

Redefining life beyond mental health labels

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Calcutta: Two individuals in their 40s are quietly proving that a diagnosis isn't a dead end. Despite living with conditions like schizophrenia, ADHD, and intellectual disabilities, they are successfully managing their own lives—handling everything from grocery runs and finances to their own medication schedules.

Their daily routine might seem ordinary to some, but it represents a powerful milestone in independent living and self-reliance for those navigating mental health challenges.

They stand as “powerful examples of autonomy, responsibility and leadership” and address one of the biggest concerns of parents: who would take care of their children in their absence, said Ishita Sanyal, the founder director of Turning Point, a mental health organisation.

Over the past 25 years, the organisation has been working with individuals with schizophrenia and borderline to moderate intellectual disability.

At a recently held event called Open the Door, Kohinur Nandi, 46, and Anirban Bhadra, 48, along with 24-year-old Swarnabho Saha, were celebrated for proving they can thrive independently.



(From left) Swarnabho Saha, Anirban Bhadra and Kohinur Nandi with Ishita Sanyal, founder-director of Turning Point, at the Open the Door event

Swarnabho lives with his father and younger brother and sometimes takes up the responsibility of an older sibling as well, especially after the death of their mother.

The younger brother, who is in Class V, had expressed disappointment to his father that with mother gone, they no longer “would be able to eat homemade sweets”.

Swarnabho grated the coconut himself to prepare his brother's favourite *nadu*.

“Many of them can do things independently, but at times over-

protective parenting becomes a hindrance,” said Sanyal.

She said that when parents assume their children can't handle a task and do it for them, they unintentionally hinder the child's development.

Turning Point provides them with skill training and teaches essential daily tasks, such as withdrawing cash from the bank, to foster greater independence.

“For individuals who have mild or borderline conditions, mainstreaming is possible, and we endeavour to do that. Parents, while

they are alive, should initiate such training,” Sanyal said.

While everyone makes mistakes, experts argue that the fear of failure shouldn't be a barrier. As one educator noted, success requires building both the individual's self-confidence and the trust of those around them.

Open the Door is a programme that celebrates “ability beyond labels”.

It aspired to challenge traditional mindsets deeply rooted in perceptions that confine individuals to diagnostic labels, overlooking their potential beyond therapy rooms and prescriptions.

Sanyal said: “Some of them manage every aspect of their daily lives — from supervising household help to planning meals, visiting banks and scheduling doctor visits. They are not waiting for society to open doors for them but are doing so on their own. It is with these changes that we shift from limitation to possibility, from diagnosis to development and from sympathy to respect.”

At the programme, nearly 300 participants showcased their talent, and more than 200 registered online in collaboration with Global Play Brigade, a US-based organisation with branches in 107 countries. The organisation uses play as a pathway to development.