



# ENGLISH SPEECHES

## WITH BIG SUBTITLES



## DEEPIKA PADUKONE

### MENTAL HEALTH

<https://youtu.be/9rFsLcVYbWg>

**Interviewer:** You're an actress, you're a film producer... but more importantly for us, a mental health advocate and a successful one, and you have done a lot. I was saying to your colleagues, the Triple L Foundation - The Live, Love and Laugh.

As you know, the very definition of health is health is a state of complete mental, physical and social well-being. It's not merely an absence of disease or infirmity.

But as you also know, mental health is the most neglected and people with mental health face severe human rights violations, stigma and discrimination. But only that. Around 80% of them, people with mental health conditions, do not have access to the mental health care they need.

So the problem is really, really serious and for someone like Deepika to really take on this big cause is, for WHO, such a great opportunity and for me today a great opportunity, too. People like you, like Deepika, will really change the tide and I hope this moment will also increase the awareness, improve the awareness and help people think about the innermost problem we are facing, especially with mental health, and decide to join your movement.

So having said this and congratulating you for all your achievements and expressing my respect - for people maybe who may not be familiar with what you're doing. You're a very strong advocate of mental health, but what triggered that? Why?

**Deepika:** Thank you for that lovely introduction and good afternoon everybody. Mental illness crept up on me when I least expected it. I think most often, or at least in my case, it comes with absolutely no warning signs and I was going through a phase that the perception and the general understanding was that I was at a professional high.

I'd had successful consecutive hits professionally at the movies. I was in an amazing relationship. My parents and my sister have always been extremely supportive of everything that I have done in my life. And so everything that we think should be okay in our lives was going more than okay. It was absolutely perfect.

And I remember waking up, just one morning, leading an absolutely normal - or what I thought was normal -- It started with -- I fell. I fainted. There was a complete blackout. I fainted. I hit my head -- And I used to live alone at this time and luckily the house help had arrived and she saw me lying on the floor and sort of revived me and then I gained consciousness.

I sort of slept through the day. I got an appointment with a general practitioner. I went and saw him. He said, "Oh, it's nothing. It was probably just exhaustion or your BP just fluctuated" and that was it. That was sort of the physical symptom.

But what I was also experiencing was this sort of hollow, sort of empty pit-ish feeling in my stomach. I would break into a sweat every now and then. I would just suddenly get into these sort of panic phases where I just felt like I needed to just get out and gasp for breath and I would just cry. Like out of nowhere, I would just break down and cry.

There was no one who really had to say anything to me or I didn't necessarily have to be in a specific place. I would just -- You know, I could be in this room and suddenly just feel like I need to cry and express myself. You know? And then there were days when I just didn't want to get out of bed. I would just want to sleep and not wake up, because to me sleep felt like my escape and I felt like I didn't have to deal with the reality of what I was experiencing.

I didn't want to eat. I didn't want to interact with anybody. I didn't want to go to work. I had lost motivation with absolutely everything. Fortunately, my mother happened to be there a couple of months into this. My parents live in a different city and they had come to visit. I was sitting in their room and they were packing up and ready to leave and I had one of those moments where I was just watching her pack and I suddenly just broke down.

She looked at me and she said "What happened? Is everything okay?" and I said that yes everything was okay, but clearly everything was not okay. She asked me the routine questions about is it my relationship, is it something at work and I just kept saying no and I didn't know. What was that one thing? I couldn't point my finger at it.

And she immediately looked at me and said "Deepika, I think you need professional help" and that's when we called Anna Chandy, who at the point was a family friend but also a trained psychologist. But at that point, we felt like we wanted to share this with somebody who we could trust and someone who was not going to -- We were concerned about what the media was going to say and we didn't want to be seen outside of a psychiatric clinic. So everything was hush hush.

I remember calling up Anna. She was in the middle of a personal crisis. She was travelling. And I called her and literally she asked me two questions and she said "I am flying down to see you right away. You need professional help. You need to see a psychiatrist".

Immediately, I think literally that same evening or the next day, she was on a flight. She came to see me. We then together went to another doctor who finally diagnosed it as clinical depression. And I remember having, after struggling for so many months of having to go about the motions of doing everything, going about my professional engagements, having to speak at events, having to perform scenes, having to engage with people and having to do all of those things but actually not being present.

I remember feeling a sense of relief; that "Wow!" At least now we know what this is that I was experiencing, because I think that the toughest part in the journey for me was not understanding what I was feeling or not understanding what I was experiencing and not being able to explain to people what it is that I am feeling.

So if people would say "Hey, how have you been?" I would have to lie and say "I've been great! I'm fine", when actually I was not feeling okay because I didn't have the strength and I didn't have the words to explain to somebody what I was experiencing.

So just the diagnosis in itself to me felt like a massive relief. At least now we knew what this was. But I think this is where my journey to recovery began, because I think accepting what Dr. Shyam Bhat told me was equally an important part of my journey to recovery and I think what I see around me very, very often is two things.

For example, when my mother said "I think you need help" I could have easily rejected that and said "No, mom. That's crazy. This doesn't make any sense. I am not seeking professional help" - A. B - The other situation could have been my mother could have completely discouraged me from seeking professional help.

So I think the two things that we managed to achieve here as a family is - one - the fact that somebody close to me, within my family, recognized the signs and symptoms - one. Two - encouraged me to seek help. Three - that I was open to the idea of seeking help and I accepted the fact that OK, if our body is sort of susceptible to illness, so can the mind and I think that's when I understood the importance of the mind and the body and understanding that in the same way that we take care of our physical health it's equally important for us to take care of our emotional health and our mental health.

And then of course that's how my journey to recovery began. It was during that time I realized that there was a lot of stigma, there was a lot of hush hush and there was a lot of not wanting to share with too many people what I was experiencing; and I think all of those experiences made me reflect on why we were behaving - including myself - why we were behaving a certain way.

Why was I not telling somebody that I am not feeling okay emotionally? Why is it that I was seeking professional help privately? Why was I not confident enough to do this publicly and with people supporting me? That's okay. And it was all of those experiences that made me think and reflect and say "One second". I took a step back and I said, "Why have I and why have we gone about it this way?"

And I think that's when I realized the stigma and the lack of awareness that's associated with mental health and mental illness and that's what led me to come out publicly with my experience with anxiety and clinical depression and subsequently setting up the Live, Love, Laugh Foundation because through that process I felt like --

-- You know, through an interview or through the press or through the foundation, if I was able to express the signs and symptoms that I experienced and if there was even one person in this room who identified with those signs and said "You know what? I am going through the exact same thing but I have not been able to put a finger on what it is that I am going through", I wanted to make that journey that I had been through of the unknown, of not understanding what I was going through.

I wanted to help somebody who is probably in that same situation, not understanding what they are going through and probably help them understand their signs and symptoms and that was sort of the intention of going public with the illness and then also subsequently setting up the Live, Love, Laugh Foundation.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. I mean, that is so moving and one of the souls actually who saved herself. I think from your story many young people can learn. We are losing a lot - 800,000 a year. This is one of the largest killers of young people.

It's serious and that's why. So what would be your advice to young people on what they should do for themselves and what they should do to help others?

**Deepika:** I think there's a lot of things that the youth can do and I think that we can do as individuals. I think to begin with, just to become a little more aware as people.

So let me give this in two perspectives. One is say for someone like me who is experiencing anxiety and depression. I think if I feel certain signs and symptoms... whether it's restlessness, whether it's not being able to sleep, sleeping too much or lack of sleep, whether it's irregular --

-- Your eating patterns. Are you eating less or are you eating more? Are you feeling a sense of sadness or low for a prolonged period of time?

And I think it's very important to understand the difference between sadness and depression. Sadness is something that we all go through in our lives for various reasons. Death, failure of an exam, heartbreak. I think sadness is transient. Depression is not transient. I think depression sort of lasts for a much longer period of time and I think that's when you realize that "Okay. This is where I need to share. This is where I need to express".

So for someone who is experiencing that, I think it's important at that very moment to share with somebody that you are close to. It could be a friend. It could be a colleague. It could be a family member. It could be a sibling. But I think the first step really is to share with somebody around you how you are feeling.

I think for people around it's important to not just sort of dismiss it as attention seeking. It's important for us to feel empathy towards the person who is telling us something. I think we all have now a habit of asking each other how we're doing without really listening to whether we actually -- If I ask you how you are doing, am I actually interested in how you are doing, and would you be vulnerable enough to share with me how you are doing?

So I think all of those things. I think just in the way that we engage with people on a daily basis, sharing with each other, understanding from each other and then of course, seeking help. So it's important for caregivers to encourage those feeling certain signs and symptoms to seek professional help.

There is a lot of stigma, especially in our country, especially in India. There is a lot of stigma with regards to seeking professional help. Parents do not want to take their children to counselors or to psychiatric treatment because they are concerned about what other family members will think. They are concerned about what society will think.

I have come across situations where there are people experiencing mental illness who want to seek help but somewhere the family is not willing to allow them to do that; and sometimes it's the other way around where the parents want their children to seek professional help and the child is resistant to that.

In my personal experience, I think acceptance of medication -- I think for me, it was a combination. Again, I am not someone who can prescribe and say "Yes, you should take medication" but I will say that in my personal experience it was a combination of taking medication as well as lifestyle changes that have led to where I am today, but it also a constant taking care of myself.

It is an illness that can come back. So I have to take care of myself on a daily basis. The amount I sleep, what I eat, exercise, mindfulness - all of those things are things that I still have to do on a regular basis to ensure that I don't go back into that dark world and dark space again.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. So together we hope to make a difference. Namaste.

**Deepika:** Namaste. Thank you.

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