



The Treasure Within

Mental Health and Community Support in Religious Life (India)

Sally John SJB

Witness & Grace: A Healthcare Forum on Mental Wellness
Global Sisters Report

A sound Mind...

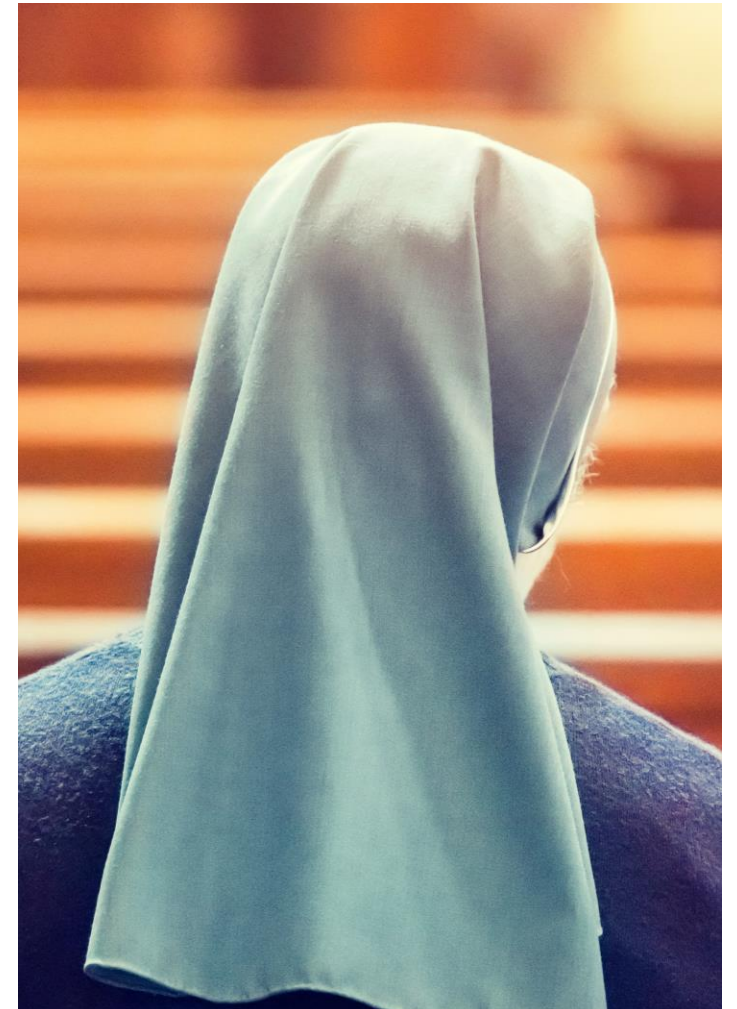
- Mental wellness is as important as physical, spiritual, and social fitness
- There is no health without mental health



Context

The Mental Health Landscape in India

- **1,00,000 religious sisters across India**
- **Minimum 10% (10,000 sisters) identifiable mental health problems**
- **Lack of research or structured care in this area**
- **Treatment Gap? 85%**



Stigma among Women Religious

- Mental illness is a result of spiritual or moral failing.
- One can manage one's problems- seeking help is a sign of weakness
- Fear of being ostracized by community members
- Concerns of Confidentiality and Privacy
- Impact of stigma: guilt, shame, and reluctance to seek help



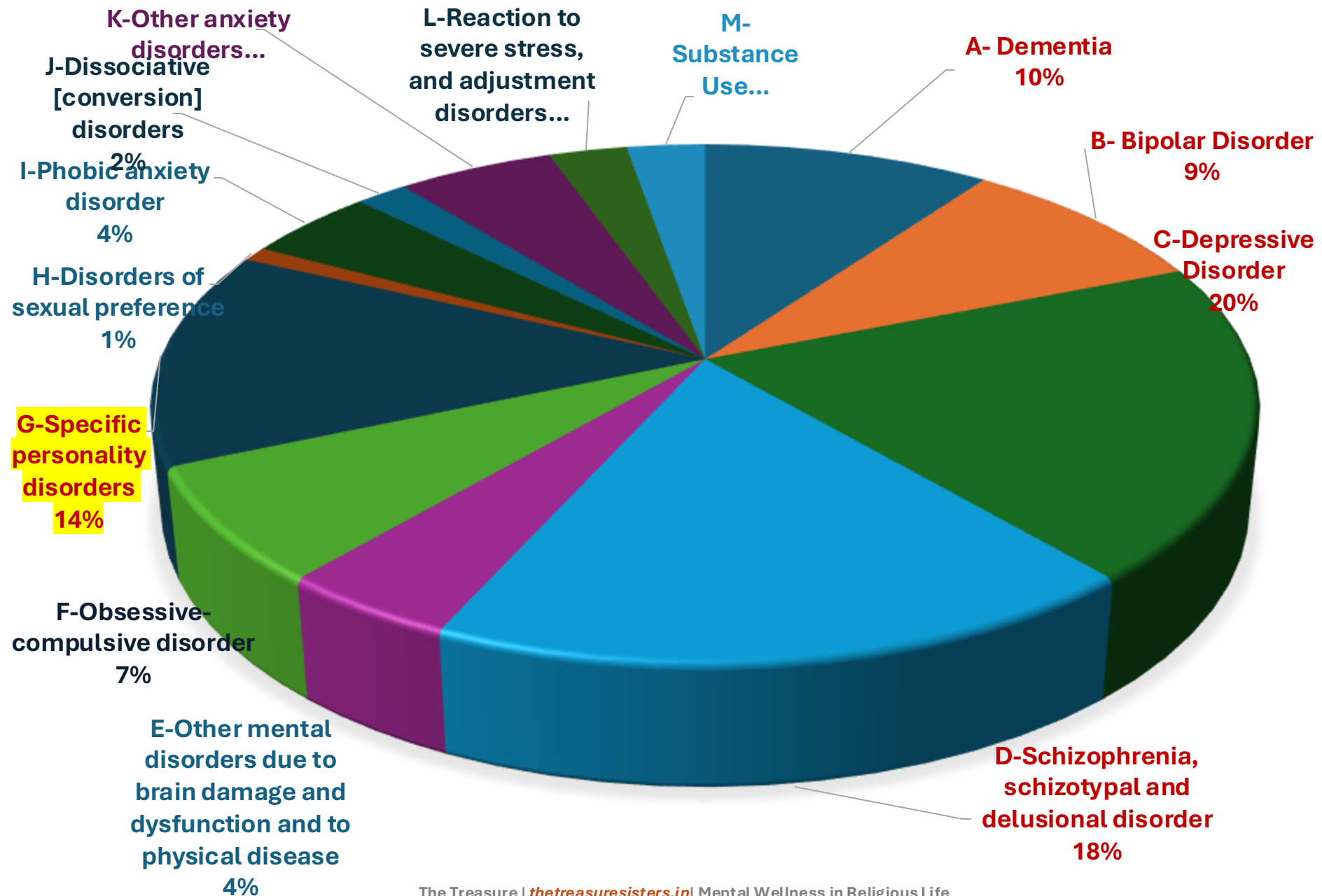
Reluctance to Seek Help

A sister, feeling persistently low and withdrawn, told another sister in the community that she needed help.

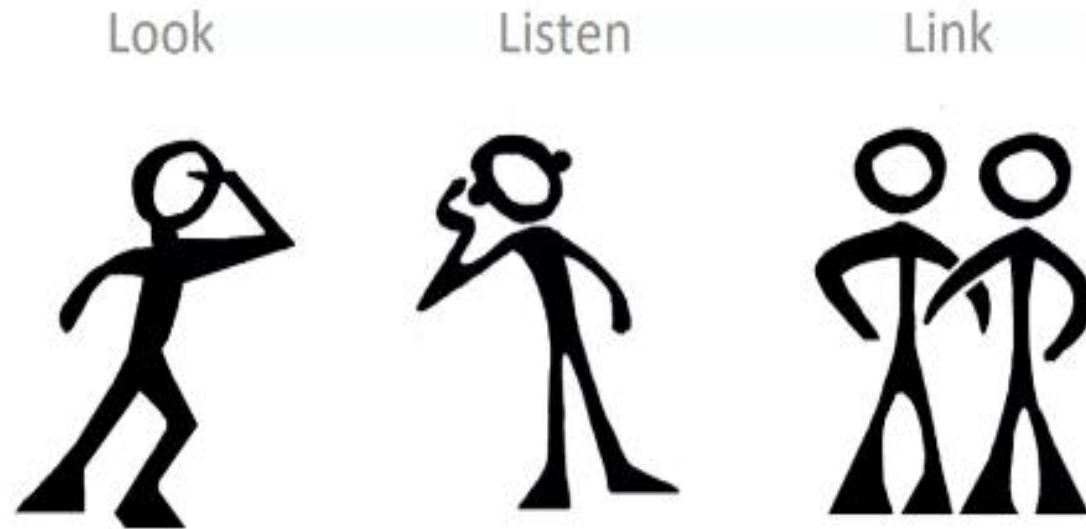
“Are you crazy? What will people say? Consider going for a retreat,” she was told.

But the silence only deepened her pain





Psychological First Aid



- **Counseling isn't always enough**—certain cases require **medical intervention**
- Mental Health Care needs a **balanced approach**—*spiritual care, physical care, community involvement, therapy, and medical treatment must be integrated.*



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Sisters Caring for Sisters Mind, Heart, and Community

- **Information (Awareness)**— break the silence, reduce stigma, and encourage open conversations(Online and offline)
- **Intervention** —support through medical treatment, counselling services, workshops, and therapeutic programs to address the specific stressors(online and offline)
- **Infrastructure Development**—To have a lasting impact - a sustainable support system, resources, training, and access to ongoing care.



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Treasure Website

<https://thetreasuresisters.in>

Any Religious sister can sign up to receive updates



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For Posts and updates of our content:

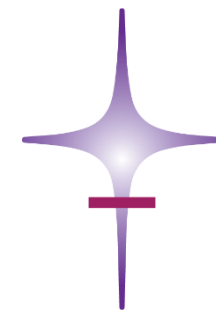
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Final Thoughts

- Every sister in religious communities comes from **different backgrounds, emotional histories, carrying untold and unhealed wounds.**
- Struggling silently
- Communal living can be **challenging**
- Each carries **a unique TREASURE** to be nurtured and cherished
- Create a **safe space for open talk, emotional healing and wellbeing**

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Thank you



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