

Are you ready to begin the journey?

For generations, people in this world have gone through emotional suffering in their lives that has made them feel stuck, lonely, anxious, and disappointed. This emotional dissatisfaction has not only led to severe mental health issues but also to heartbreaks, loss of lives, family conflicts, wars, and enmity.

Based on a 2017 study published on Future Learn,¹ it is estimated that 792 million people live with a mental health disorder, translating to 10.7% of the global population. The most prevalent disorders were anxiety (284 million people, 3.8% of the population) and depression (264 million people, 3.4%).

To overcome this mental suffering and discover peace, we run after people, places, power, money, and other material things around us. I also ran a similar race.

I was born into a family where peace was a rare commodity, and domestic violence was a daily ritual. My assets were faith in God, perseverance, determination, and support from my mother, grandparents, teachers, and friends.

Every time I faced a hard blow, I asked God, "Why me?" I could not escape these problematic situations, and I had no choice but to face them. From the early age of three years old, I was blamed for the family conflicts. Every action that I performed was negatively criticized. I slowly began believing in the negative remarks, starting to think that I was not good enough and that something was wrong with me. Over the years, this self-doubt grew larger and shielded my true personality underneath. Every time I came across a negative situation or person, this self-doubt popped up with feelings of sorrow, worry, and anxiety, which obstructed me from expressing my authentic self and leading a life of peace and confidence. As I did not know the way to overcome it at that time, I just suppressed it into the deep corners of my mind for nobody to discover.

I was deeply attached to my grandfather who was highly spiritual and lived by solid principles and values in life. Because I was surrounded by talks on spirituality and was taken to the abodes of various great spiritual masters, I began relying on a higher power to work wonders in my life.

Years passed, and it was when I was ten years old that I was introduced to the holy text, the Bhagavad Gita, by my grandmother. She gave me the book and told me whenever I had a problem, I could open this book and find a solution. I had no clue what treasure was hidden within this holy text, but I blindly agreed. After a few months, my parents were transferred to a new location for their jobs, so I had to move to a new school. One of the requirements for admission into the school was to

¹ Future Learn, "The State of Global Mental Health."

know the Sanskrit language. I had yet to learn this language before. So my parents decided to send me to a Sanskrit teacher during my summer break.

With just one month left for the school to reopen, my Sanskrit teacher mentioned that it was hard to learn a language in a month, but she said, "Let's see if this child can learn this language in a month." I heard this statement from my teacher and considered it an opportunity to prove myself.

When my teacher introduced this beautiful language, I was surprised by Sanskrit's simplicity and the ease with which I read and wrote sentences. I began loving Sanskrit more than my mother tongue. Later, I was admitted into the school and began scoring highest in Sanskrit in my class most of the time. However, I did not know that Sanskrit would change my life over the years to come.

Years went by, and I carried the baggage of self-doubt wherever I went and in whatever I did. I managed to complete my master's, got a job in a reputed multinational institution, and also, got married. Twelve years ago, on a Wednesday afternoon, on my way to my cubicle in my office, I felt my whole body collapse. I had no control of myself, and I held on to a chair so I wouldn't fall.

Something was not right with my body, and with the help of some of my colleagues, I managed to reach home. I used to work for 12 hours a day even after the birth of my first child. I had to return to work 2 months after my delivery. As it was the time of a global recession, I did not want to quit my job and agreed to work on a project that required me to be in the office for longer hours. Leaving my two-month-old baby with my mother, I suffered severe emotional stress. I completely denied my body and mind until my body put a hard break on me.

Sharp shooting pain radiated all over my body from my head to my toes. The pain was so intense that I felt like I was lying on a bed of thorns. My whole body was dysfunctional with acute giddiness, numbness in my fingers and toes, and stomach issues. I was unable to carry out the simplest chore of brushing my teeth or combing my hair. I was unable to travel to work without a cervical collar around my neck as the slightest jerk from applying the brake would hurt me badly. Day by day the pain was aggravated, making it intolerable for me to go to work.

I reached out for support by consulting various physicians and was diagnosed with acute cervical spondylosis. Five out of seven vertebrae in my neck were degenerated. The physicians laid down their hands and said that even a spine surgery would not be able to bring me back to normal health.

I was completely shattered when I heard the news. I came back home disappointed, helpless, and shameful. Quietly, I went to my bed and lay down due to the severe pain of not knowing what to do. It was then my mother came near me and asked me

a very profound question: “Do you want to lie down in this pathetic condition as a sympathetic figure forever, or do you want to get back to life?”

This question hit me hard. I did not say anything out loud, but inside me, a loud voice screamed, “No, I don’t want to give up now.”

I began deeply reflecting on my life experiences and the emotional suffering that I was going through. After many days of deep reflection, I realized that the physical pain that I was going through was a manifestation of the accumulation of the emotions that I had suppressed from my past. This realization made me understand that I was responsible for my own pain and suffering. However, that did not solve my physical pain.

As my family and I were not mentally prepared to go through a spine surgery, we began exploring alternate therapies available around us.

When each door before me closed and all my attempts failed, my heart began to slowly surrender. Deep within me the urge to recover became stronger.

A few days later, I received a phone call from my mother’s friend. During the conversation, he asked, as a last resort, if I would like to consult Swami Nirmalananda Giri who was a very well-known spiritual master, naturopathy expert, and expert in treating chronic ailments. With a little bit of hope left in my mind, I went to meet Swamiji. Swamiji looked at me empathetically and said, “Will you be able to follow the procedure, medication, and diet that I prescribe every day and share your weekly progress with me?” Without a second thought, I nodded and agreed to follow. Swamiji’s considerate nature, unconditional love, encouragement, support, and medication began working on my weak nerves, slowly making them stronger and stronger every day. In 10 months, I recovered completely and came back to my normal health condition. However, my emotional pain remained as a deep scar on my heart.

I wanted to find an answer to overcome my emotional pain. So I set out on a new journey to discover the answer without any clue where I would end up. Like a hungry man who will eat whatever he finds around, I began searching for the answers in books, spiritual lectures, videos, and mentors.

My quest to know the answer to the question “Where is peace?” grew stronger in me.

Many months later, my mother expressed an interest in meeting an enlightened spiritual master, “Sri M,” at his abode in India. We booked a one-on-one meeting with the great Yogi and set out for the trip in the morning. We arrived in a few hours and waited in the garden to be called in. I was excited and, at the same time, nervous inside. After a few minutes, the Yogi’s personal assistant called us inside his room. We went into the quiet and calm room where the Yogi was seated. As a way of

showing my respect, I bowed before him and sat on the floor. As soon as he saw me sitting on the floor he said, "Please sit in the chair." This small gesture of treating everyone equally changed my perspective about spirituality. Sir's kind gesture, simplicity, and sharp eyes filled with love and understanding made me feel like I was at home. With a wide smile he greeted us and spoke softly as he inquired more about us. I sat like a child with my mouth wide open with curiosity and burning questions in my mind. Before I uttered my questions, he answered them one by one. Time flew in his presence, and I experienced an unexplainable awe, joy, and content within. I am not able to reveal the special advice he offered me. However, I will share one piece of his advice that had a profound impact on me: implement what the teacher has taught rather than worshiping the image of the teacher.

Later, as I was about to leave, he asked me if there was anything else that I would like to ask him. I told him, "I am not happy with the job that I do now, and it does not bring meaning to my life. I feel stuck and want to do something that fulfills my heart." He listened with understanding and asked, "What would that be?" The quick response jumped from my mouth: teaching. He smiled and said, "Everything will be taken care of. God bless." I bowed down before him with deep contentment. Our allocated time for the meeting was over, and the personal assistant came inside to remind us. So we got up from our seats and bowed again with folded hands to bid him goodbye. Meeting Sri M was a transformational experience for my whole family. The seed of inner peace and change was sown into my heart through Sir's powerful presence and words. Little did I know then the beautiful journey of life that was awaiting me.

After we left, the mesmerizing bliss and joy remained in me for many days. Nothing was visible from outside, but internally, I felt blessed and grateful. I began integrating the advice and practices offered to me with great attention.

A few months later, I quit my job. My husband got a job opportunity overseas that required us to travel to Canada. When the travel plan was finalized, I requested to have a phone conversation with my Guru and shared the delightful news with him. In a composed voice he spoke to me briefly for one minute and said, "God bless."

After moving to Canada, I began volunteering for a kid's program in the public library to get local experience before applying for jobs. It was during the visits to the library that rare gems of great masters like the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, Swami Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi inspired me. Eventually, I realized that merely by reading and accumulating information, nothing much was changing inside me. I was continuing the same old patterns of thinking, action, and behavior. I was not sure where the journey would lead me, but I believed in the words of the masters and I was tired of fighting with my mind, which was filled with negative thoughts, emotions, and memories. I was determined not to give up until I found the answer to peace.

In 2015, after my dear grandfather passed away, I started looking for a job in Canada. I did not want to return to a multinational company; instead, I wanted to explore my passions in music. I applied for a job in a private school in Canada and inquired about the music teacher position. The school's president mentioned that there were no vacancies for music teachers. However, he had a vacancy open for a language teacher. He showed me a flier and asked, "Which language do you know among these?" The language that stood out to me was Sanskrit. He was delighted to hear that as he had been looking for a Sanskrit teacher and had not found one yet. He did a quick interview and took me in for the position of Sanskrit teacher. I was over the moon, and it felt like I was connecting back to an old and dear friend I had lost over the years.

I took the opportunity and began to educate students of all age groups. As I taught the meaning behind the Vedic mantras and slokas from the Holy Bhagavad Gita, a huge shift began happening in my mind. The wisdom conveyed helped me understand that all these scriptures offered simple and powerful techniques to train the mind that would help humankind to overcome suffering. I began to have deeper clarity about my own mind in connection to my life. I began watching my mind closely and started seeing disturbing patterns that made me suffer. I noticed that when my mind was happy, I was happy. When my mind was sad, I was sad. As an exploration, I started applying the techniques mentioned in the Holy Bhagavad Gita to my daily life. This included integrating Reiki, music, Sanskrit mantra chanting, Yoga, meditation, and mindfulness into my daily routine.

Slowly, I noticed my mind was developing a resilient mindset through the mental discipline of consistent practice and commitment to these daily techniques. I then began using some of these skills in my daily interactions at work, with family, and in various situations. I noticed my mind was expanding with love, empathy, and compassion and eventually navigating to peace, guiding me toward the next phase of sharing ancient wisdom. Meanwhile, I also got into an IT job in a start-up where there was a lot of flexibility, support, and freedom to express my potential to the fullest.