

THE PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTEBOOK

Volume 3



REMEMBERING SUDHIR
KAKAR: THE FATHER OF
INDIAN
PSYCHOANALYSIS

Trends in therapy:
Mindfulness-Based Cognitive
Therapy (MBCT)

Mental health in Influencer
Age

Exploring the integration
of eastern influences in
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Drawing Parallel Between
Indian Philosophy to western
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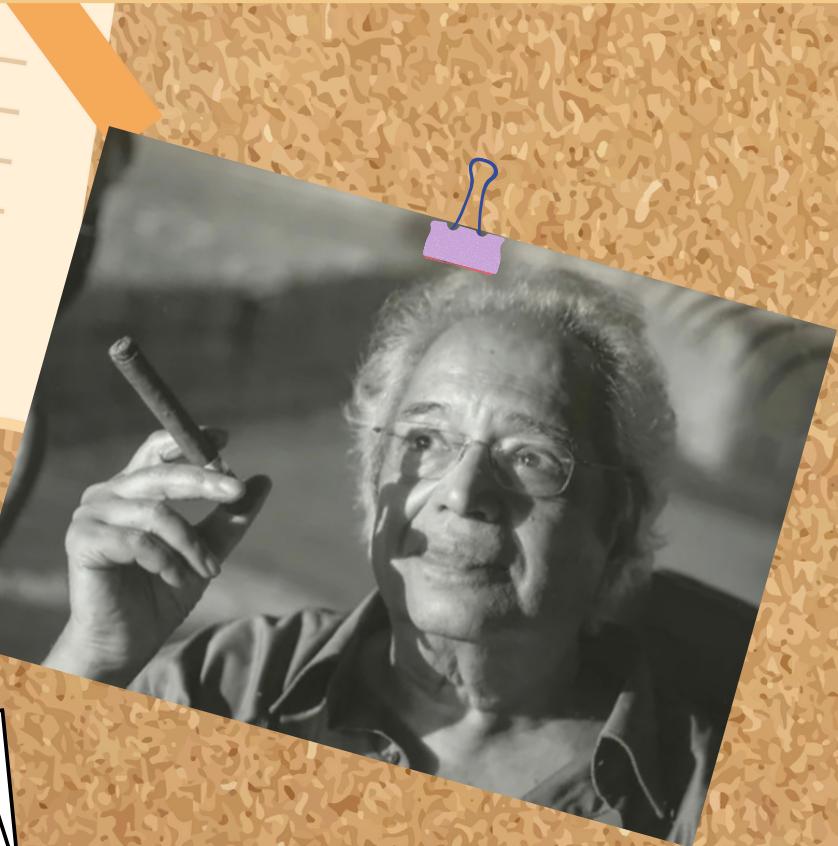
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Remembering Sudhir Kakar: The Father of Indian Psychoanalysis



Research repository
Sattva Enhancement Therapy: An innovative approach to psychotherapy

- An innovative psychotherapy method known as Sattva Enhancement Therapy (SET), which has its roots in Indian psychology and yoga philosophy, is introduced in the paper "Sattva Enhancement Therapy: An illustrative report" by Jyotsna Agrawal, which was published in the Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology. As one of the three Gunas (qualities) in the Triguna concept, Sattva is linked to positive mental health and well-being, and this therapy aims to increase the presence of Sattva in an individual. Negative mental health consequences are associated with the other two Gunas, Tamas and Rajas.

Bulletin

The Legacy of Daniel Kahneman: A Journey Through the Mind



Research repository

Delulu is the Solulu?
Study finds YouTubers lift spirits more than casual friends

Comparing parasocial relationships (PSRs) to standard two-sided interactions, Lotun, Lamarche, Matran-Fernandez, and Sandstrom's extensive study explores the complexities of PSRs and their function in meeting emotional needs. **This research provides insight into the perceived efficacy of PSRs, or one-sided relationships people have with media icons or fictional characters.** It is based on three investigations with a total participant pool of 3085 persons.

The study highlights how social ties are changing in the digital age and how PSRs are now an essential component of people's social networks, providing a kind of emotional support that is independent of the fluctuations of interpersonal relationships. The results also show how individual differences—like self-worth—affect how people interact with PSRs to satisfy their emotional demands.

Remembering Sudhir Kakar: The Father of Indian Psychoanalysis

Sudhir Kakar, passed away on April 22, leaving behind a great legacy of psychoanalytical tradition in India. His unique approach to observing Indian society with a psychoanalytical lens significantly contributed to the field of psychology in India. Thus, his passing has left the community grieving a great loss for times to come.

Kakar was born in Nainital, India, on 25 July 1938. Following a brief stint studying engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, he made his way into the field of psychology. As his curiosity for human behaviour grew, he attended Harvard University and studied under the renowned psychoanalyst Erik Erikson. Kakar pursued a PhD in Economics and trained as an analyst at the Sigmund Freud Institute in Frankfurt. His intellectual path was significantly shaped by this guidance, especially his emphasis on the interaction between culture and psychology.

His early years, which were turbulent due to the Partition and radical movement, as well as his upbringing in a multicultural India, had a significant impact on his development of thought. Kakar primarily inquired about the intersectionality between identity, psychoanalysis, mythology, mysticism, and religion. A significant portion of his work included reframing the Indian psyche in the context of Western psychoanalysis, particularly about the conflict between individualism and collectivism.

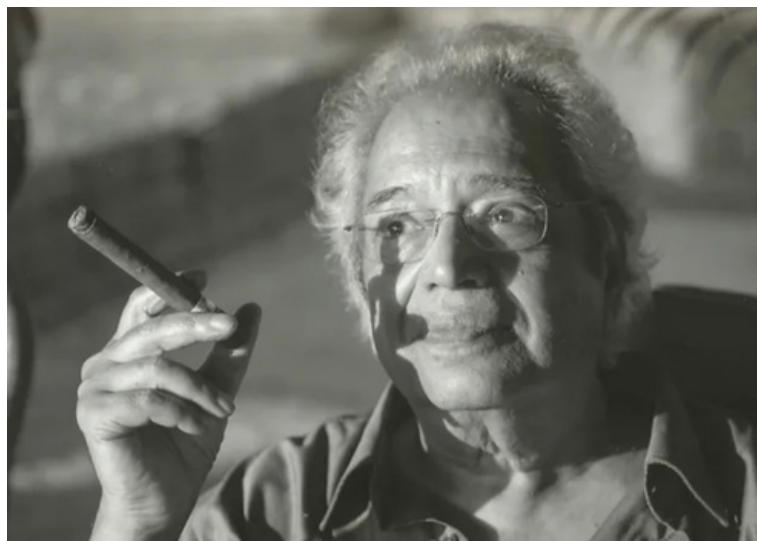


Rather than departing from Freud's vision, Kakar worked to expand it during his career. Famously, Freud refused to be called the "discoverer of the unconscious," praising philosophers and poets instead for that distinction.

Embracing this notion, Kakar integrated stories from Hindu mythologies and Urdu folk tales with ideas from Indian philosophers such as Gandhi, Tagore, and Vatsayana into his psychoanalytic framework. Through this method, a regional unconscious within psychoanalysis was defined and recognised globally.

One of Kakar's significant contributions is his exploration of the Indian concept of the self. In contrast to the Western enclosed self, he conceptualised the Hindu-Indian self as "much more open and strongly influenced by and intimately connected to its surround." The Hindu Indian perspective goes on to say that one's basic need is to belong to a community. Consequently, the two notions of "inclusiveness" and "universal consciousness" are prevalent throughout Sudhir's work. It was the first of its kind for Kakar to look at Indian sexuality. In treading an uncommon subject, he explores the historical and cultural perspectives of intimacy and sexual expression in Indian society, as well as the influence of religion, social mores, and the colonial past on close relationships that oscillate between eroticism and asceticism. Aside from his psychoanalytic practice in Delhi and his global, multidisciplinary teaching activity, he has written twenty nonfiction books and six novels.

Often spotted with a cigar, Sudhir Kakar was a romantic committed to uniting Eastern and Western thought. His contributions as a trailblazing psychotherapist, accomplished author, and cultural critic have a lasting impact on how we perceive the human experience. We pay tribute to a visionary who enhanced the intellectual and cultural landscapes as we remember him. His legacy continues with the Kakar Centre of Psychoanalysis and Culture, which is striving towards the formation of global psychoanalysis rather than local psychoanalysis, drawing resources from diverse civilizational foundations and varied conceptions of the human psyche thus revising the existing psychoanalytic perspective of basic concerns of human life, the human mind and the hunt for the psychic truth. Kakar's passing marks the end of an era, but his influence will continue to be felt for generations.



Psychology News!

Impact of social chatbots on neurodiverse individuals

Australian researchers are raising concerns about social chatbots' impact on neurodiverse individuals and those who struggle with human interaction. While these AI tools appeal to people with autism, anxiety, and limited social skills, they might foster bad habits and increase social isolation. Lead researcher Andrew Franze from UniSA highlights that chatbots' inability to engage in real conversations or show empathy may reinforce dysfunctional habits, necessitating further studies on their effects.

The Legacy of Daniel Kahneman: A Journey Through the Mind

It is essential to consider psychologist and Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman's significant contributions to the fields of behavioral economics and psychology in light of his untimely demise. Some people have the power to transform your life just by being in your immediate vicinity; others, however, have the ability to do it without your knowledge. Whichever category Daniel Kahneman falls into, he has undoubtedly altered your life, just as he has unquestionably altered the lives of the majority of economists and psychologists today.

Although Kahneman's work has had a direct and indirect impact on how the world functions economically, his groundbreaking theory has a far more profound effect on how we view ourselves. Daniel Kahneman had not only mastered behavioral economics but also brought psychological insights to economic science, so much so that he was ultimately awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics in 2002.

On March 5, 1934, Kahneman was born in Tel Aviv when his mother was visiting family. The family immigrated to France from Lithuania and settled there. During World War II, his father, a Jewish scientist, was detained due to his religious beliefs. In 1954, he graduated from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem with a bachelor's degree in psychology. He joined the Israel Defense Forces later that year and was placed in charge of recruiting evaluations while attached to the psychological branch.

After earning his PhD from the University of California, Berkeley, he went back to the Hebrew University to take psychology classes. He met Tversky in 1969, and the two worked together on his Nobel Prize-winning research for more than ten years. Because of their close collaboration, the two decided by flipping a coin who would be the primary author on their first paper, an honor they would thereafter oscillate for decades.

Kahneman's widely read masterwork, the best-selling "Thinking, Fast and Slow", is one of his greatest contributions. The book, which was published in 2011 and provided a lifetime of insights, exposed the general public to two distinct forms of human decision-making: System 2, or "slower," deliberative or rational, and System 1, or "quick," instinctual and emotive. He demonstrated how humans have a tendency to give up reason in favor of emotional responses.

Only a few thousand years old, System 2 is one of the most "recent" contributions to our brain. It's what enables us to prosper in the modern world, when making complicated decisions, sustaining a family, and producing money have replaced the need for food and shelter.

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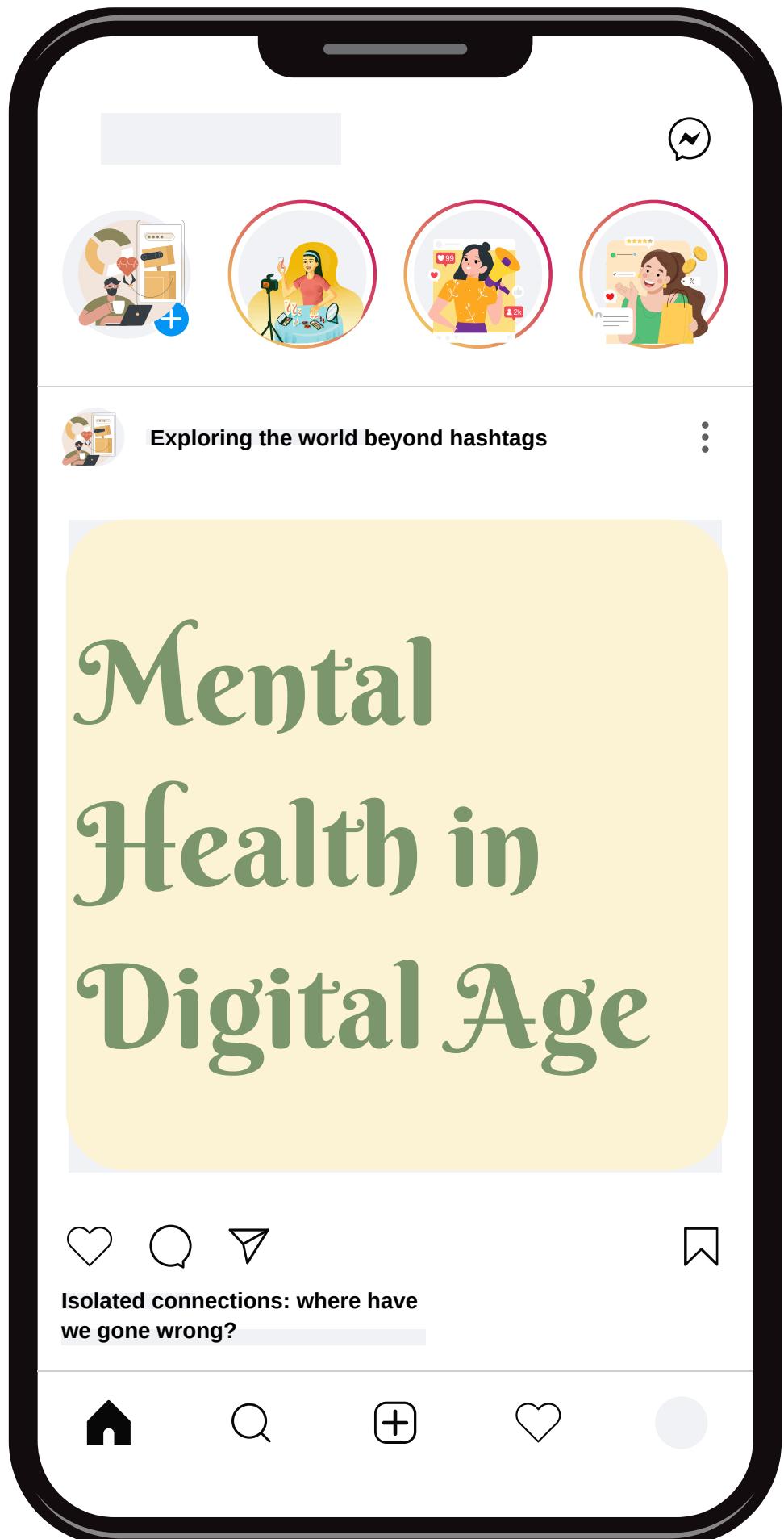


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These two systems do not, however, simply operate in perfect harmony or alternation. They quarrel a lot over who's in control, and this struggle dictates your actions. Apart from his books, Daniel Kahneman wrote 150 scholarly articles on areas related to judgment and thinking, human choices, values, utility, heuristics and happiness and won several highly esteemed awards for his work.

Although Kahneman's departure is a great loss, future generations will be inspired and influenced by his work. We have the resources to manage the intricacies of the human condition and work toward a better, more compassionate society thanks to his studies, writings, and the ideals he upheld: optimism, humility, and an awareness of our cognitive limits.

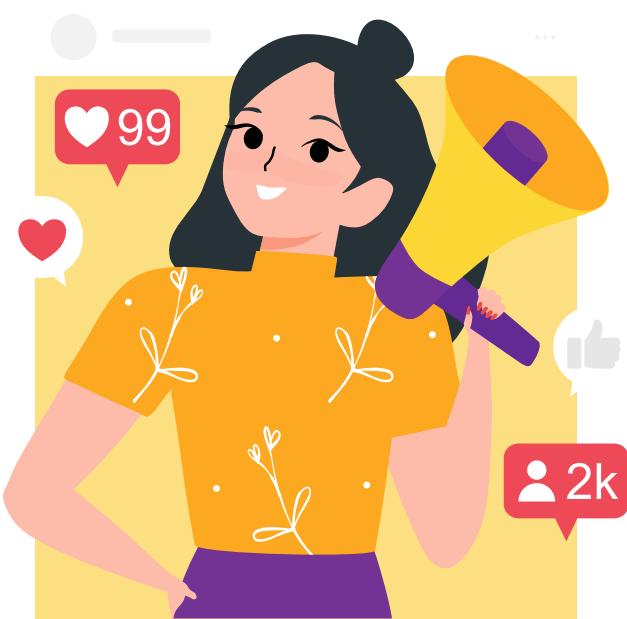


Mental health in Influencer Age: Exploring the world beyond hashtags

Navigating the shadows of social stardom

It's 9am in the morning. We realize that we overslept and are going to be late to work if we don't get up from the bed in the next 30 seconds. Yet, we don't. We reach out for our phones with a blurry vision and go straight to Instagram and scroll mindlessly, feeling a sense of contentment. The same cycle continues before we go to bed. Except, this time, we don't have anywhere to go, so our "just a few minutes" turns into hours..It's like a self-habitual rut we have become fixated on, day in and day out.

We never notice it, but if asked, we will be unable to remember what we scrolled through in the past hour. It's all slipped away from our minds in a matter of seconds like a cool breeze on a summer day. But we still do it, yesterday, today and tomorrow- why though?



We all know the basic reason why social media is addictive. Most social media platforms including instagram, facebook and snapchat aim to surge people's dopamine drive that makes them hooked. The shares, likes and comments trigger the brain's reward system and produce feelings similar to what one experiences during drugs and gambling. These platforms are designed to be addictive and are associated with anxiety, depression, and even physical ailments.



Psychology News!

Oxford Psychologists: Anxiety Linked to Heightened Awareness

Lucy Foulkes suggests that increased awareness of mental health issues may unintentionally make young people feel powerless over their conditions. While some theories blame social media and environmental factors, Foulkes argues that current mental health messaging may contribute to the problem by fostering a sense of helplessness.

The logic behind it is that when any outcome is unpredictable, our behavior is likely to repeat. Think of a slot machine: if game players knew they never were going to get money by playing the game, then they never would play. Since we don't know what post or reel is going to appear next on our screens, it makes us anticipate even more. Hence, whenever we are bored, we tend to subconsciously go for our phones and start scrolling in order to get that cheap dopamine. When reviewing others' social activity, we tend to make comparisons such as, "Did I get as many likes as someone else?", or "Why didn't this person like my post, but this other person did?"

We're searching for validation on the internet that serves as a replacement for meaningful connections we might otherwise make in real life. FOMO—which is the fear of missing out also plays a huge role in our social media usage. Missing out on experiences can create anxiety and depression. If everyone else is using social media sites, and if someone doesn't join in, there's concern that they'll miss jokes, connections, or invitations. If everyone else is included in any activity and if one is excluded, it can affect their thoughts, feelings and can even lead to physical effects. Sometimes I wonder if this fear of missing out comes from a fear of not belonging which is also one of the crucial needs stated by Abraham Maslow in his hierarchy of needs model.

In the early 2000's when there were no phones or social media platforms to review anyone's activity, people weren't aware of who was being invited to what and when. The lack of information about other's lives actually safe-guarded them from getting hurt. Since the past few years social media platforms like Instagram, Youtube and Snapchat have started to provide us information about not just our friends or mutuals, but also a bunch of people who we've never talked to or met.

In the early 2000's when there were no phones or social media platforms to review anyone's activity, people weren't aware of who was being invited to what and when. The lack of information about other's lives actually safe-guarded them from getting hurt. Since the past few years social media platforms like Instagram, Youtube and Snapchat have started to provide us information about not just our friends or mutuals, but also a bunch of people who we've never talked to or met.

This bunch of people have been named "influencers". They are basically strangers who we come across while browsing and we happen to like the way they look, talk, wear and behave. We're inclined to know more about them and happen to "follow" them everywhere they go, but digitally. We don't know them personally and neither do they know us, but it creates a sense of connection between us and them. What they think about a war, what they choose to wear on a hot day and what restaurants they go to highly affects our decisions on a daily basis. This is referred to as a parasocial relationship. A parasocial relationship is a one-sided relationship that a media user engages in with a media persona. In some ways, parasocial relationships can appear safer because there's no risk of rejection, but there's also no possibility for a mutual relationship. While any relationship can bring joy and connection to a person, they might get unhealthy if we get too involved.

The dark side of influencers

Influencers are supposed to be charismatic and charming enough to "influence" or inspire a bunch of people. There are different kinds of influencers - health, fitness, education, fashion, makeup and so on. A major difference between physical relationships and parasocial relationships is that we have access to influencer's content all day long, that too without their knowledge. When we are exposed to someone for so long, it starts to get a bit too much for the person absorbing the content. An effect called the deindividuation effect starts to occur

Deindividuation is the perceived loss of individuality and personal responsibility that can occur when someone participates as part of a group. Since the followers consider themselves to be a collective identity, they might start to perform acts and follow unrealistic standards that they would otherwise not have followed in their own conscience. According to a study conducted to assess the impact of social media influencers on health outcome, it was found that when an unhealthy food is marketed by an influencer of unhealthy appearance, this led to an increased preference for healthy snacks. Exposure to idealized influencer body imagery had statistically significant negative impacts on body image and mood. There have been hundreds of cases, all across the world where youngsters have tried to replicate the unrealistic looks and bodies of influencers and have in turn ruined their own mental and physical health.

This is mainly because there has been a trend of promoting unrealistic body standards which includes zero waist, zero body fat, thin thighs, a symmetrical face and a chiseled body for both men and women. But how has an unhealthy trend reached its toxic heights? Through influencers. It has been found that younger people are more susceptible to follow those impractical standards set by influencers. This might be attributed to the fact that, the younger you are, the less developed is your prefrontal cortex.



Psychology News!
Birdwatching Reduces Stress in Younger Generations, Study Shows

A Cornell University study found that birdwatching significantly reduces stress more than nature walks. Professor Peterson noted that birdwatching's unique benefits may stem from evolutionary signals of safety and the sense of accomplishment from identifying birds.

One of the last places in the brain to mature, the prefrontal cortex is thought of as the “personality center” and is the cortical region that makes us uniquely human. Our prefrontal cortex is what allows us to think and reason rationally. However, nowadays, the older teens (16-23) have also shown to be shaped by influencers.

Conclusion

Fortunately, we are at a junction where many of us have realized the toxicity and the unrealistic nature of influencers appearances. Body positivity campaigns starting from the year 2004 have majorly helped disregard the irrational expectations set by these media personalities.



People have realized the unhealthy extent to which an individual can go if these parasocial relationships become too attached. Digital detoxes, which are basically periods of time when individuals refrain from using social media platforms or electronic devices, have served as a blessing to maintain a healthy relationship with the media. As time goes, it is likely that more and more people realize the noxious nature of an entangled relationship with social media and its effects on the mental health

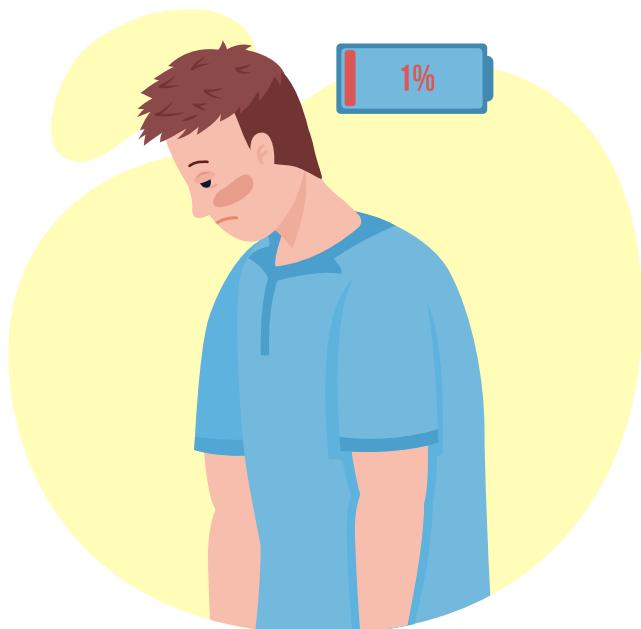
Isolated connections: where have we gone wrong?

The rise of social media has allowed people to connect far and wide with people across the globe. It has never been easier to communicate with people who have the same interests, like the same things we do, and live on the other side of the world. Social media has even made people in our lives more accessible to us, via video calls, instant messaging, etc. But why is it that in today's world we are more isolated than we have ever been?

a tool used to bring people together has started showing negative effects, a big reason for that could be because of "digital fatigue". **Digital fatigue, also known as zoom fatigue or technology fatigue, is mental exhaustion from prolonged screen exposure. It blurs the line between work and leisure, leading to low motivation and morale.**

With the rise of technology, making everything accessible from the screens of our smartphones it has also made it so that nearly 100 % of someone's daily interactions happen over the phone or via text. Which can lead to digital fatigue.

Along with that, a lot of people find it difficult to maintain a connection through social media, individuals struggling with their mental health may find it even more difficult .

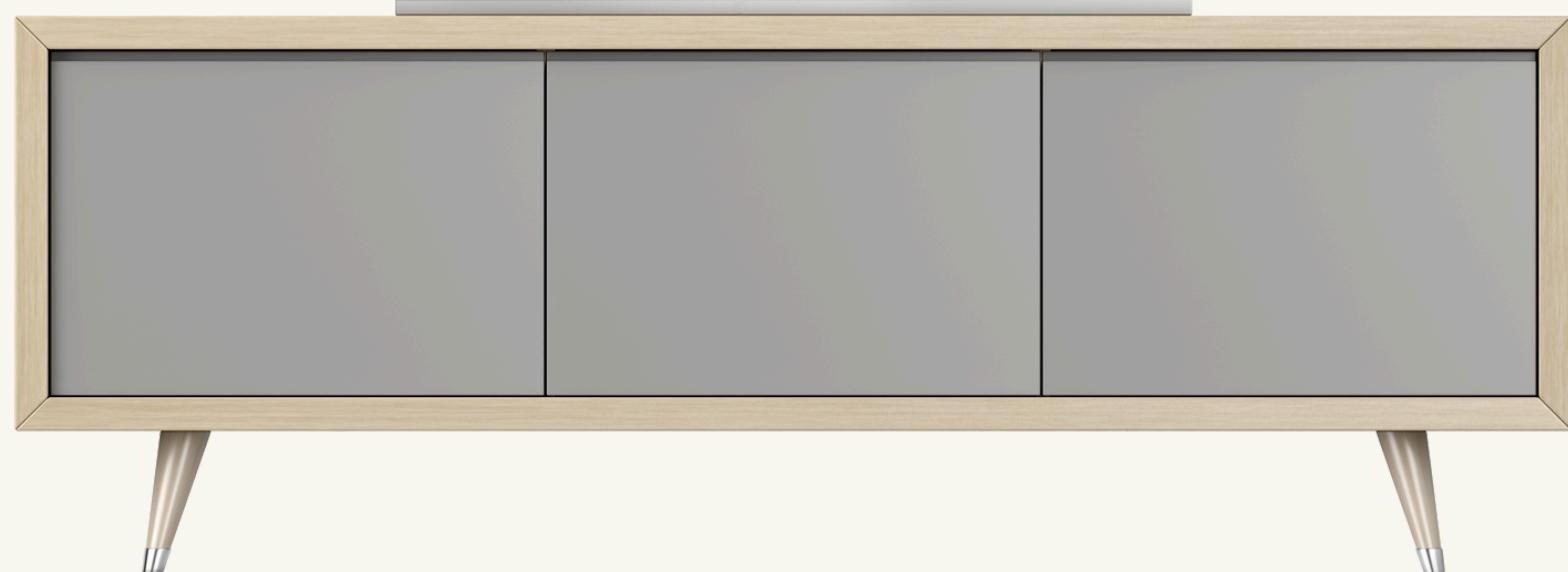




Some researchers suggested that socially isolated individuals might spend more time on social media, potentially explaining the results. Social media can serve as an escape from real-life interactions, even with people we know. But, it also often presents unrealistic or distorted versions of others' lives, leading to increased feelings of social isolation.

It is also safe to say that social media has also distorted our perceptions of what it is like to communicate and maintain relationships, countless viral think pieces on 'why it is okay to let go without any explanation to those around you', or 'You don't owe anyone anything at all' to 'this is what a healthy relationship is supposed to look like' often creates a false idea of what it means to be a human. Existing online and existing in reality are very different things, you cannot apply the same principles on both especially when those preachings are coming from, not professionals or relationship experts but internet sleuths who have found their token psychology book of the month to spread misinformation with.

With such things happening all over social media, combined with people displaying their picture-perfect lives and general burnout and fatigue faced by individuals it acts as a dangerous cocktail that leads to further isolation, and makes it difficult for people to connect with people on a meaningful level whether online or offline. **Studies have revealed that the relationship between social media and social isolation is complex, and there are a lot of other factors that play a role that exacerbate the feelings of isolation in individuals**

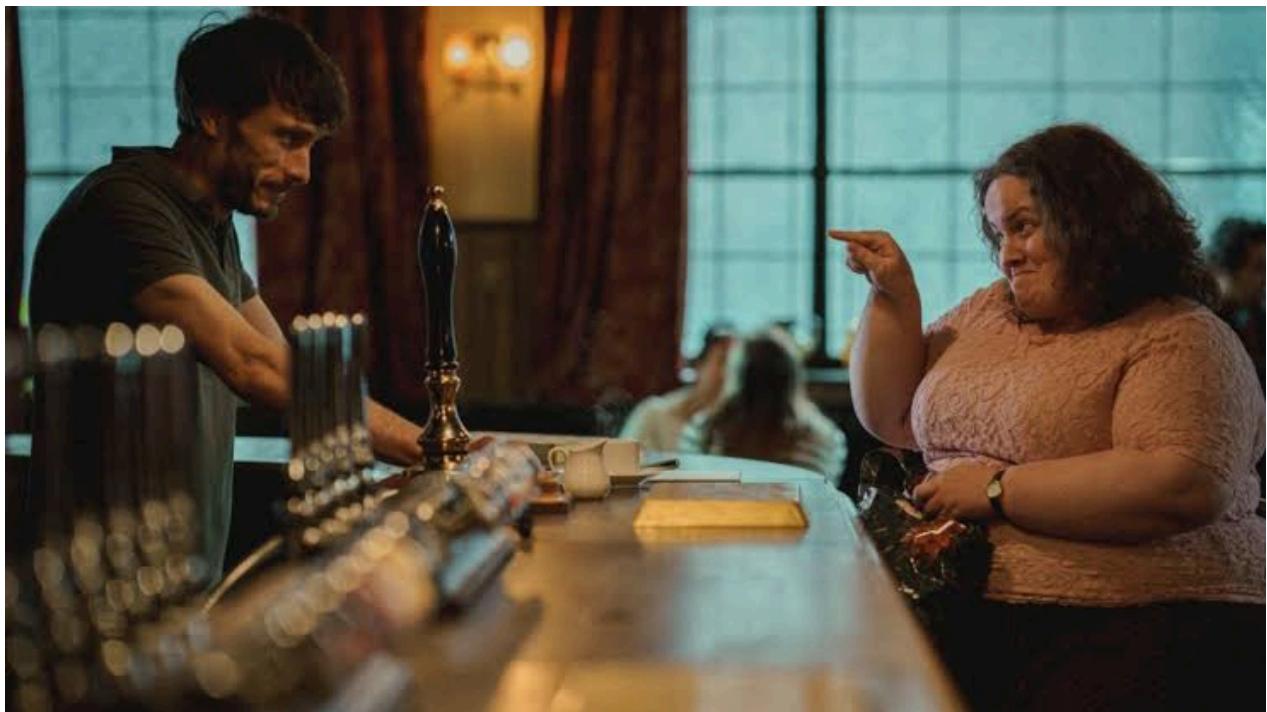


PsyClops Reviews : Baby Reindeer

Three adjectives best sum up the show for me: honest, dark, and profound. I get shivers just thinking about how "Baby Reindeer" is based on Richard Gadd's true story of living, writing, and acting through his experience with his stalker. The 7-episode series is difficult to watch since it feels like a punch in the gut witnessing stalking situations go unnoticed and how little pity in the form of a cup of tea is misinterpreted as kindness.

The show skillfully illustrates that there is no such thing as a perfect victim, and Donny's self-destructive response to trauma is candid and real. You can be a victim and yet be flawed. Many of Donny's actions and inactions make sense when we consider his background as a struggling comedian who met his mentor. It all comes down to the heartbreakingly realisation that the one person who he thought believed in him was just using him. To mask the unpleasant feelings that bubbled up inside of him and caused him to let someone like Martha away more than she should have, he desperately wanted to be the funny guy.





Baby Reindeer was such a nuanced portrayal of so many difficult experiences. When I think of reindeer I think of Christmas, but here you get haunted by the reality of abuse from a very different point of view. Donny is so aware of his patterns yet he is a puppet in his own life, having very little influence over the events that occur to him, hanging on the strings of his suffering. His life is now a spiral of trauma-based decisions until he faces all the terrible feelings he has been repressing, and strangely, his volatile connection with Martha, his stalker, has inspired all of this. He feels dehumanised and worthless, this is a story about a man's self-loathing, but he still empathises with his stalker.

The show does an amazing job of exploring traumas and how they lead to feeling fear, guilt, and shame. It is super confronting yet validating. I have to applaud the show for throwing light on taboo topics including transphobia, male victims of sexual abuse and mental health issues. Richard Gadd exhibits a heroic level of introspection throughout this series.



PsyClops Reviews:
RPWP by RM



On May 24, RM from BTS, the leader of the biggest boy group in the global music industry, released his second solo album, and his fourth solo body of work, Right Place, Wrong Person (RPWP).

The 11-track album is far more eccentric and chaotic than his more polished debut work, Indigo. As his band member Jimin from BTS describes it, Indigo felt like Namjoon buried his feelings and RPWP felt like he “poured them all out”. There is a stark difference between his more controlled music, representing his position as the leader of BTS, and his more chaotic, angry music that displays his true unbridled emotions in a more honest and vulnerable way. However, both of these sides are still very quintessential Kim Namjoon.

His most recent work is reminiscent of one of his oldest bodies of work, his self-titled 2015 mixtape, RM. Bringing back a raw, vulnerable yet loud and chaotic side of him that we haven't seen in a few years.



Namjoon describes his feelings of being lost, as he himself not fully understood what he was going through. Wanting to put some distance between him and his identity as the leader of BTS, Namjoon had to take some time away from his brothers and the band. And his brothers let him wander, after all as the saying goes when you love someone you set them free.

RPWP, is the journey he took to rediscover himself, come to terms with what was happening in his life at the moment, and deal with the feelings of being lost.

The album has a variety of tracks, all experimental something Namjoon attempted for the first time, yet all of the tracks shine in a way only Namjoon could make them work. Having writing credits on all tracks, the album features artists like Little Simz, DOMi, JD BECK, and Moses Sumney.



Track-Wise

RPWP begins with the bold, intense intro *Right People Wrong Place*, a play on the album's title. Grim trap beats and synth dominate most of the track as the lyrics alternate between *right people in wrong place* and *wrong people in right place*. Together they create a sense of ambiguity that RM uses to his advantage, showing that the same person may be "right" or "wrong" depending on the place they are in. The eerie-sounding instrumentals and minimal lyrics (ending with the ominous *feelin' high on a forest fire*) set the stage for the next set of tracks.

The undeniable influence of old-school hip-hop and alternative becomes evident quickly enough with *Nuts*. RM knows he can do all the "right" things – be it making the right place, playing the right chord, or taking you right to the moon.

But he also makes it clear that he *won't*, because he refuses to be shackled any longer by the people who have wronged him. The shift at 2:28 is dramatic and cerebral, with RM rapping a prayer – pleading with the ghosts of his past stay away now that he has finally set himself free.

The transition to *out of love* is effortless, maintaining the high from *Nuts* but easing the listener into a buzzed but alert state as RM raps, in an almost drunken haze, about being out of place – “*I don't belong here, poetry died and love was buried*”.

Domodachi shakes you awake with a jolt, its fast-paced drill beat and crisp rap reminiscent of RM's characteristic style. The Lil Sims feature is an instant shoo-in, as is the undeniable influence of producers JNKYRD and San Yawn, members of the band *Balming Tiger* who are also involved in other major aspects of the album production. *Domodachi* (or *Tomodachi*, 友達), means *friend* in Japanese, and the song's lyrics are a loud declaration of how RM feels about his “real” friends who have his back.

Interludes are typical to BTS's discography, particularly the rap line (composed of rapper-producers RM, SUGA and j-Hope). They're not just breaks in the narrative for the sake of it, but serve as critical segways that help the listener transition from one subtheme in the album to another. The same is true for ? (Interlude), featuring the jazz singer-drummer duo DOMi and JD Beck. The track ends with the refrain “what goes around / comes around”, a saying RM has quoted several times in his Weverse Lives, interviews and other band content, especially when referring to all the times the world has been cruel to them.

It's a smart segue into *Groin*, a hip-hop track with strong guitar riffs in its underbelly. It acts as the perfect vessel to hold RM's declarations that who he is is not defined by the expectations of others who have ridden on his coattails, be it the K-pop industry, politicians or the rest of the world.

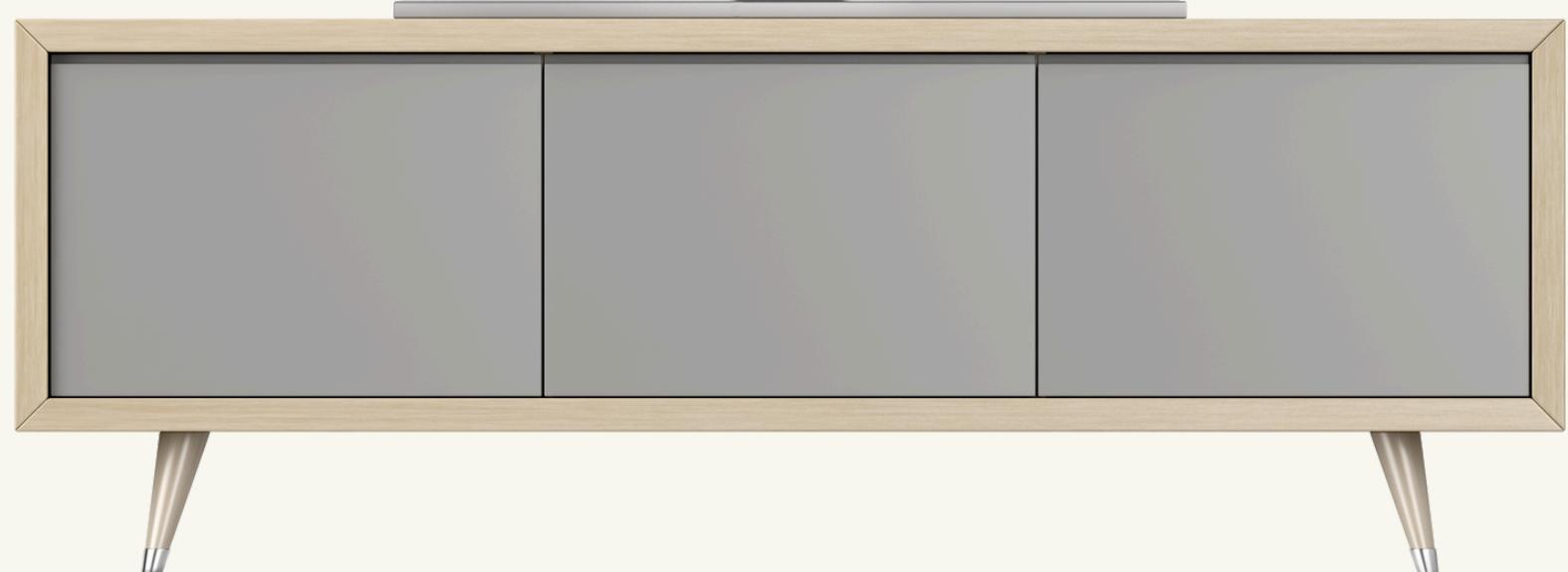
"I just made it and now they're pressuring me to step up / like I represent something? / All I rep is myself." One may go as far as to call it a diss track in the same league as BTS' *Cyphers*, and RM, like his rap brothers, is not one to hold back.

LOST! has a fast-paced pop beat and lyrical genius worthy of being the album title. Coupled with its silly and humourous but reckoning music video, the track has notes of both glee and despair that make up the life of a man in the limelight. Surely the lyrics "I'm goddamn lost / I never been to club before" were meant for blasting on the speakers at a party?



RM harnesses the best of indie and alternative in *Around the world in a day* (ft. Moses Sumney). It's a generous come-down from the joyride in *LOST!*, a slow dance to the refrain, *"Only time will sort it out."* Its blend of Korean and English lyrics reflects the multicultural nature of RM's music.

The finale approaches with the contemplative farewell ᴾ ᴾ (*Credit Roll*). The lyrics *"When the credits roll do you hang tight?"* are a gentle probing to the listener - who has presumably held on until the end - and also an expression of gratitude. One would deem this an adequate farewell, but RM does not: his re-release single *Come back to me* ties the knots together at the end.



PsyClops Reviews : Lapata Ladies

Nowadays, it often feels like the world around us has become too negative and lacking in positive thinking. But the Hindi movie Laapataa Ladies is a refreshing change - it has an upbeat and optimistic tone. The movie shows that we can still have faith in people's basic goodness inside them.

Most of the characters in the film have some faults or have done some wrong things, but they are still shown as fundamentally decent human beings at their core. The only outright bad person seems to be Jaya's husband Pradeep. Even Shyam Manohar, the police officer who takes bribes, is shown to have more to his personality beyond just greed.

But the real strength of Laapataa Ladies lies in how it beautifully depicts the wonderful bond between the group of women who are the main characters. Through their warm, heartfelt talks with each other, we get to understand their hopes, struggles, and the way they draw strength from their friendships.

These women come from fairly traditional backgrounds where attitudes of treating women as lesser than men are deeply rooted. But the film celebrates those among them who still manage to question such backward attitudes and rebel in their own small ways.





For instance, there is Manju Mai, who found the courage to drive away her abusive husband and now lives with solitude and self-reliance. Her independent spirit serves as an inspiration for the meek and timid Phool. Then there is Jaya, who carries herself with confidence and refuses to be defined just by household chores. She is the one who discovers that Poonam has a hidden talent for sketching that she had kept away from the world.

The central theme of Laapataa Ladies is how these women go beyond the rigid boundaries society has set for what their roles and responsibilities should be. They build bonds of sisterhood, make new friends, and find empowerment in each other's company.

Ultimately, Laapataa Ladies shines brightest in the moments where the women simply talk and interact with each other in an uninhibited way. It reminds us of the simple yet meaningful joys of womanhood, the solidarity between women, and long-lasting friendships between women.

The film manages to be optimistic without getting preachy. It acknowledges human imperfections but also highlights the basic decency in people. And above all, it is a warm celebration of women's voices, their hopes, struggles, and the energy they draw from supporting each other.



Drawing Parallel Between Indian Philosophy to western psychology

Threads of Tranquility: Unraveling the Ancient Practices of Mindfulness and Meditation

Mindfulness and yoga have been intertwined for ages, both historically and in modern times. Yoga is an ancient Indian practice that combines physical postures (asanas), breathing exercises (pranayama), meditation, and principles for living. **The physical practice of yoga involves moving the body through various poses or postures to increase strength, flexibility, and body awareness.**

Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present and aware of the current moment, without judgment. It involves paying attention to your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations as they arise, with an attitude of openness and curiosity.

While yoga and mindfulness are closely related and often practiced together, they are distinct concepts. Yoga has a more comprehensive approach that includes physical postures, breathing exercises, and meditation, while mindfulness is primarily focused on cultivating present-moment awareness through meditation and conscious attention.



Yoga has a strong philosophical and spiritual foundation rooted in ancient Indian traditions, while mindfulness has its origins in Buddhist meditation practices but can be practiced independently of any religious or spiritual context.

Tons of yoga practices get you to be mindful, and some mindfulness meditation practices like the body scan feel super similar to yoga since they're all about tuning into your body. One study looked at this connection by measuring mindfulness levels in people who practice yoga (Gaiswinkler & Unterrainer, 2016). The researchers found that regular yoga practitioners were way more mindful compared to people who did little or no yoga. So yoga and mindfulness definitely seem to be two peas in a pod, with some styles aiming for the same awareness goals.

It's really interesting that just as the ancient origins of yoga are tied to Hinduism, the relatively recent rise of yoga's popularity in the West has gone hand-in-hand with the mindfulness boom too. It just shows you how tightly woven Buddhism, Hinduism, mindfulness and yoga really are. *But how did mindfulness in particular become such a big deal over here in the Western world?*

While the roots of mindfulness can be traced back to ancient Eastern traditions, particularly Buddhism, its journey to the Western world gained significant momentum in modern times, thanks to the pioneering work of Jon Kabat-Zinn. He founded mindfulness centers at UMass Medical School and set up training for mindfulness professionals. This is where he created his famous **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program - an 8-week course to help reduce stress**. Kabat-Zinn had studied mindfulness under respected Buddhist teachers like Thich Nhat Hanh, who's a hugely influential mindfulness figure in the West himself. So Kabat-Zinn had this strong Eastern foundation in mindfulness that he could integrate with Western psychological science to develop MBSR.

Combining it with Western science was key for helping mindfulness go mainstream in the West. **MBSR then inspired another program called Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy to treat depression. Fusing mindfulness with therapy like this really helped it take off, especially for Western audiences more familiar with science than ancient Eastern teachings.**

Part of the reason it took a Westerner to adapt these Eastern traditions and make them so popular may be the different cultural worldviews between East and West. There's a TED talk by Devdutt Pattanaik exploring some of those differences, like individualism vs. institutional thinking, or linear vs. cyclical ways of seeing things. For example, he discusses how Western cultures tend to have a more individualistic worldview, while Eastern cultures often have a more institutional or community-oriented mindset. Additionally, he points out that Western thinking tends to be more linear and goal-oriented, whereas Eastern perspectives often view the world in a more cyclical and interconnected way.

But Kabat-Zinn wasn't the only pioneer. Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzberg and Joseph Goldstein played a major role too when they co-founded the Insight Meditation Society in 1975. The IMS helped kick off the mindfulness meditation movement in the West. The combined influence of groups like the IMS teaching meditation along with Kabat-Zinn's MBSR really turbocharged mindfulness' rise to popularity in the West, both clinically and just for regular folk.

The Ancient Origins Mindfulness - the practice of being completely present and non-judgmentally aware - has such deep roots in ancient Eastern traditions, especially Buddhism. But you can trace it even further back to the ancient Hindu scriptures and philosophies from India going back centuries. The Upanishads, the foundational philosophical texts of Hinduism, emphasize meditation, silence, acceptance - the exact same stuff that mindfulness is all about! These sacred writings describe all sorts of meditation practices, from using mantras and chants to just cultivating a sense of calm presence.



Psychology News!
AI Advances in ADHD Diagnosis for Adolescents

At the Radiological Society of North America's annual meeting, researchers revealed that AI analysis of specialized brain MRI scans found notable differences in nine white matter tracts in adolescents with ADHD compared to those without.

Across all the Indian religions and philosophies, being mindful is like central teaching. Principles aligned with mindfulness can be found across many major religions:

- Buddhism directly incorporates mindfulness meditation practices like breath awareness and non-attachment.
- Taoism emphasizes living in harmony with the natural flow (Tao) through stillness and presence.
- Some Christian mystics practiced repetitive prayer and breath control to achieve inner stillness.
- The Sufi tradition in Islam uses meditation, breath work, and sacred phrases (dhikr) to pursue union with the divine.

The whole idea is that suffering comes from being too caught up in your individual self, rather than feeling that greater connection to the divine whole. So these traditions prescribe meditation and mindfulness as ways to let go of the ego, deepening your unity with the entirety of existence - often called Satchitananda, or ever-conscious, ever-renewed bliss.

While mindfulness-based therapies (MBT) are often credited to Kabat-Zinn and his 1979 MBSR program, their real roots go back to the Buddha's original teachings and the Theravada Buddhist tradition.



Although, as the scholar Geoffrey Samuel points out, a lot of the "Western Buddhism" we know today is kind of a modern reinterpretation that strays from the original Buddhist view of all phenomena, including the self, as transient illusions.

In mindfulness therapy, patients learn to be completely present and aware, often by focusing on the breath while observing thoughts and feelings with detached openness. They're encouraged to approach unpleasant experiences with acceptance and self-compassion instead of reactivity. **Researchers have proposed various ways mindfulness therapies work, like increasing acceptance, decentering from your experiences, better emotion regulation, reduced rumination, and even a shift in your sense of self.**

But regardless of which particular tradition or terminology is used, the essence of mindfulness and meditation appears strikingly consistent across all those ancient Eastern philosophies. Whether it's the Upanishads on silent reflection, the Buddha's teachings on present-moment awareness, or using mantras and imagery to train the mind - a common thread of tranquility runs through them all, offering a path to inner peace and self-realization. As we retrace the roots of mindfulness and meditation, we rediscover an ageless tapestry of wisdom that reminds us of our shared human journey to understand and embrace the present moment.



—psychEd—

WITH DR. PSYCLOPS!





GAMES CORNER



Below are 16 key ideas that belong to different schools or broader themes in psychology. Your task is to analyze these concepts carefully and create four groups of four, where members of the group share something in common.

Attribution

Empathy

Obedience

Resistance

Happiness

Reflection

Listening

Hope

Transference

Resilience

Compliance

Conformity

Gratitude

Free
Association

Dream
Analysis

Clarification

We're excited to introduce a fun and educational game in this edition of our newsletter: Match the Slangs!



Slang terms are an integral part of any culture, adding color and character to our language. Understanding slang can help us communicate more effectively and connect with diverse communities, whether it's regional dialects, generational jargon, or subcultural phrases. Below, you'll find a list of slang terms and their potential meanings. Your task is to match each slang term with its correct meaning!

	Slangs		Meaning
1	Menty b	A	Get outside, ground yourself
2	Doomscrolling	B	Talking excessively
3	Bed rotting	C	An emotionally distressing time
4	Yap	D	A self-perpetuating cycle
5	Touch grass	E	Feeling bitter or resentful
6	Salty	F	A form of self-care

Brain Riddles

Below are 6 riddles based on psychological concepts. Can you guess all of them



1. I am the mental process where information is actively worked on in your mind. I am crucial for problem-solving and decision-making.
What am I?
2. I am a part of your personality that acts as the moral compass, representing internalized ideals and standards. What am I?
3. I am a cognitive bias where an individual's fundamental beliefs and assumptions about the world influence their perception of events, causing them to interpret new information in a way that confirms their existing beliefs. I often lead to overconfidence in personal beliefs. What am I?
4. I am a phenomenon where group members tend to make more extreme decisions than they would individually. What am I?
5. I am the effect where people's expectations influence their perception and performance. Often seen in experiments. What am I?
6. I am an intense but brief burst of energy used by the body to prepare for an emergency. I am often called the "fight or flight" response. What am I?

Bridging Boundaries: Ethical Reflections on Eastern Spiritual Practices in the West

Imagine stepping into a yoga studio, the scent of incense wafting through the air, and the sound of a Sanskrit chant gently guiding your breath, the guru telling you to find the oneness with the universe... Now picture a bustling city office where employees, clutching their designer yoga mats, rush to a midday meditation session promised to boost productivity at a designated space in the building. It's kind of jarring when said together right? Yet people do this quite often in their lives, one way or the other to cope with the world as we have it right now. In today's global village, blending ancient practices within the current capitalistic framework raises important questions about how this knowledge is being utilized and respected.

The encounter between Eastern and Western traditions has a long and complex history, dating back to early interactions between the two regions through trade, colonization, and globalization. The exchange of ideas, beliefs, and practices has resulted in a rich tapestry of cross-cultural influences. When it comes to Eastern influences, the mystical philosophies of Hinduism and Buddhism, and the meditative practices of Taoism and Zen, these traditions offer a path to inner peace, self-understanding, and a connection with something larger than oneself.



Recently, many individuals have begun incorporating these ancient traditions into their daily lives. From yoga and meditation to mindfulness and Ayurveda, the adoption of Eastern spiritual practices has become increasingly widespread. However, the adoption of these practices in the West (or, in a Western manner) raises several ethical considerations. Careful examination is needed regarding issues of cultural appropriation, commodification, and the importance of respecting cultural contexts and lineage. We must pause to ask—are we truly honoring their profound cultural and spiritual roots, or merely consuming them as the latest wellness trend?

Cultural Appropriation and Commodification: When Appreciation Turns Disrespectful

Cultural appropriation is a significant ethical consideration when it comes to the adoption of Eastern spiritual practices in the West. It occurs when elements of a marginalized culture are adopted and exploited by members of a dominant culture without proper understanding, respect, or permission. This may entail the commodification of sacred traditions, the distortion of their meanings, and the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. On the other hand, cultural appreciation involves a genuine effort to understand, respect, and honor the cultural origins of the practices being integrated. It requires a willingness to engage with the traditions in a way that acknowledges their complexity and diversity. Let's see some instances where this happens.



An international research group led by researchers from the University of Turku and Turku University Hospital in Finland has succeeded in identifying the probable origin of stuttering in the brain, findings suggest a shared brain network involved in both acquired and developmental stuttering, offering insights into its underlying causes.

1. Yoga and similar associated practices:

The commercialization of yoga often strips away its spiritual aspects, focusing solely on physical fitness. This is reducing a rich spiritual tradition to a mere workout routine. Many Western yoga classes neglect the philosophical and spiritual teachings that are integral to traditional yoga practice. Today, you can also find several brands that promote fashionable outfits that are supposed to make you feel good about doing yoga - in an aesthetic sense, which yoga is not about! Associated with the "yogic lifestyle" there may also be crystals, mantra beads, Tibetan singing bowls, chanting of Sanskrit shlokas, and usage of sacred symbols where it may be inappropriate. Images of Hindu gods and Buddhist symbols are often used for decorative purposes in people's homes or where they are not practicing the religion in its true sense. T'ai Chi and Qigong also suffer from similar fates- reducing them to be in activities that you do to stay fit.

2. Mindfulness and meditative practices:

Mindfulness practices rooted in Buddhism are often secularized and marketed in the West for stress reduction and productivity. Corporate mindfulness initiatives use it for enhancing productivity and reducing stress, often stripping away the ethical teachings and deeper spiritual contexts from which these practices originate. In this way, the motivation to minimize stress and deeper introspection is in the interest of the big corporations, not the human soul. When mindfulness is marketed as a trendy lifestyle choice, its significance can be diluted or distorted. When it comes to meditation, various apps in the market today often package meditation in a way that prioritizes user convenience and marketability over the preservation of its spiritual and cultural origins. While these apps have made meditation more accessible, they sometimes present it as a quick fix for stress rather than a profound spiritual practice rooted in centuries-old traditions.

3. Ayurveda:

Many Western wellness brands sell Ayurvedic products without acknowledging the extensive traditional knowledge and cultural context behind them. This commodification can strip Ayurveda of its depth and reduce it to a series of marketable items. For example, Ayurvedic dietary supplements and beauty products are often marketed for their exotic appeal without educating consumers about the underlying principles of Ayurveda, which encompass a comprehensive system of health that integrates diet, lifestyle, and spiritual practices.

..and there are many more examples like this. Now, how to address these practices which feed the culture of consumption and commodification and obscure real indigenous practices? Education and awareness are needed to prioritize cultural sensitivity, respect, and authenticity. Practitioners and enthusiasts must strive to engage with these traditions in a way that honors their origins and cultural contexts, rather than appropriating or exploiting them for personal gain or gratification. This involves approaching these practices with a genuine desire to understand and learn from their cultural and spiritual significance, from the people who truly abide by that lifestyle.



Psychology News!

95 Genome Regions Tied to PTSD Uncovered by Scientists

In posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), intrusive thoughts, changes in mood, and other symptoms after exposure to trauma can greatly impact a person's quality of life. About 6 percent of people who experience trauma develop the disorder, but scientists don't yet understand the neurobiology underlying PTSD. Now, a new genetic study of more than 1.2 million people has pinpointed 95 loci, or locations in the genome, that are associated with risk of developing PTSD, including 80 that had not been previously identified.

Honoring Heritage: Embracing Cultural Contexts and Lineages

To imbibe the knowledge of these Eastern traditions, it's important to consider the different aspects of identity and diversity of the indigenous people who practice it in its truest form. People from various cultural, racial, gender, and socioeconomic backgrounds engage with these practices differently, influenced by their unique positions in society. Selectively adopting parts of Eastern spiritual practices can hide the broader social, political, and economic realities that shape these traditions in their original countries. It is through this mindful approach that we can bridge the boundaries between East and West, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of these ancient spiritual practices.

1. Educate Yourself on what you would want to make your way of life.

Before adopting an Eastern spiritual practice, take the time to learn about its cultural and historical context. Read books, attend workshops, and seek out authentic sources of information. For example, if you're interested in yoga, study the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and other foundational texts, and learn from teachers who honor the spiritual and philosophical aspects of the practice.



2. Authentic teachers are not replaceable.

Find teachers who are well-versed in the tradition and respect its cultural and spiritual origins. Look for teachers who have trained extensively and can provide a deep understanding of the practice, rather than those who offer superficial or commodified versions.



For instance, studying Ayurveda with a certified Ayurvedic practitioner who has trained in India can provide a more authentic and comprehensive understanding than a brief online course.

Schools like those following B.K.S. Iyengar's teachings emphasize maintaining the spiritual and philosophical dimensions of yoga, preserving the integrity of its lineage

These schools often integrate the ethical teachings of yoga, such as the Yamas and Niyamas (moral observances and personal disciplines), which are foundational to a holistic understanding of the practice. Same with Thich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village- founded by Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, integrates mindfulness with ethical teachings, promoting a holistic understanding of Buddhist practices.

3. Age-old rituals have a reason to be the way they are.

Learning them could mean taking part in ceremonies, following ethical guidelines, and appreciating the cultures that have kept these practices alive for centuries. For instance, in Reiki, it's important to honor the Usui lineage and understand the spiritual principles behind it to keep the practice authentic.

4. Without ethical teachings, these practices become a shell of their real self.

Many Eastern spiritual practices come with important ethical lessons. Bringing these into your daily life can help you engage with the practice more fully and respectfully. For example, in Buddhism, mindfulness isn't just about meditation—it's also about acting ethically, showing compassion, and being mindful in everything you do.

Overall, adopting Eastern spiritual practices in the West means recognizing their cultural importance, avoiding commercialization, and honoring their roots. By doing this, we can truly appreciate these traditions and ensure their wisdom is preserved for future generations. This helps us learn, grow, and build a more culturally sensitive world.



Psychology News!

Brain Myelination Crucial for Learning Opioid Addiction

A recent study highlights the role of myelin plasticity in reward learning and substance use disorders. Researchers found that activity-regulated changes in myelin within dopaminergic neurons are crucial for opioid reward. These changes occur specifically in the ventral tegmental area and affect dopamine release in the nucleus accumbens.

Harmony in Healing: Exploring the integration of eastern influences in western therapy

Ever wondered why, despite your best efforts, you still feel stuck in certain situations or patterns? The reason could be that you are just coping with the situation, which is essential, but not enough. Coping is like basic first-aid—crucial in the moment but insufficient for long-term recovery. To truly move forward, we need to heal. And in order to heal we need to dig into deeper problems and not just deal with the symptoms. Sometimes we might have tried some strategies yet it may not be working for us. It is because effective healing requires treatment of individuals as whole entities, which involves considering mind, body and spirit.

While western therapy often focuses on external factors and symptom management, taking a top-down approach. It equips us with the tools to navigate life's challenges effectively. However, it is crucial to consider a bottom-up approach to healing, which emphasizes the mind-body-spirit connection. Practices like meditation places a strong emphasis on cultivating inner peace and self-acceptance. By looking inward and learning to embrace yourself unconditionally, you can achieve a holistic sense of well-being.

In this article we will explore how the integration of eastern philosophies with western therapeutic techniques can create a more holistic approach to mental well-being. Let's start by understanding why it is necessary to heal in this manner.

Humans: Same yet different

The only thing the entire human race has in common is its diversity. Every individual differs from the others in terms of his or her personality, way of thinking, and life circumstances which affect the intensity of our emotional responses differently. While we all experience emotions, their degree of intensity, duration and how long they last varies from one person to another. These variations exemplify intricacies concerning human emotions and what underlies them. These differences underscore just how nuanced human emotions and their underlying mechanisms can really be. To understand this, it is important to look at the key factors that play a role in creating individual differences such as: personality, life experiences, genetic makeup, cultural background, and the context of the situation.

This is exactly where a holistic stance is necessary for healing which can be achieved by combining both eastern and western approaches. Ancient wisdom from around the world has long emphasized this unified mind-body-spirit view of human beings.

From the emphasis on mind-body connection in Indian yoga and ayurvedic teachings, to the Chinese concept of cultivating vital life force energy, to the aboriginal understandings of individual and collective healing arising from connectedness to nature and ancestry. These philosophies recognized our inherent wholeness. From this it is evident that there is no one-size-fits all when it comes to mental health.



The path to healing

In a study using brain imaging, Tibetan monks were shown to have an enhanced ability to regulate brain activity during meditation. They exhibited greater control over the regions that involved focused attention and emotional processing. These monks were able to display lower baseline activity in areas related to mind-wandering and distractibility, which allowed for sustained focus during meditation. Through continued practice, they had essentially re-wired their brain circuitry to optimize cognitive functioning and emotional self-regulation. Such findings demonstrate meditation's neuroplastic effects in cultivating desirable brain states and abilities.

Meditation, like other contemplative practices, is increasingly being adopted into western approaches. It enhances resilience by giving practitioners conscious control over cognitive and emotional dynamics. Thereby you see, this integration of eastern techniques into healthcare and therapy establishes holistic mind-body benefits. This doesn't mean the eastern approach should replace western methods.

Instead, it should be embraced as a complementary approach. By integrating both, we can achieve greater self-understanding and a deeper sense of inner peace. Combining eastern methods for cultivating inner peace with western approaches for managing external challenges creates a holistic approach that empowers us to build resilience and achieve lasting well-being.



The power of holistic healing

There's a shift happening in how we approach mental health. Instead of just band-aiding symptoms, we are tapping into something deeper - holistic, personalized healing from the inside out. By opening to a more holistic perspective, innovative pathways to psychological wellness are emerging. At the forefront are mindfulness-based approaches that empower individuals to build resilience amidst the storms of stress, anxiety, and depression. Practices like breathwork, body scans, and meditation are more than just relaxation techniques. **They're portals to anchoring ourselves in unshakable inner peace and balance.** These aren't just quick-fix coping strategies - they're pathways to reclaiming our innate sense of fulfillment and well-being.

Conclusion

We aren't just physical machines compartmentalized into diagnoses - we're beings of consciousness, energy, stories and mysteries. So, next time you feel stuck, remember that coping is just the first step. True healing requires a holistic approach, addressing the root causes and integrating mindfulness into your life.

Trends in therapy



Cognitive Control Training



Cognitive Control Therapy (CCT) is a new treatment that is based on the idea that depression can be partly caused by problems with working memory and cognitive control. According to this approach, these problems can lead to difficulty in stopping repetitive negative thinking, which increases the risk of depression.

Depression symptoms can be linked to increased activity in our amygdala and decreased activity in our dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (dIPFC). *This combination is what leads to excessive focus on negative thoughts (due to hyperactivity in amygdala) and the trouble in controlling them (reduced functioning of dorsolateral prefrontal cortex).* In CCT the main focus is to boost the activity in dIPFC when the amygdala is overly active, improving cognitive control during stressful experiences.

One form of CCT uses a version of Paced Auditory serial addition task (This test checks attention, vigilance, and short-term memory by having the patient focus on numbers, stay alert for changes, and remember the previous number while responding), to simulate activity in the prefrontal cortex while experiencing stress and negative emotions, essentially training the individual to practice control over a hyperactive amygdala.

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)



The therapy was developed by Zindel Segal, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale, who combined cognitive therapy with a program called mindfulness-based stress reduction therapy by Jon Kabat-Zinn to make the therapy more effective.

MBCT teaches skills that allow individuals to disengage from habitual ("automatic") dysfunctional cognitive routines, in particular, depression-related ruminative thought patterns, as a way to reduce future risk of relapse and recurrence of depression.

Techniques in Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy *builds upon the principles of cognitive therapy by using techniques such as mindfulness meditation to teach people to consciously pay attention to their thoughts and feelings without placing any judgments upon them.*

There are a number of mindfulness techniques and exercises that are utilized as a part of MBCT. Some of these include:

- Meditation
- Body scan exercise
- Mindfulness practices
- Mindfulness stretching
- Yoga

The Wellness Economy: Profiting from the Popularity of Yoga, Meditation, and Mindfulness

Picture this: You're strolling through a busy city, surrounded by skyscrapers and noise. Suddenly, you spot a peaceful yoga studio, promising calm amidst the chaos. But as you step inside, you wonder: Is this place really about inner peace, or just making money?

Yoga blends physical postures with breathwork. Meditation cultivates mental clarity and inner peace through focused awareness. Mindfulness emphasizes present-moment acceptance and self-awareness, rooted in Buddhist principles. Together, they offer pathways to reduce stress, enhance well-being, and deepen self-understanding.

Let's explore how popular wellness trends like yoga and meditation are turning into big business—and whether they're losing their true meaning along the way.

Yoga: From Ancient Practice to Modern Business

Yoga, once a sacred and ancient practice rooted in spirituality and self-discovery, has transformed over the years. What was once considered a way of life, focused on physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, has now become a thriving global industry.

Yoga studios, teacher training programs, clothing lines, and wellness retreats have proliferated, catering to a growing market of health-conscious individuals.

However, the modern yoga industry often focuses on physical postures (asanas) and trendy variations, leaving behind the profound spiritual and philosophical teachings that yoga is rooted in.

Commercialisation of Yoga :

The commercialization of yoga has led to the standardization of practices. While standardization can ensure quality and safety, it also risks diluting the individuality and uniqueness of yoga.

The emphasis on certifications and branded yoga styles sometimes limits the creative freedom and diversity of teaching methods, hindering the true essence of yoga, which is about self-expression and self-discovery.

Moreover, the commercialization of yoga has created an unrealistic body image standard. Social media platforms are flooded with images of yogis in perfect poses, creating pressure on individuals to attain similar physical feats.

Yoga's transformation into a business has also given rise to a culture of consumerism. The focus on expensive yoga apparel, accessories, and gadgets creates an impression that one needs material possessions to practice yoga effectively.

This contradicts the fundamental yogic principle of contentment (Santosha), which teaches that true fulfillment comes from within and is not dependent on external possessions.

This obsession with physical appearance can lead to self-esteem issues and a distorted understanding of yoga, which is fundamentally about self-acceptance and self-love.



Fun Fact:

Did you know that the word "yoga" comes from the Sanskrit word "yuj," which means to yoke or unite? It's a fitting name for a practice that aims to unite the mind, body, and spirit!

Commercializing Mindfulness and meditation: Helping or Hindering?

The practice of mindfulness was first conceptualized in the 6th century BCE, in India, but the road to its commercialisation began 2,500 years later, in the northeast of the United States, during the late 1970s. It was then that Jon Kabat-Zinn, an American professor of medicine and student of Zen Buddhism, introduced the term 'mindfulness', a translation of the Pali word sati, to the Western scientific world. Through his Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme, Kabat-Zinn integrated modern medicine with Buddhist teaching.

Today, the mindfulness sector is big business; in fact, it is estimated to be a billion-dollar industry. That's a difficult number to conceive of. But what exactly is the mindfulness we are being offered? Is it Buddhist, or something else?

The eight branches, or pillars, of mindfulness are called: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. If you are meditating in order to grow the wealth of your business then you are approaching the act with, as Buddhist's would say, **wrong intention**.

The problem with the commercialization of meditation is that it can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and cultural appropriation. When meditation is marketed as a luxury lifestyle accessory for the wealthy or as a way to "get ahead" in business, it can reinforce the idea that mindfulness is only for privileged white people. This erases the rich history of meditation in diverse cultures around the world and perpetuates harmful power dynamics.



According to a 2016 report from Yoga Journal and Yoga Alliance, the yoga industry in the United States generated \$16 billion in revenue that year, with nearly 37 million people practicing yoga.

Headspace, a leading app among many contenders, made a turnover in 2022 of \$235 million. If it helps people, that's great, but by promoting mindfulness as something to be achieved, or striven for, in order to better ourselves and our performance, the corporate world is entirely missing the point of Siddhartha Gautama's hard-won insight. From a Buddhist perspective, it could be leading us away from the Eightfold Path. Mindfulness is not about achieving or gaining, it's about acceptance and the relinquishing of material desire. When we're charging \$10 a month with the promise of a 'better life', can you really be holding true to that compassionate and egalitarian vision?

So, what's the solution?

Well, I think we need to stay grounded in the principles of mindfulness itself. This means cultivating awareness, compassion, and non-judgment in everything we do, including how we consume and market meditation products and services.

It also means recognizing the limitations of the market-driven approach to meditation, and working towards creating spaces and resources that make meditation accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status.

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