

Understanding Empathy and Emotional Intelligence in Mental Health

Have you ever observed people getting angry immediately, starting to cry instantly when someone hurts them, or calming down the moment someone says,

“Don’t worry, you’re not alone. I’m here for you.”

I think these kinds of people are well-defined examples of how our mental well-being works.

If we try to understand what mental health really is, and how we can address people facing anxieties or mental health issues, we first need to understand one thing—

Mental health is not a problem that needs to be fixed with an immediate solution.

A Personal Reflection

There’s a time I can remember. One of my friends was failing an exam again and again. His relationship also broke off.

Everyone he met would say,

- “Sab thik ho jayega,”
- “Positive raho,”
- “Acha socho,”
- ... and all that.

But that person became more frustrated whenever someone told him to follow forced positivity. Everyone he met gave him advice that he could never implement in his reality.

Why Do These Things Happen?

People try to give them positivity. People try to give them advice.

Then why is he getting more frustrated?

Actually, we need to understand something here.

When people feel lonely, heavy-hearted, anxious, or a bit depressed, we just need to be there.

Yes, I think sometimes **listening** is more valuable and helpful than pouring your forced positivity and advice that they cannot implement in reality.

Research also says that when people are feeling depressed, anxious, alone, and helpless, we try to push them to think positively or say,

- “Sab thik ho jayega,”

- “Hota rehta hai ye sab life me,”
... and all that—it makes them feel even more alone than they did before meeting people who tried to pour forced positivity and give absurd advice.

How Should They Get Catered to Then?

How can they feel better?

How can we really be their support during their healing phase?

There is a solution.

Yes, and the solution is **“EMPATHY”** and **“EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE.”**

What is Empathy?

First, we need to understand what these terms really mean.

How can we understand these words and bring them into our lives?

Have you ever felt someone's situation was very insignificant or ineffective?

And then, after some time, you got into the same situation where you said to that person,

“Bhai, mujhe ab samajh aa raha hai, tum kaisa feel kar rahe the.”

There's a chance ki ye shayad aap sabke sath nahi hua hoga.

But this is what empathy means.

“IT'S STEPPING INTO SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES.”

When we try to understand people from their point of view, from their emotions, from their perspective, keeping ourselves in their situation, we can bring out empathy from within ourselves.

Now you might be thinking that:

What Would Be Its Benefit?

How can it improve our understanding of people who are not mentally well?

When we start listening to them with empathy, They will start relating their emotions to you.

Yes, they will start relating their situation with your understanding.

And when they find your understanding familiar, they start feeling heard.

They start feeling supported. They begin to feel that there is someone with whom they can share their deepest thoughts and feelings opening their heart with you.

Has it ever happened that someone told you about their struggles, and you instantly connected with them?

Your mind will immediately trigger that, **"Yes! I can feel what you're saying,"** because you've been through something similar. **That's empathy.**

But in actuality, we need to make our mindsets like this whenever we meet someone who is not well.

Just make them feel heard.

Try to observe their situation, not with your own mindset, but instead through their emotions.

Tabhi aap samajh paoge ki wo actual me kaisa feel kar rahe hai.

What Should We Do Instead of Forced Positivity?

Instead of trying to fix everyone with your forced positivity or advice, just do these small things instead:

- Tell them, **"I'm here for you,"** and let them know they don't need to feel alone in this phase of life. When they feel they're not alone, they get more comfort than from your advice.
- Give them the assurance that your support will always be there whenever they feel the need.
- Sometimes they start feeling odd among the group with their emotions.
Just tell them, **"It's okay to sometimes feel like that. Your emotions are validated."**
- Among us, many think, "I'm now becoming a burden on people if I ask for support or help while not being well."
Tell them, **"You'll never be a burden on me."**
Saying this directly eases them and makes them feel comfortable asking for any kind of help from you.
- Many times we force them to say what's on their mind, what's happening, what's going on—even when they don't want to open up with their thoughts. At that time, instead of forcing them, we need to say,
"It's okay if you're not ready to open your heart right now. Just know I'm here to be your listener without any judgment, and you can be open with me whenever you feel ready."
- **Sometimes people just need someone to listen to their words—not advice.**
So before giving any advice, ask them first if they need it.

Most of the time, we observe people being happy with us, but deep down there is something making them feel worried and unwell.

For that, we need to assure them,

"You don't need to pretend to be okay with me."

This helps them feel supported and safe with you.

In 2023, I had to bring one of my friends to a psychologist for his mental well-being. And then, when we were meeting, he told me that we normally try to cheer up people or say to them,

- “Everything will be alright.”
- “Just be calm.”
- “Just be positive.”

But we have to understand that this makes them feel more isolated, unheard, and helpless. **If we truly want a change in someone’s life for a better tomorrow, we just need to be empathetic with them.**

What is Emotional Intelligence (EQ)?

And the second one is **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**.

There are two quotients that we need to know about.

First is the **Emotional Quotient (EQ)** and second is the **Intelligence Quotient (IQ)**.

We’ve all heard about IQ, like saying or hearing someone say,

- “Your IQ is very good,”
- “You’re very fast and intelligent with your mind.”

But do we understand what EQ is and how it brings value to our lives and relationships?

EQ is our Emotional Quotient.

When we keep our emotions without hurting someone else, then it’s called EQ—our emotional intelligence.

Why Does Emotional Intelligence Matter?

Hota hai na aksar ki hum apni baat rakhte hue saamne wale ko hurt kar dete hai, ya unhe bura lag jata hai.

Why does this happen?

There are times when we find ourselves approaching situations differently, and then we end up feeling unheard and not understood.

It’s one of the most common experiences we’ve all sometimes felt in our lives, right?

Hota hai na aksar hum kahi ka gussa kahi aur nikaal jaate hai.

Ab aap soch rahe honge ki haan aisa to aksar hota hai.

To iske liye hum kya kar sakte hai?

Now we need to understand that at that time, regulating our emotions is more necessary than we think for us.

What Can We Do then?

Whenever things get tough or you know deep down that this is not the place where you can bring out your frustration,

Where you know that if you do something unfavorable,
Relationships can get damaged, or issues can arise,

Then just remind yourself for a bit—

Close your eyes, and ask yourself:

“If I let this frustration out here, on my family or friends or someone who has nothing to do with it, what will happen? Will it damage a relationship? Will it make me regret my words later?”

And if we react to a situation impulsively,
We don't just end up making sad others,
We also end up falling into guilt ourselves.

So at that time, just reflect on yourself for 30 seconds, and ask yourself—

- Whether what you are doing is right or wrong,
- Whether it will benefit you or end up bringing you guilt.

Just this small reflection can help you be a better emotional version of yourself.

Check On Others (And Yourself)

Remember one more thing.

There are times when you observe someone is not feeling good, or not well, or not behaving as they usually do.

Just ask them,

“Are you okay? Do you wanna speak to me?”

Realize them that you're there to listen, to hear,
And they don't need to end up getting unheard.

Final Thought

And remember—

Sometimes a healer needs to heal also.

The one who is always there for others might need someone to check in on them.

Be that person.

By practicing **Empathy** and **Emotional Intelligence**, we can create spaces where people feel safe, supported, and understood. And in doing so, we make the world a little kinder—for them and for ourselves.
