

# Caring Minds: Breaking stigmas

*A non-profit organisation; Caring Minds is for everyone who is coping with mental health issues*

MONIKA P LALITHI

**M**ental health is a state of well-being in which every individual (males his or her own potential) can cope with the normal stress of life, work productively and is able to make a contribution to society. It is often noticed that we go to doctors only if we have a physical health issue but completely ignore our mental well-being. Such issues can lead to more pressure in our daily lives. Research has shown that mental illness, including several varieties of disabilities and conditions like autism or learning problems are pushed under the carpet so often and leads to bad health, broken marriages and 'special' kids.

'Caring Minds' - the first of its kind in Eastern India, is a multi-specialty wellness facility aimed at helping people of all ages cope with mental health issues. 'Caring Minds' offers an easily accessible and a confidential environment for clients to consult with a diverse range of mental health experts. The 'Caring Minds' team consists of counsellors, psychiatrists, psychologists, developmental paediatricians, paediatric physiotherapists, speech therapists, geriatricologists, nutritionists and the like all under one roof. In an exclusive interview, founder and director of 'Caring Minds', Miss Badhina opens about how she came up with this idea of a mental wellness centre and her future plans. Excerpt...

**What does 'Caring Minds' mean to you?**

In my third baby after my two daughters. It's a joy, possibl making organisations. And we work together towards the mental health and well-being of individuals.

**What was your motivation behind opening such an institute?**

It all began when I gave birth



Miss Badhina - founder and director of 'Caring Minds', working towards the mental health and well-being of individuals

to my second daughter, Prachi, eight years after my first daughter Priyanshu (90) was born. As Prachi grew up, my family noticed that her school performance was suffering and we knew that something was wrong. It was in the late 1990s when my daughter was going to preschool that I began to get a bit of complaints. Since she never sat still, the teacher labelled her 'naughty'. A mother's instinct told me otherwise.

But there were no proper facilities available in Kolkata then. Awareness on such issues was very low. After thorough research, I travelled abroad and finally got my daughter diagnosed with Low IQ and ADHD following which I tagged into severe depression. It lasted eight long years before I realised the need to accept her as a 'special' child. Till then, not only had I put her through a lot of therapies, but I was realising some



realised that I, myself, got treated for depression. Yet, even the subject of depression was such a taboo that no one wanted to talk about it. Eventually, I decided to come out of my shell and embrace life. Till the time I did not accept my daughter as she was, I was in a constant battle with myself. I was unhappy and so was she. As soon as the acceptance came, we reached out to each other. In fact, now the entire family tries to not hate her for her, we would not have been sensitive to the needs of 'special' people in the world.

She has broadened our horizons and made us better persons. Once there was acceptance of the situation, things began to fall into place. I travelled again; this time not in search of a cure but to gain to manage my daughter. I underwent normal training in child brain development in Philadelphia, US, followed by a basic counselling course from Krupa Foundation, Mumbai, and then a cognitive behaviour therapy course from London. After qualifying as a psycho-therapist, I became a student counsellor at ED-Rita and St Xavier's and also practised at Belle Vue before deciding to open an integrated psychological and cognitive wellness centre. 'I was in Belle Vue. I was constantly referring patients to other centres for treatments like remedial education and speech therapy. Soon, I realised the need for a single centre where one could avail of all therapies under a single roof. That is how



'Caring Minds' happened. Thanks to my family, especially my husband Sanjoy Budhia who inspired me throughout my journey, today, we have a clinical and non-clinical wing.

#### How is Caring Minds different from other similar institutes?

The facility is a one-stop shop solution, ranging from psychometric assessment and diagnosis to client psycho-education and workshops to therapy and treatment to psycho-social rehabilitation and follow up. Based inside is a sprawling facility, where 'Caring Minds' serves everyone's needs through various specialised services. It has a development unit providing speech and occupational therapy and remedial education in addition to a behaviour clinic. Caring Minds' psychometric assessments include neuropsychological testing, psychiatric evaluation, precise diagnosis and more. It also provides support for anger management, grief, bereavement, anxiety disorders and mood disorders. For the young and elderly there are paediatric and geriatric departments. The holistic and inclusive approach ensures health and care for everyone.

#### What are the different services you provide here?

'Caring Minds' operates through the following units - Clinical, Training and Development, Akademia, MindSpeak. I am planning a voc-

ational training unit for young adults with 'special' needs. Our services include - IQ testing, testing for ADHD/Dyslexia etc, personality testing, neuropsychological test, career counselling, counselling, behaviour clinic, special education, psychiatry, nutrition consultation, speech/hearing clinic, voice clinic, postnatal physio therapy.

#### What are your specialised services?

'Caring Minds' brings specialised services designed for teachers - from training trainees to positive disciplining, new age educators' workshops have it all. There is one for students too - from handling exam stress to making the right career choices - everything students need to make their way ahead in life. One for the parents - effective life management skills for raising to children with 'special' needs, positive strategies for instilling discipline and more to make for a well-equipped guardian. We also have corporate skill enhancement units - preparing oneself to get ahead in his/her job and career through training and workshops. There is also a unit on psychometry for employee screening - finding the right employees through fair simple processes. Our training and development unit is there to help increase productivity, efficiency and job-satisfaction.

Many people suffer from certain emotional and psychological difficulties and find it problematic to seek assistance due to social stigma. We felt that the time was ripe to bring to the forefront such issues and banish the stigma surrounding mental health and wellness. My campaign says that even a scientist can have dyslexia! So get help and don't let them define.

According to you what are the main areas of concern in our day-to-day life which needs

#### counselling?

One of the biggest problems in relationships, marriages are bubbling up these days as gatekeepers refuse to adjust and tolerate like their elders had. In cities, only 10% marry in that manner. In order to work out better relationships, there is a strong need to seek expert services. One need not suffer in silence any further. Mental wellness is quintessential in our community. Everyone could benefit from talking to a counsellor. There is no shame in seeking help. Dealing with children must be done most sensitively.

The first thing we do in child-related disorders is counsel parents. We make them understand that they need to accept children as they are, judging a child, comparing him or her with an elder or younger sibling is an absolute no-no because they are sensitive and understood everything.

#### Do you support the newly and poor who can't afford modern counselling?

Yes, no one goes empty-handed from 'Caring Minds'. Everyone depending on the nature of need of the treatment is welcome. It is a non-profit organisation and I personally see to it that everyone goes proper treatment here.

#### Your message to the society?

The center is for everyone. Like in foreign countries where everyone has a personal counsellor and a personal physician in the palm and palm of everyday life, people here too are realising the need to speak to someone who is non-judgemental and unbiased. Here's where 'Caring Minds' comes in.

Hailing from Assam's Tezpur, where there weren't too many opportunities, it was Mani's younger daughter who made her take up courses in mental therapy and this 'special' child turned around a mother to a social philanthropist.