

Q & A Mindline



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Q What is the difference between a psychiatrist and a psychologist?

This is a timeless question but worth answering again! And if the question is being asked then there is contemplation of seeking help, which is always good. Mental health problems have risen to an epidemic proportion, therefore any and all professional intervention is the need of the hour.

Psychiatrists are medically trained licensed physicians with expertise in assessment, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental health problems or illness. Sometimes physical illness or biological imbalances can trigger mental illness, therefore, their medical background allows them to conduct blood tests and other tests, evaluate the results and prescribe medications. They may also conduct and lead various psychotherapies or talking therapies.

Psychologists tend to focus on the psychological mechanisms of behaviour, conduct psychometric testing and offer talking therapies. In a wide array of mental health issues, interpersonal and family problems, both might work jointly and offer multidisciplinary interventions.

Q I personally find it quite hard to juggle between professional and personal life and quite simply cannot say 'no' to my boss. Please advise on correcting my 'work-life imbalance.'

This so-called work life imbalance is brought upon by yourself. In an urban, fast-paced, techno-dependent and perhaps privacy-compromised life, many are unduly striving for appreciation, material acquisition, status, position and power, beyond conscious imagination. Thus, there is a high degree of expectation from yourself - more than others have of you. Consequently, you are overworked and the line between work and life gets blurred. Also, in such a scenario, saying 'no' is a taboo!

An ingenious distribution of electronic devices like a laptop and tablets by employers mean the employees are accessible round the clock and expected to respond to communication at odd hours. Consequently, working hours are extended beyond contractual obligation, without additional pay. Perhaps we ought to define work life balance, which is a sense of satisfaction and optimal level of functioning, at both work and home with minimal role conflict.

Restoring work life balance may be one of the most important solutions for managing stress in many domains of your life. The key is to prioritize areas of your life professionally and personally, by listing and attending to things in descending order. Be focused and dedicate time flexibly but distinctively.

Remember that 24 hours of your life has three segments of eight hours, with a segment for work, the other for sleep and the last one for family, friends, self, health and wellness. It's that last segment that mustn't be compromised, or ignored at any cost. Importantly, draw

a clear distinction between work and life, learn to say a polite 'NO' to any new work or demands until pending work is sorted out and never carry work home! Prioritise yourself and your health above all.

Q When I see a psychiatrist what will I be asked and what should I ask?

This is a good question. Remember, psychiatric consultation is holistic in nature, which implies treating the 'whole' person. A psychiatrist will be interested to know why you've come to see them.

The initial session is about gathering information you volunteer, understanding the presenting difficulties, getting to know you as a person in context of your background, learning about any previous medical or psychiatric condition and treatment taken.

The information you provide is then collated to conclude a diagnosis of an ailment or formulate problems into an understandable model. The psychiatrist will try to establish a sense of you as a person and the impact of the presenting problems on your life, functioning, work and relationships.

It might be a good idea to prepare and plan your first and subsequent consultation or therapy session. Perhaps, it would best to write down all the questions that need to be addressed. Ensure that you actively participate in the consultation, question the risks and benefits of proposed medicines, understand the nature and purpose of psychological therapy planned as well as know the likely number of session that may be required.

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