a brilliant initiative and am so happy to be a part of it. Minu has a unique take on life, she sees everything a little bit differently. Like looking through a stained glass window, she finds beauty in the ordinary, and colour in black and white. In all the years I have known her, she has never failed to surprise me with her creativity, so it is no surprise that she came up with a creative way to make people aware of mental health. I find the concept so totally interesting, it makes me want to take part," said RITUPARNA SENGUPTA, urging youngsters not to limit themselves.

"I would say you should try different types of creative mediums and don't just limit yourself to the one you are good at. Even if you can't draw a straight line, make art. Even if you can't hold a note, sing. Even if you're terrible at remembering lines, act. The more creative activities you embrace, the more creative you become," she added.

Terming LovvYouZindagi as exciting, thought provoking and perceptive, SUDHA KAUL said, "I think it is important to talk about mental health openly with both adults and children. The media can play an important and positive role in creating awareness. More campaigns like LovvYouZindagi should be planned." She also encouraged young minds to grab the opportunity with both hands. "Here is an opportunity for you to be an 'influencer'. By learning about mental health, you can play an active role in changing attitudes towards persons who have mental health issues," added Kaul.



"Minu, in whatever she does, adds a touch of speciality and uniqueness. She has done the same with her initiative LovvYouZindagi. I love the fact that it doesn't talk directly about mental health, but it makes us aware of mental health issues nonetheless. Personally, I would start more conversations about mental health. The more we talk, the more we break the stigma, the more awareness we spread, the more lives we touch," said JUNE who said that if she could participate in the contest she would choose the mini-documentary and the tagline contest.

"I am honoured, to be honest. Minu brings compassion, inclusivity and above all, excellence to everything she does. LovvYouZindagi will be no different. Personally, I'd ditch the word 'mental'. I think it's loaded and brings all those connotations from school, where 'mental' was interchangeable with 'mad' or 'crazy'. I think that's where the stigma comes from. Someone with 'mental health issues' is 'not quite right'. We wouldn't say that about someone with respiratory issues or a very sensitive gut, would we? Why should it be any different?" said NICK LOW, British deputy high commissioner — East and Northeast India.



"I frequently talk about the need for all people, regardless of gender or age, to learn to express our emotions in a healthy way rather than repress them. Processing our emotions, actually feeling our emotions, and consciously making the connection between our body and mind, and understanding that the two are linked, improves our mental and physical health and is an inherently human capability. As we learn more about how our brains operate, the stigmas around talking openly about mental health will naturally reduce. In many places around the world, we are already seeing mental health being treated with the same level of care as physical health, to the benefit of the individual and greater society," MELINDA PAVEK, US consul general in Calcutta.



"LovvYouZindagi is a right initiative which is being undertaken at the right moment. Caring Minds has been at the forefront of the process of destigmatizing mental health issues among children and generating a scientific temper among us to generate a supportive environment for children with special needs, thereby creating the conditions for a compassionate and inclusive society. We need to include courses on mental health in teaching-learning process to break the stigma of mental health," said professor SURANJAN DAS, adding that the campaign has instilled in him a sense of social responsibility to contribute to the well-being of those children affected by issues of mental health.