

GLOBAL AND LOCAL INITIATIVES SHAPING PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH CONVERSATIONS

Innovative Approaches to Advocacy, Access, and Awareness

ACCESSIBLE THERAPY IN COMMUNITIES

The Friendship Bench Initiative (Zimbabwe)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

The *Friendship Bench* is a groundbreaking initiative in Zimbabwe that brings talk therapy to public spaces, making mental health support easily accessible. Trained health workers, called “Grandmothers,” provide compassionate, non-judgmental therapy on benches in the heart of communities, targeting individuals experiencing depression, anxiety, and other mental health concerns.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- Trained health workers offer tailored, community-centred support.
- Therapy is provided in public spaces, breaking down barriers to access.
- The initiative focuses on tackling depression and anxiety at a grassroots level.
- Proven to be highly effective in reducing mental health issues and improving well-being.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The Friendship Bench makes mental health care both accessible and approachable, breaking the stigma around mental illness by bringing therapy to the people. It normalizes these crucial conversations in everyday settings, helping more people get the support they need.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Health workers sit on designated benches in public areas, offering free, confidential talk therapy. These safe, informal environments encourage individuals to open up and receive help without the pressures of formal settings.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

This initiative has demonstrated a significant reduction in symptoms of depression and anxiety within the community. It's a cost-effective, scalable model that makes mental health care more inclusive and less intimidating.

Think about this !

- What public spaces in your community could serve as platforms for mental health conversations?
- How might you collaborate with local health professionals to establish an accessible mental health support network?
- What obstacles would need to be addressed to implement a similar model in your area?
- How could public spaces be adapted to remain welcoming and functional throughout different seasons and times of the day?

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IN A SOCIAL HUB

The Head Room Café (London, UK)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

The *Head Room Café* in London is a community-driven space that integrates mental health support with a welcoming, social environment. It offers free well-being sessions, workshops, and resources aimed at promoting mental health awareness and providing peer support.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- Free well-being sessions and workshops for the community.
- A social hub where people can meet, share experiences, and access mental health resources.
- Programs focus on mindfulness, stress management, creative therapies, and peer support.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The cafe creates a safe, informal space where individuals can openly discuss mental health, reducing stigma and encouraging support. It provides accessible resources and practical tools for emotional well-being, helping people feel connected and supported in their mental health journeys.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

The cafe hosts regular workshops, well-being sessions, and community events. People can attend, learn, and participate in various activities in a relaxed, supportive environment, fostering engagement and mental health awareness.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

The *Head Room Café* helps normalize mental health conversations in everyday settings. By offering free resources and an inclusive space, it encourages individuals to seek support, share experiences, and learn coping strategies for better mental health.

Think about this !

- How can community spaces like cafes encourage open conversations about mental health?
- What features make this space feel welcoming and supportive?
- What types of well-being sessions or workshops could be most beneficial to different groups?
- How does a comfortable, informal setting contribute to mental health awareness?

COFFEE WITH A CAUSE

Sip of Hope's Mental Health Mission (Chicago, USA)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

Sip of Hope is the world's first coffee shop where 100% of profits support suicide prevention and mental health education. This unique space encourages open conversations about mental health while offering a welcoming environment for customers.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- All profits are dedicated to suicide prevention and mental health education.
- Baristas are trained in mental health first aid, providing immediate support to those in need.
- The cafe provides mental health resources alongside its menu.
- Regular community events and discussions help normalize mental health conversations.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

By creating a space where mental health is part of the conversation, *Sip of Hope* fosters a culture of support and awareness. Profits go directly to mental health initiatives, making each purchase contribute to life-saving work. Trained staff ensure that those struggling can find help in a safe, understanding environment.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Operating as a regular coffee shop, *Sip of Hope* channels all profits into suicide prevention efforts. The cafe also provides mental health resources and information, and the staff is equipped with mental health first aid training to offer immediate assistance. Community events focused on mental health help to engage and inform patrons.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Sip of Hope plays a vital role in normalizing mental health discussions in a casual, everyday setting. Combining great coffee with a cause empowers the community to support mental health initiatives while creating a safe space where people can access help and resources.

Think about this !

- How can coffee shops or similar public spaces promote mental health awareness effectively?
- Why was this type of space chosen for mental health conversations?
- What impact can trained staff in mental health first aid have in a community space?
- How does dedicating profits to mental health causes help sustain long-term support for such initiatives?



**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
MENTAL HEALTH & NEURO SCIENCES**
Institute of National Importance
Bengaluru

NATURE AND NURTURE

The NIMHANS Community Connect Project (Bengaluru, India)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

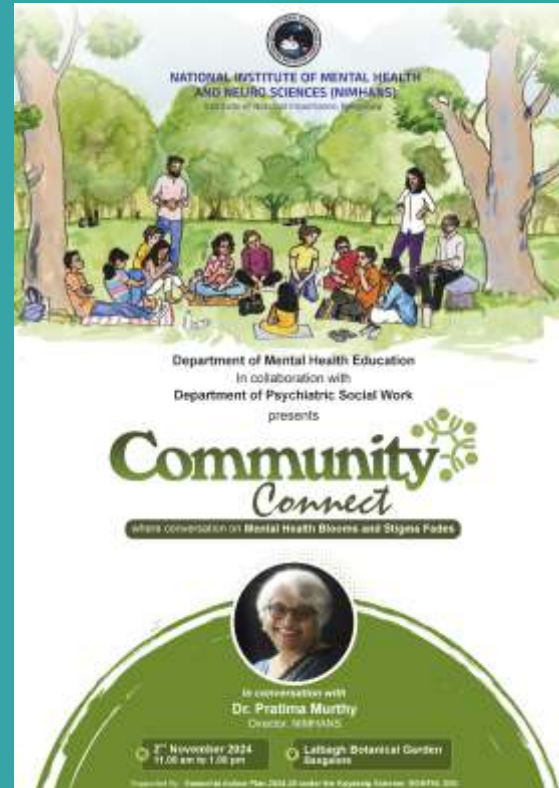
The Community Connect Project by NIMHANS is an upcoming initiative designed to foster mental health engagement through wellness walks and group discussions in Lalbagh Park, Bengaluru. This project will offer a peaceful environment for open conversations and mental well-being activities in natural public spaces.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- Regular wellness walks led by mental health professionals.
- Group discussions on mental health topics in a relaxed, natural setting.
- Open to the public, promoting inclusivity and community participation.
- Participants can share personal experiences and gain insights from experts.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

This project will help bridge the gap between professional mental health services and everyday community life. Offering accessible mental health support in a public, non-clinical setting, aims to reduce stigma and make mental health discussions more approachable for everyone.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

The project will organize monthly wellness walks and group discussions at Lalbagh Park, guided by mental health professionals. These sessions will incorporate mindfulness exercises and provide a safe, inclusive space for participants to engage in open discussions about mental health.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

The Community Connect Project aims to normalize mental health conversations in public spaces, making mental health support more accessible and less intimidating. Taking mental health activities outside of clinical settings encourages community participation and reduces stigma around seeking help.

Think about this !

- How can natural spaces like parks enhance the effectiveness of mental health initiatives?
- In what ways can group discussions in public spaces help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health?
- How can community-based programs create long-term mental health awareness and support?
- Who could you partner with (e.g., local businesses, mental health groups, schools) to create or maintain a space like this in your community?

TACKLING LONELINESS THROUGH CONVERSATION

The Chatty Café Scheme (UK)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

The Chatty Cafe Scheme places 'Chatter & Natter' tables in over 1,000 cafes across the UK, encouraging conversations among strangers. This initiative helps combat loneliness and promotes social interaction in a relaxed, welcoming setting.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- Designated 'Chatter & Natter' tables in participating cafes.
- Open to anyone looking for a conversation with others.
- Supports mental well-being by reducing social isolation.
- Promotes inclusive social engagement, particularly for those feeling lonely.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The scheme addresses the growing issue of loneliness by fostering simple, everyday conversations between strangers. It creates a sense of community and connection, making it easier for people to engage in social interactions that can improve mental health and reduce feelings of isolation.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Participating cafes have marked 'Chatter & Natter' tables where anyone can sit and join in a conversation. These tables are specially designed for individuals who may feel lonely, are new to the area, or just want to connect with others in a friendly and non-intimidating environment.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

The Chatty Cafe Scheme provides a simple yet effective way to combat loneliness by encouraging human connection in everyday spaces. It fosters an inclusive atmosphere where social engagement can thrive, benefiting mental wellbeing and community ties.

Think about this !

- How can small social interactions help reduce loneliness and improve mental health?
- In what ways can public spaces be transformed to support community engagement and mental well-being?
- How can similar schemes be adapted to different cultural contexts or communities?
- How can this space be made welcoming for everyone, regardless of their background or ability?

TECH-FREE ZONES FOR CONNECTION & COMMUNICATION

The Book Establishment Cafe (Pune, India)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

The Book Establishment is a one-of-a-kind cafe in Pune that bans the use of mobile phones, creating a space where personal connections and meaningful conversations are prioritized. The cafe also offers on-site trained counselors for mental health support, providing a blend of relaxation and professional guidance.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- Mobile phones are prohibited to promote face-to-face interactions.
- Trained counselors are available for mental health support.
- Encourages disconnection from technology and reconnection with people.
- Focuses on creating a supportive environment for mental well-being.
- Promotes book reading, personal reflection, and open dialogue.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

In a world dominated by technology, this cafe offers a refreshing break from constant digital distractions. By fostering face-to-face interactions and providing access to mental health support, the Book Establishment helps reduce isolation, encourage mindfulness, and create a welcoming space for emotional well-being.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Upon entering, visitors are asked to store their mobile phones, creating a tech-free zone that encourages meaningful conversations or personal reflection. The trained counselors are on hand for those who seek mental health guidance. The cafe cultivates an atmosphere of mindful social interaction and mental well-being.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

By removing the distractions of technology, the Book Establishment helps people connect more deeply with those around them. The availability of counselors ensures that those in need of mental health support can access help in a relaxed, non-clinical setting. This unique environment fosters both mental wellness and social engagement.

Think about this !

- How does disconnecting from technology impact our ability to connect with others?
- In what ways can cafes or similar public spaces integrate mental health support into their services?
- What makes this space good for safe and open mental health discussions?
- How can social settings like this encourage more mindfulness and reduce stress?

BREAKING STIGMA THROUGH DIALOGUE

Honest Conversations Over Coffee (Delhi, India)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

Honest Conversations Over Coffee is a forum in Delhi designed to foster open, non-judgmental discussions about mental health. It brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds, providing a safe space for sharing experiences, learning from one another, and promoting mental health awareness.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- A safe, open space for mental health discussions.
- Participants from diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- Non-judgmental environment that encourages honest sharing.
- Focus on breaking mental health stigma through dialogue.
- Informal, community-based setting, often centered around coffee meetings.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The forum creates a supportive environment where people can speak openly about their mental health without fear of judgment. By bringing people from different walks of life together, *Honest Conversations Over Coffee* helps break down stigma, fosters mutual understanding, and raises mental health awareness in a relaxed, informal setting.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Regular meet-ups are organized, usually in casual café settings. Participants are encouraged to share their mental health stories, thoughts, and challenges in a non-judgmental atmosphere. Group discussions allow individuals to gain new perspectives, emotional support, and a sense of community.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

By encouraging open dialogue about mental health, this forum helps reduce stigma and fosters understanding. Hearing diverse perspectives enables participants to broaden their views on mental health, creating a community where individuals feel supported and understood.

Think about this !

- How can sharing personal mental health experiences help in reducing stigma?
- What impact can open forums like this have on the mental well-being of individuals?
- How does hearing diverse perspectives influence our understanding of mental health?
- How might local culture or community attitudes affect how people use this space for mental health talks?

STORYTELLING FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Events at Atta Galatta (Bengaluru, India)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

Atta Galatta is a beloved cultural space and bookstore in Bengaluru that collaborates with mental health organizations to host events like *Let's Talk - Your Mental Health* and other initiatives aimed at reducing mental health stigma. The space offers open mic sessions, storytelling events, and group activities that foster open conversations and community engagement.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- Collaborations with mental health organizations for events and workshops.
- Open mic sessions where individuals share their mental health stories.
- Storytelling events that encourage emotional expression and catharsis.
- Group activities that foster community connection and support.
- A safe and inclusive space for mental health discussions.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Atta Galatta provides a platform where mental health conversations are normalized through storytelling and creative expression. By offering a space for individuals to openly share their experiences, the events help break down stigma and build a supportive community focused on understanding and emotional well-being.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Events like *Let's Talk - Your Mental Health* invite participants to engage in open mic sessions, storytelling, and group activities. Mental health professionals and organizations collaborate to offer resources, while attendees share personal stories, listen to others, and participate in discussions that reduce isolation and promote understanding.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

The open, inclusive atmosphere at *Atta Galatta* allows individuals to express their emotions and experiences freely, helping reduce the stigma surrounding mental health. Storytelling and group activities provide emotional catharsis, strengthen community bonds, and raise mental health awareness.

Think about this !

- How can sharing personal stories help others in their mental health journeys?
- What role does community support play in reducing mental health stigma?
- How can creative activities like storytelling and open mic sessions contribute to mental wellness?

CASUAL CONVERSATIONS WITH COUNSELORS

The Mind Cafe Experience (Chennai, India)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

Mind Cafe is a unique mental health-focused cafe in Chennai that provides visitors with the opportunity to have open conversations with trained counselors in a relaxed, non-judgmental setting. The cafe offers a comforting ambiance where individuals can seek mental health support while enjoying refreshments.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- On-site counselors available for one-on-one conversations.
- Relaxed, peaceful cafe atmosphere that encourages open dialogue.
- Focus on reducing the stigma around seeking mental health support.
- A safe and welcoming space for individuals of all backgrounds.
- Integration of mental wellness and casual social interactions.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Mind Cafe normalizes mental health conversations by providing an approachable, stigma-free setting. It allows individuals to feel supported while discussing their emotional challenges in an informal environment, making mental health support more accessible and less intimidating.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

At *Mind Cafe*, visitors can enjoy a coffee or a meal while sitting down with an on-site counselor. These sessions are informal and designed to feel like casual conversations rather than formal therapy, which helps reduce hesitancy for those who might be reluctant to seek professional help. The counselors are trained to listen and provide support without judgment.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

By creating a comfortable, casual setting, *Mind Cafe* makes it easier for people to open up about their mental health. This approach encourages individuals to engage in conversations about their well-being, ultimately reducing stigma and promoting a culture of mental health awareness.

Think about this !

- How does having access to a casual, stigma-free environment help people open up about their mental health?
- In what ways could integrating mental health support into everyday spaces, like cafes, change how society approaches mental well-being?
- How can informal conversations with counselors impact a person's willingness to seek further professional help?

EMPOWERING RECOVERY THROUGH EMPLOYMENT

South East Café (Pune, India)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

South East Cafe in Pune is a socially-conscious cafe that provides employment to individuals who have recovered from mental health challenges. The cafe aims to break the stigma surrounding mental illness by offering meaningful employment and fostering inclusion and understanding within the community.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- Employment opportunities for individuals recovering from mental illness.
- Supportive, inclusive work environment that promotes mental well-being.
- Focus on raising mental health awareness through community engagement.
- A welcoming space for conversations about mental health and recovery.
- High-quality food and drinks served by a compassionate team with lived experiences.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

South East Cafe challenges stereotypes associated with mental illness by providing a platform for individuals to reintegrate into society through meaningful employment. It fosters understanding and inclusion by encouraging open conversations about mental health and recovery, offering customers a chance to engage with staff who have lived experiences.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

The cafe hires individuals who have recovered from mental health challenges and provides them with training in a supportive work environment. This initiative helps staff regain confidence and financial independence, while also serving as an educational opportunity for customers to learn about mental health recovery through personal interactions. The cafe acts as a bridge between mental health awareness and everyday social engagement.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

By providing employment and promoting mental health conversations, South East Cafe reduces stigma and fosters a compassionate, inclusive community. The initiative highlights the value of supportive work environments in promoting long-term recovery and shifts societal perceptions of mental illness through firsthand experiences.

Think about this !

- How does providing employment opportunities for individuals recovering from mental illness contribute to reducing stigma?
- In what ways can supportive work environments promote long-term mental health recovery?
- How might personal interactions with people who have lived experiences of mental health challenges impact society's perception of mental illness?



MENTAL HEALTH MESSAGING IN PUBLIC SPACES

Billboard Campaign in Bengaluru Parks (NIMHANS, Bengaluru, India)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

On July 4th, 2017, the *Department of Mental Health Education* NIMHANS launched a public awareness campaign to encourage individuals to seek help for mental health issues. The campaign combined visual outreach and staff training to foster mental health awareness in key public spaces in Bengaluru.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- Six educational billboards with mental health slogans in both English and Kannada.
- Strategic placement in Lalbagh and Cubbon Park, two major botanical gardens in Bengaluru.
- 350 staff members at both locations received Mental Health First Aid training.
- Training focused on recognizing common mental health disorders and providing assistance to visitors.
- A follow-up assessment during the annual flower show to evaluate the campaign's impact.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

This initiative sought to raise mental health awareness in highly frequented public spaces, using visual aids and trained staff to create a supportive environment. By placing the billboards in popular locations and training park staff in mental health first aid, the campaign aimed to make mental health assistance more accessible and reduce the stigma around seeking help.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

The campaign utilized educational billboards with mental health slogans to catch the public's attention and spread awareness. Simultaneously, trained staff members at the parks were equipped to identify visitors in need of mental health support and provide assistance. A follow-up during the annual flower show allowed for feedback and assessment of the campaign's effectiveness.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

By combining public awareness efforts with trained staff on-site, the campaign promoted mental health support in everyday settings, making it easier for individuals to seek help. The presence of mental health first aid-trained staff ensures that visitors feel supported in an inclusive environment, helping to reduce stigma and encourage proactive mental health care.

Think about this !

- How effective do you think visual aids like billboards are in promoting mental health awareness?
- In what other public spaces could such initiatives be introduced to reach a larger audience?
- How might training in mental health first aid benefit the general public and park staff in the long term?



SURVIVING SUICIDE

Tales of the Mind at Atta Galatta (NIMHANS, Bengaluru, India)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

On September 28, 2018, the *Department of Mental Health Education* organized *Tales of the Mind: Sharing Stories of Surviving Suicide* at Atta Galatta. The event aimed to raise awareness about suicide survival and create a community support network through open, shared dialogues.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- Interactive session designed to foster a community support network.
- Attracted a diverse audience, promoting inclusivity in discussions about suicide survival.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The event sought to destigmatize mental health issues related to suicide by providing a platform for survivors to share their stories. By fostering an open dialogue and creating a support network within the community, it aimed to encourage greater understanding and empathy for those facing mental health challenges.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Sharing Stories of Surviving Suicide involved personal narratives that allowed participants to openly discuss their mental health experiences. The guidance of experts helped facilitate the conversation, ensuring an informative and inclusive space for discussions on suicide survival and mental health awareness.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Events like these help reduce the stigma surrounding suicide by providing a safe space for people to discuss their struggles openly. By promoting survivor stories, the event encouraged empathy, understanding, and the creation of a supportive community around mental health issues.

Think about this !

- How can sharing stories of survival help individuals and the community understand and support those struggling with mental health issues?
- What are some ways to create more public spaces for such important conversations about mental health?
- How can events like these help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues like suicide?



FOSTERING HOPE AND ACTION

Suicide Prevention Day at Atta Galatta

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

On September 8th, 2023, the *Department of Mental Health Education, in collaboration with Atta Galatta, marked Suicide Prevention Day with a campaign themed Creating Hope Through Action.* The event focused on breaking the silence around suicide, fostering open dialogue, and building a stigma-free, supportive community for mental health.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- Held to mark *Suicide Prevention Day.*
- Collaborative event.
- Theme: *Creating Hope Through Action.*
- Focused on encouraging open dialogue and collective action to address suicide prevention.
- Featured distinguished speakers who shared insights and inspired attendees to help end the stigma around mental health.
- Campaign promoted via posters on social media platforms to extend reach.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The campaign aimed to create a supportive environment where people could talk openly about suicide prevention and mental health. By encouraging collective action and dialogue, the event sought to foster a community that embraces understanding and reduces the stigma around mental health challenges.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

The event featured speakers who discussed the importance of open conversations and collective efforts to break the stigma around suicide. Promoted through social media, the campaign reached a broader audience, encouraging engagement and spreading awareness about suicide prevention and mental health support.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

By promoting open dialogue about suicide prevention and mental health, the event helped create a more inclusive, stigma-free community. It inspired attendees to take action, contribute to collective efforts, and support individuals facing mental health challenges.

Think about this !

- How can open dialogue about mental health and suicide prevention create a more supportive and understanding community?
- What actions can individuals take to help break the stigma surrounding mental health challenges?
- How can social media be used more effectively to spread awareness about mental health issues?



CAFES AS MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES

The Mental Health Awareness Initiative (NIMHANS, Bengaluru, India)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

As part of *Mental Health Santhe 2.0*, the Department of Mental Health Education collaborated with several popular cafes to raise awareness about mental health, neurological, and neuromuscular disorders. Fellows and students distributed educational materials, badges, and stickers to promote mental health awareness and reduce stigma in public spaces.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- Initiative launched as part of *Mental Health Santhe 2.0*.
- Cafes such as *Atta Galatta*, *Dyu Art Cafe*, *Glen's Bakehouse*, and *Lahe Lahe* were involved.
- Distribution of educational materials on mental health, neurological, and neuromuscular disorders.
- Badges and stickers promoting mental health awareness were provided for display in cafes.
- Aimed at making mental health resources easily accessible to the public.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

By partnering with popular cafes, the initiative made mental health resources more visible and accessible to the broader community. These public spaces became platforms for promoting mental health awareness and breaking the stigma surrounding mental health issues through small, approachable gestures like distributing badges and stickers.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Fellows and students from the Department of Mental Health Education visited cafes to engage with patrons, providing educational materials and distributing badges and stickers promoting mental health awareness. These cafes served as accessible platforms to spread the message within the community.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

The initiative utilized everyday public spaces to engage the public in conversations about mental health. The distribution of badges and stickers encouraged patrons to openly support mental health awareness, helping to reduce stigma and make mental health resources more accessible.

Think about this !

- How can public spaces like cafes be used to effectively promote mental health awareness?
- What impact do you think small gestures, like providing badges and stickers, have on reducing mental health stigma?
- How can partnerships between educational institutions and local businesses support public health initiatives?



READINESS OF PUBLIC SPACES

For Initiating Conversations Around Mental Health (NIMHANS, Bengaluru, India)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

Led by the Department of Mental Health Education, NIMHANS to enhance mental health literacy across Bengaluru's urban and suburban communities. The project aimed to transform cafes and libraries into hubs for open discussions on mental health, reducing stigma and raising awareness.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- Focus on transforming public spaces like cafes and libraries into hubs for mental health discussions.
- Aimed at reducing mental health stigma and raising awareness.
- Involved seven months of collaboration with over 20 public spaces in Bengaluru.
- Assessed the readiness of these spaces to host mental health events and addressed challenges.
- Fostered a supportive and informed community prioritizing mental well-being.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The initiative played a crucial role in creating accessible platforms for open discussions about mental health in everyday public spaces. By fostering dialogue in places like cafes and libraries, it worked to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health and build a community that prioritizes mental well-being.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Through collaboration with cafes and libraries, the initiative assessed their readiness to host mental health-related events and worked to overcome challenges in implementing them. By transforming these public spaces into hubs for dialogue, the project facilitated meaningful conversations that contributed to raising mental health awareness and reducing stigma.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

By creating accessible and welcoming venues for mental health discussions, this initiative made mental health literacy a community-wide priority. It encouraged open dialogue, educated the public, and promoted a stigma-free environment, fostering a more informed and supportive society.

Think about this !

- How can public spaces such as cafes and libraries serve as effective venues for promoting mental health literacy?
- What are some potential challenges public spaces might face when hosting mental health events, and how can they be addressed?
- How does fostering open dialogue in public spaces contribute to reducing the stigma around mental health?



CHANGING THE NARRATIVE ON SUICIDE

Stick Together Campaign

(NIMHANS, Bengaluru, India
supported by Swachhta Action Plan 2024–25
and the Kayakalp Scheme from MOHFW, GOI)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

On September 18, 2024, the community outreach program *Stick Together: Sharing Stories, Spreading Hope* took place at Atta Galatta. Held in alignment with *World Suicide Prevention Day (September 10)*, the event featured interactive boards where participants could share narratives about suicide, reflecting the theme “*Changing the Narratives on Suicide.*” The initiative aimed to promote mental health awareness and reduce stigma through shared stories of hope and resilience.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- Held in recognition of *World Suicide Prevention Day (September 10)*.
- Theme: “*Changing the Narratives on Suicide.*”
- Interactive boards in public spaces for participants to write messages of hope.
- Participants were encouraged to share personal experiences and connect with others.
- Supported by the Swachhta Action Plan 2024–25 and the Kayakalp Scheme from MOHFW, GOI.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The event was timed around *World Suicide Prevention Day* to maximize awareness and encourage conversations about suicide and mental health. It provided a platform for participants to share personal stories and messages of hope, helping to reduce stigma and foster a supportive environment where mental health issues could be openly discussed.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Participants were invited to write messages of hope on interactive boards, allowing them to express their feelings and resonate with others. This activity created a shared space for emotional expression and connection, promoting mental health awareness and fostering a sense of hope within the community.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

By utilizing a significant date like *World Suicide Prevention Day*, *Stick Together: Sharing Stories, Spreading Hope* highlighted the importance of timely discussions around suicide and mental health. The initiative encouraged community members to connect through shared experiences, promoting open dialogue, reducing stigma, and creating a supportive, hope-filled environment.

Think about this !

- How can interactive public spaces, such as message boards, help in changing the narratives around suicide?
- What role does sharing personal stories play in reducing the stigma associated with mental health issues?
- How can important days like *World Suicide Prevention Day* or *World Mental Health Day* foster a sense of community and hope for individuals struggling with mental health challenges?



INNOVATIVE MENTAL HEALTH DIALOGUES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Manas Samvaadha (NIMHANS, Karnataka, India)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

The Department of Mental Health Education, in collaboration with the National Health Mission and the Department of Rural Development & Panchayat Raj, Karnataka, has launched a Human Library initiative to combat mental health stigma in rural communities. Volunteers with lived experiences of mental illness share their personal stories in 30-minute sessions, fostering open dialogue and understanding.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- Collaboration between the Department of Mental Health Education, National Health Mission, and Dept. of Rural Development & Panchayat Raj.
- Piloted in 12 libraries across Bangalore Rural, Chikballapur, and Ram Nagara districts.
- Volunteers with lived mental health experiences act as "Books."
- Community members engage with the volunteers ("Readers") in 30-minute sessions.
- Focused on reducing mental health stigma and increasing mental health literacy in rural communities.
- Contact-based approach, a first of its kind in India.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The *Human Library* initiative provides a unique, personal way to reduce mental health stigma in rural areas by facilitating direct conversations between volunteers who have lived through mental health challenges and community members. This approach helps demystify mental illness and fosters a deeper understanding and acceptance within rural communities.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

The *Human Library* is piloted in 12 public libraries across rural districts of Karnataka. Volunteers, referred to as "Books," share their experiences with mental health challenges during 30-minute sessions with community members ("Readers"). Through these dialogues, the initiative aims to break down misconceptions and promote a more informed, supportive community around mental health issues.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

By engaging rural communities in direct conversations with individuals who have lived through mental health challenges, the Human Library model fosters empathy and understanding. It provides a platform for personal stories to challenge stigma, change perceptions, and increase mental health literacy in areas where awareness may be low.

Think about this !

- How does the Human Library model facilitate understanding and reduce stigma in rural communities?
- What impact can personal storytelling have on changing perceptions about mental health?
- How can this initiative be scaled to reach more rural areas across India?

MOVIES, MENUS AND MENTAL HEALTH

The Snackversation Series (Augmenta Health)

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

Snackversation by *Augmenta Health* is a unique initiative and recurring event in which participants are invited to watch a movie with a mental health theme ahead of time and then gather for a discussion over snacks. The conversation is enriched by providing discussion points in advance, ensuring participants come prepared to dive into the film's mental health messages in a relaxed, enjoyable setting.

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- Participants are informed about the movie and given time to watch it before the snackversation.
- Key discussion points and ideas are shared beforehand to encourage reflection and prepare for meaningful dialogue.
- Movies are chosen for their strong focus on mental health themes.
- Participants engage in open conversations while enjoying snacks in a casual, welcoming environment.
- A unique combination of entertainment and education that makes complex mental health topics more accessible.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Snackversation provides a platform for open and informed discussions around mental health in a non-intimidating way. The conversations are more insightful and engaging by allowing participants to watch the movie and reflect on its key themes before the event. This approach makes it easier for participants to discuss sensitive mental health issues while promoting awareness and reducing stigma in a fun, social setting.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Participants are informed about the selected movie well in advance, along with discussion prompts to help them reflect on key mental health themes. After watching the movie on their own time, participants gather at the snackversation, where mental health professionals or moderators facilitate the conversation over snacks. The relaxed setting encourages open dialogue and personal reflections, making it a fun yet meaningful way to explore mental health issues.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Snackversation turns mental health conversations into something both enjoyable and impactful. Combining film with structured discussion makes difficult topics more approachable and encourages participants to engage deeply with mental health themes. The advanced preparation helps foster more thoughtful and personal contributions, creating a richer, more meaningful dialogue that helps reduce stigma and raise mental health awareness.

Think about this !

- What role does a relaxed, social setting play in making mental health discussions more approachable?
- How can the inclusion of snacks and food contribute to creating a comfortable, non-judgmental environment for participants?
- Could directors, actors, or people involved in making the movie be approached to provide insights, and how might that enhance the conversation?
- How can movies that reflect mental health struggles be used as educational tools to foster empathy and understanding among participants?
- In what ways can *Snackversation* be scaled or adapted to different audiences, such as schools, corporate settings, or other community groups?

CONVERSATIONS OF WELLNESS, ENLIGHTEN (AUGMENTA HEALTH)

Lighten with Yoga II
Brighten with a Book II
Energize with a Bite

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

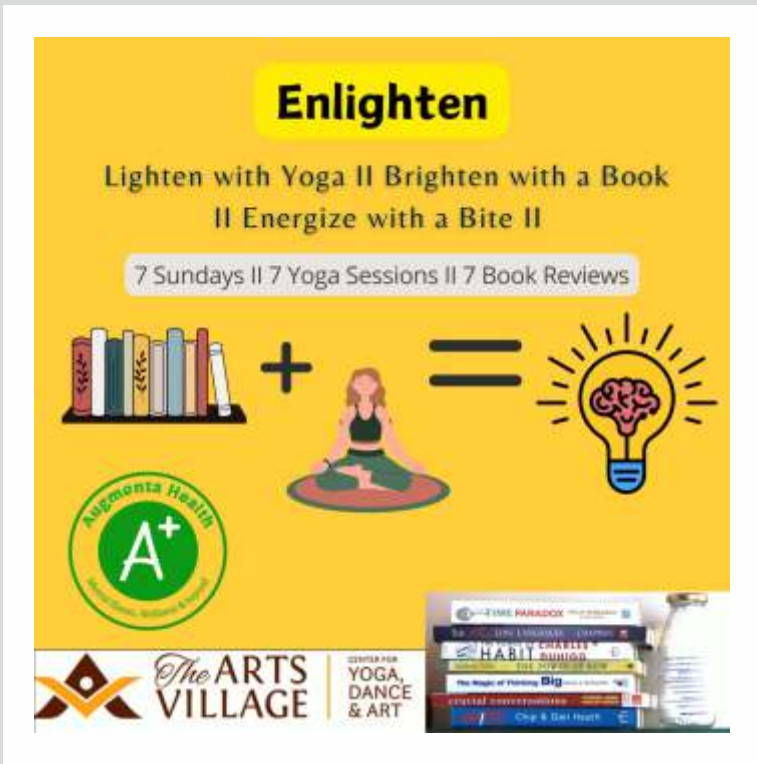
Enlighten 2017 was a unique initiative by Augmenta Health that aimed to combine the power of yoga, reading, and healthy eating to nurture both mind and body. Over the course of 7 Sundays, participants engaged in 7 themed yoga sessions, 7 curated book reviews, and were treated to a carefully selected healthy snack and drink after each session. The program created a holistic wellness experience, offering a space for self-reflection, intellectual growth, and physical well-being, while building a supportive community environment

WHAT STANDS OUT?

- The program integrated 7 thoughtfully selected books with 7 themed yoga sessions.
- Each session focused on promoting mental, physical, and spiritual wellness.
- Participants received intellectual stimulation through book reviews led by experts.
- Every session ended with a curated healthy snack and drink to refresh the body, further promoting the connection between mindful eating and well-being.
- The sessions built a community of like-minded individuals motivated to enhance their overall wellness.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Enlighten 2017 helped participants start the year with a fresh, balanced mindset by combining the synergy of mental, physical, and nutritional health. The program provided a structured yet flexible approach to self-care, making the connection between mind, body, and food explicit. By creating a space where people could "Lighten with Yoga, Brighten with a Book, and Energize with a Bite," it broke away from traditional health programs and introduced a comprehensive and enjoyable path to wellness.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Over 7 Sundays, participants attended morning yoga sessions, each followed by a book review that engaged their minds. The yoga sessions were facilitated by experienced instructors, and each book review was led by professionals, providing practical insights and intellectual engagement. After each session, participants were given a curated healthy snack and drink, creating a sensory experience that promoted physical health while encouraging mindful eating. The program nurtured both body and mind in a well-rounded, immersive experience.

HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Enlighten 2017 made holistic wellness accessible by integrating intellectual growth, physical activity, and mindful eating into a single, comprehensive program. The combination of yoga, book reviews, and healthy refreshments allowed participants to reflect on their health, explore new ideas, and develop habits that promoted long-term well-being. Participants left the program feeling rejuvenated, focused, and equipped with practical tools to continue their wellness journey.

Think about this !

- How might public spaces in your community be used to host wellness activities that integrate both mental and physical well-being?
- What kind of books, themes, or wellness practices could spark engaging conversations on mental health and holistic wellness in public settings?
- How can community wellness programs create a balance between physical, mental, and nutritional health to ensure a well-rounded approach to well-being?
- How can you involve local cafes, libraries, or community centers to establish accessible, open, and supportive mental health conversations in your area?