

Being the mother of a special child, Minu Budhia is aware of the needs of people who struggle to cope in this sphere. It was her personal experience that prompted her to form AddLife, a state-of-the-art centre for psychological growth. It is the first of its kind in Kolkata, where more than 30 mental health professionals provide their expert services to issues, both clinical and non-clinical.



"For a long time worries surrounding my special child, Prachi's, future have plagued my mind. I wondered being a special child what will she do when she grows up? Will it be only restricted to watching TV and going for evening walks? I didn't want my daughter to be so idle. And, my daughter was not the only one in my mind", says Minu. Haunted by this thought she came up with the idea to empower these special needs young adults who also deserve a place in society. "They can be trained to be independent to an extent and get employed in a sheltered workplace. Some of the brighter ones can also be employed by the corporate. It is the responsibility of the society to accept them and give them suitable jobs. There should also be a quota for them like there is in western countries," feels Minu.

Minu was always interested in studying the human mind and medical science and has done a course on cognitive behaviour therapy. She has worked as a student counsellor at schools and colleges.

While taking my younger daughter, Prachi, for therapy and counselling I found that people need to do rounds of a number of clinics to avail different services and that involves a lot of stress. That was when I decided about a one stop clinic where all the services related to mental health could be accessed,

says Minu Budhia. Since the last two years AddLife Caring Minds has been working in the four wings of Clinical, Training & Development, Akademia and MindSpeak. The Clinical Wing provides mental health care through the services of psychiatrists, psychologists, special educators, psychotherapists, speech therapists, the hearing and voice clinic etc. The Training & Development wing conducts workshops on relevant topics for parents, teachers, students, corporate audiences and other social bodies. The third – Akademia, is running successful batches of the basic counselling course as well as multiple short term courses on topics like Play Therapy, Behaviour Modification, Specific Learning Disorders, etc. The fourth wing is Mind Speak which is an open forum that organizes a speak-free session every month on a relevant topic where individuals from all walks of life can participate by expressing their thoughts on the subject.

We are introducing the fifth wing – i.can.fly, primarily designed for young special needs adults who need to be inspired and motivated through meaningful vocational tasks. It will increase their sense of self-worth knowing that they have contributed to the society of created something meaningful. We hope that those who receive training here are later able to work online from home or make products that are saleable in the market. We hope to bring a smile to the face of everyone who enrolls at i.can.fly and ensure that they have a brighter future,

says Founder Director of AddLife Caring Minds, Minu Budhia.

i.can.fly aims to provide a platform where special needs young adults (15 years and above) can gain



awareness of the interests and aptitude that they possess, exposure to various career options, and extensive training on building requisite skills for a brighter future. The training will not only benefit them monetarily but instil in them a sense of vision and make them self-sufficient and independent in this competitive world. "It is a specially designed curriculum formulated by professionals who have been working with young special needs adults for years and can ensure that no undue stress is exerted on them and that each individual is allowed to learn to their maximum potential. The curriculum caters to all differently-abled adults, without any discrimination. The individual would slowly learn skill based activities and be a part of our production unit or work independently in his/her home setup. Since different people learn at different speeds, the teachers and instructors of AddLife Caring Minds will help them learn at their own pace and facilitate an environment of support and encouragement," explains Minu.

i.can.fly will not just provide a platform for skill building but also provide some hours of respite for the parents / caregivers of these young special needs adults. Research shows that the quality of care suffers if the caregivers cannot disengage from their ward for some time regularly.

Minu has been expanding the bouquet of AddLife Caring Minds and pursuing her dream. Today she is all smiles. Not only has her labour of love, AddLifeCaring Minds, turned two, it is also ready to flag off a new wing – i.can.fly. Preeyam, Minu's elder daughter is now ready to pitch in with her management acumen and to take life skills, grooming, gadgets and baking classes.

Minu's daughter Prachi has made her very sensitive to others needs which otherwise she would not be aware of. She rightly says, "For everything God does, there is a purpose. There is a larger picture to it. Through Prachi He has made me serve the society in my own way. My vision is much broader now. Thanks to the Almighty!".

MENTAL HEALTH

ADDLIFE

DIFFERENTLY ABLED ADULTS

I.CAN.FLY

MINU BUDHIA

PSYCHOLOGICAL GROWTH

SPECIAL CHILD

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

HERSTORY

INSPIRATION

Minu Budhia the face behind Kolkata's first state-of-the-art centre for psychological growth

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