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Are you aware that May is a Mental Awareness month? So we thought it was appropriate to feature someone, a known face, Betty Irabor, who has gone through the ordeal of clinical depression and overcome it. Her selfless act of allowing the world into her space by telling her story is by no means a small feat. It is a bold and brave act as it takes a lot of courage to admit your weaknesses in public. What is most disheartening is the stigma that goes with clinical depression or mental illness of any kind. If other ailments like Cancer do not carry a stigma, why should mental ailments? Just because one is physical and the other is ‘in the head’ does not take away the fact that they are both ailments and need treatment. Many people are under the impression that once your life seems picture perfect or better than some other people on the outside, your state of mind should automatically be ‘in a good place’. Any cracks on the such smooth polished surface should be hidden from the public no matter what curveballs life throws at you simply because you are ‘lucky’ to have the life you live and ‘impressions’ count! This assumption is rather unfortunate because there are so many people dying inside praying for their lone voices to be heard so they can be saved from this spiral of sadness that has engulfed them. Some don’t even know when, where or how to begin to look for solace or treatment. Worse still, people around them are either impatient or overwhelmed with the situation and feel totally helpless. They are at a loss at what to do to help their loved one/friend/relative. So that more awareness is being created about mental ailments a welcome development in our society and a lot more needs to be done for people to pay closer attention to this issue. Sadly, because Nigeria is a grueling place to survive talk less of living, people are less tolerant when it comes to having listening ears or showing sympathy. Because of this, suicide rates have escalated to a worrisome figure and we need to address this prevailing problem in our midst. Organisations are setting up forums and systems that will provide immediate help and assistance to those in need of a cure, our duty therefore is to be alert, watch out for signs and pay more attention to those who show signs of any mental illness. Perhaps we can save a life in doing so.

I do hope Betty’s story will touch a chord and make us appreciate our fellow human beings a lot more.
A cursory look at life makes the heart sink as many are indifferent to the plights of others. I use to wonder if it was possible for anyone to sleep in 2 rooms at once, drive 2 cars at once because if this is impossible, then why are we the way we are...amazing how shaking us like headless chicken. Why are we apathetic to the pain and suffering of those around us, if it should be obvious to the wise that if you keep the poor hungry, they will one day turn against you. Why is it so difficult for each one to reach one, yet we all know that an open palm receives whilst a clenched fist only receives the clenche.

What does it profit anyone to continue to “pepper” the needy by flagrantly disregarding them....

How are we not affected when others hurt to their marrow in the quest for a crust of bread while we cruise around in our luxurious rides splashing “monkey” mud at them.

How do we sleep at night set with abject poverty greeting us on every side, we then unhappily pull our warm blankets tightly around us forming the new “blow” in town.

Let us even for a second pack the material and connect on a different level, do we mentor others and teach them the “how” we fished and got where we are or we are so “aridated” we can even share knowledge. E get as it be for us too, what...

Do we reach out in care to the weeping and the hurting or join the throng in deriding them. Do we wake up daily looking for ways to alleviate the suffering of others or do we just prance around like the peacock, with a deep froth when approached for help?

How can anyone not see that this attitude of ours is a boiling pit that will one day pull many...

We need to pause and ponder as we will one day be called upon to account for the wealth given to us in trust...

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From neon-coloured co-ords to sunny yellow suits, colourful suiting has been one of the most wearable runway trends this year. Worn head-to-toe, the look is eye-catching and polished, but also anything but corporate. If you've been working in a professional setting for a few years but don't have to wear a suit to work every day, there's a good chance you have a wardrobe of dark-coloured “interview” suits and blazers in safe, easy-to-match neutrals like grey and beige. For something new this season, why not inject a dose of colour to your work wear wardrobe? Don't forget: You could always wear each piece individually for subtler impact.
Yellow is definitely having its moment on the fashion scene right now and it comes in multiple manifestations: from a pop-artsy hit of zesty lemon to soft mustard hues. What’s even more interesting about this color is that despite its loud vibe, it is versatile enough to suit the two main style tribes: the minimalist and the maximalist.

Lately we’ve seen it pop up at multiple fashion houses, red carpets and street style looks either as a spin of sunshine amongst an otherwise muted color palette, or as the boldest dose of vibrancy. It is safe to say that yellow has been crowned the cool-girl color for the year.

If you intend jumping on this trend, you could wear it head-to-toe to turn heads, or opt for unexpected accents with accessories. Either way you definitely won’t go wrong!
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How do you find the courage to write Dust to Dew?
Before you were diagnosed with anxiety and depression, what was your day-to-day life like?
What was the journey to recovery like?
What is life like for you now?
What is the single most important thing to tell someone who is depressed?
What is life like for you now?
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Differences in Frequency of and Reaction to greater vulnerability to depression.

Differences in Frequency of and Reaction to greater depression in women, who must look outside themselves for validation.

Studies show that women tend to use a more emotion-focused coping style, or distraction, to cope with stressful events, which means they are more likely to experience a decrease in work performance, quality, and consistency. Some end up foregoing on their homes, declaring bankruptcy or being homeless or incarcerated after trying to manage a mental illness.

if both concerns are addressed and co-occur, leading to increased stress and wind down include yoga, learning how to identify and manage stress and work in a community garden or play with pets, get creative, go for a walk in the park, do something nice for a friend (or stranger). When you help others, it makes you feel good too. Find like-minded people. Join a club, class or group so you can mix with people who have similar interests. A healthy body is linked to a healthy mind: if your body feels good, you will feel the sun, listen to the wind, feel the grass under your bare feet. Check out mindfulness. It really works.

Millions of people around the world suffer from a form of mental illness. Statistics say one in four.

It has been widely documented that there are gender differences in depression prevalence, with women experiencing major depression twice as often as men. This risk exists independent of race or ethnicity. Some risk factors have been studied which might account for gender differences in depression prevalence. Below are some reasons;

1. Hormonal changes

Given that the peak onset of depressive disorders in women coincides with their reproductive years (between the ages of 20 to 45 years), hormonal risk factors may play a role. Estrogen and progesterone have been shown to affect neurotransmitter, neuroendocrine, and circadian systems that have been implicated in mood disorders. The fact that women often undergo mood disorders associated with their menstrual cycle, such as premenstrual dysphoric disorder (though this is a fairly new disorder that has not been embraced by everyone in the healthcare field), also points to a relationship between female sex hormones and mood.

In addition, the hormonal fluctuations associated with childbirth are a common trigger for mood disorders. Although menopause is a time when a woman’s risk of depression declines, the perimenopausal period is a time of increased risk for those with a history of major depression.

2. Gender Differences in Socialization

Researchers have found that gender differences in socialization could play a role as well. Little girls are socialized by their parents and teachers to be more nurturing and sensitive to the feelings of others, while little boys are encouraged to develop a greater sense of mastery and independence in their lives. This type of socialization is theorized to lead to greater depression in women, who must look outside themselves for validation.

3. Gender Differences in Coping Style

Studies show that women tend to use a more emotion-focused, nominating coping style, wording their problems over in their minds, while men tend to use a more problem-focused, distancing coping style to help them forget or avoid their problems. It has been hypothesized that this summative coping strategy leads to a more severe expression of depressive symptoms and contribute to women’s greater vulnerability to depression.

4. Differences in Frequency of and Reaction to Stressful Life Events

Evidence suggests that, throughout their lifetimes, women may experience stressful life events and have a greater sensitivity to them than men. Adolescent girls tend to report more negative life events than boys, usually related to their relationships with their parents and peers, and to experience higher levels of distress related to them. Studies of adult women have found that women are more likely than men to become depressed in response to a stressful life event and to have experienced a stressful event within six months prior to a major depressive episode.

5. Social Roles and Cultural Influences

It has also been theorized that women who become housewives and mothers may find their roles devalued by society while women who pursue a career outside the home may face discrimination and job insecurity or may feel conflicts between their roles as a wife and a mother and their work. Their social circumstances, adverse life events associated with children, housing or reproduction may hit women especially hard because they perceive these tasks as important to their definition of themselves and may feel they have no alternative ways to define themselves when these areas are threatened.

Based on your day to day experience with patients and people you meet daily, would you say depression is on the rise? Or is it being exaggerated by the media? What is rate of suicide in Nigeria?

It is important to view and prioritize mental health in the same context as physical health as both have the capacity to influence the quality and longevity of one’s life.

It is important to remember that both mental and physical health issues can co-occur, leading to increased symptoms and distress. However, if both concerns are addressed and proper adherence is maintained, many people can receive relief from symptoms and distress. Notably, if the mental health symptoms are not addressed, many patients report improvements in their overall physical health. Persons with mental health problems, especially mild symptoms of anxiety or depression, often fly under the radar of physicians and mental health professionals, typically at a significant cost to individuals, families and the community.

As just we have effective treatments for physical illnesses, there are these interventions and Lifestyle interventions that can ease mental suffering, especially if you get help at the earliest signs of concerns or issues.

What are your general tips for staying mentally healthy?

It’s not broke don’t fix it…right? Not! One of the best methods of mental health recovery is to maintain an environment prone to mental health anxiety and stress. Mental health is a way of life, not something you do when things start going wrong. You have to look for your top 10 tips to staying mentally healthy! Remember sometimes, the best treatment is prevention.

Connect with others

Put time and effort into building relationships with people you were brought up with. An extended family, friends, neighbors, even just two people who get along, can have a big impact on your mental health.

Do what you enjoy

Take time out to do something that you enjoy. Take a walk in the park, do a crossword, get into that hobby you love; play with pets, get creative, go for a swim, read a book. Make room for your happiness.

Share your interests

Find like-minded people. Join a club, class or group so you can mix with people with similar interests. A sense of belonging does wonders for wellbeing.

Help out

Volunteer for a cause or issue that you care about. Help out a neighbour, work in a community garden or do something nice for a friend (or stranger). When you help others, it makes you feel good too.

Take care yourself

A healthy body is linked to a healthy mind: If your body feels good, you will feel the sun, listen to the wind, feel the grass under your bare feet. Check out mindfulness. It really works.

In the present

Our default mode is to think and worry about the past and future. Try to spend more time in the present: feel the sun, listen to the wind, feel the grass under your bare feet. Check out mindfulness. It really works.

Ask for help

It’s true, the perfect, worry-free life doesn’t exist. Everyone’s life journey is different, and sometimes you need to help me really build bumpy bits. Don’t ask for help out of guilt; it’s not a weakness, or shame. If you have a mental illness, a friend, a family member or a member of the Health Professionals. Our help lines are open 24/7. Also, is the walk in free counselling services every Friday 3:30.

The World Health Organisation, WHO, there are 322 million people living with depression in the world. In the WHO suicide ranking, Nigeria, with 15.1 suicides per 100,000 population per year, is ranked the 30th most suicide-prone out of 183 nations in the world. Nigeria also ranks 10th in Africa.

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What are some healthy ways to manage stress in a country like ours? Stress affects everyone and if left unchecked may pose a serious threat to our physical and mental health. It is a common major mental health disorder, which globally affects over 300 million people of all ages. It is a leading cause of disability worldwide and can impact all aspects of life, including work, relationships, and overall well-being. Depression is predicted by World Health Organization as the leading cause of disability by 2020. Depression results from a complex interaction of social, biological and psychological factors. It is a disease that affects all aspects of life, including our ability to think, feel and act. It can be frustrating or overwhelming, unpredictable or inexplicable. At its most severe, depression can lead to suicide or even more serious health issues. The more we talk about it, the lesser the stigma. The stigma is from lack of adequate information. The people do not know any different or better so they do not know how to support, how to help or who to trust.

In your experience, what would you say are the barriers to access for mental health services in Nigeria, and how do you believe we can combat them?

The major barrier is information. There are people who want to know how to heal their pain, their wounds, who want to have a better life but the information they get is either incorrect or they get none at all. There needs to be more awareness about mental health issues. The more we talk about it, the lesser the stigma. The stigma is from lack of adequate information. The people do not know any different or better so they do not know how to support, how to help or who to trust. It is vital to identify the triggers of the anxiety and depression being experienced. It could be a toxic environment or situation, which the individual may need to address. Lifestyle modifications have been shown to be helpful e.g. regular exercising, eating healthy, meditating, supportive relationships, and reducing or avoiding sleep hygiene. If the symptoms persist despite implementing the above, it is important to urgently seek professional help. In doing so, treatment is usually extremely helpful. Psychotherapy works by talking through drug treatment. Both approaches are known to be effective depending on the severity of symptoms.

What’s the difference between ‘sadness’ and ‘clinical depression’? And how can people know for a fact which of these they are experiencing?

Sadness is usually brief normal human emotion triggered by a loss, challenging or difficult situation while clinical depression is an abnormal persistent emotional or mental disorder which negatively impacts our thinking, emotions, perception, behavior and overall functioning.

People mistake sadness for a loss, challenging or difficult situation while clinical depression is an abnormal persistent emotional or mental disorder which negatively impacts our thinking, emotions, perception, behavior and overall functioning. People experience sadness for a few days or weeks after a loss. Sometimes, sadness can last over two to four weeks, then may require urgent attention. The journey to making Nigerians more mentally aware has already begun. What we need is the right people with loud voices to support these causes or create causes that focus on this. The more people who look up with admiration and respect are bold enough to speak of their humanity, the faster and the better for the people. For, we Nigerians, it is our own community and we created this stigma so it is our own responsibility to remove it from our way of being and thinking. We need to educate ourselves, allow our minds to be open, lend our voices to spreading the gospel of mental health and mental illness within our families, spiritual groups, work groups, and amongst our friends. We can do it. Non-Governmental Organisations such as Mentally Aware Initiative, Anti Suicide and Depression Squad, Olamora Care, Shil Whites-Loman, Listening Ear Africa are actively doing the work. Everyday. Volunteering time and effort to these organisations and many more like them is valuable. It is the simplest act of love if you cannot be physically, supporting financially or strategically by putting them in touch with people who help them grow or succeed at their goals it is always welcome. Go to therapy and talk at others to go about therapy. If we are going to stand up and tell others to confront their mental health challenges; then we must be first of all confront ours. In my practice, every month I offer free group therapy sessions. This month of May, I will be having a group for free with some of the NGOs mentioned above to educate people about mental health and illnesses. Every last Wednesday of the month, a dear friend of mine and fantastic poet, William Moore organizes an open gathering called Words As Therapy at the Revolving Art Incubator Lagos. It is a safe space for everyone to talk about the tools that they use to be in contact with people who help them through their pain or mental illness. We have talked about communication, loneliness, sometimes having difficulty making friends, and the journey to making Nigerians more mentally aware.

Additionally, what type of social change needs to take place to make citizens more receptive to mental health programs? I would love to have a more open discussion about mental health and illnesses. Every last Wednesday of the month, a dear friend of mine and fantastic poet, William Moore organizes an open gathering called Words As Therapy at the Revolving Art Incubator Lagos. It is a safe space for everyone to talk about the tools that they use to be in touch with people who help them through their pain or mental illness.

Words As Therapy is an open gathering for people who are ready to talk or hear about their mental health and illnesses. Every last Wednesday of the month, a dear friend of mine and fantastic poet, William Moore organizes an open gathering called Words As Therapy at the Revolving Art Incubator Lagos. It is a safe space for everyone to talk about the tools that they use to be in contact with people who help them through their pain or mental illness.

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What mental health services are readily available to the average Nigerian? Generally speaking, Nigerians have options for mental health care. However, we will be so out of touch with reality to say that there are lots of options readily available for the average Nigerian. Studies show that the average Nigerian lives on less than $2 a day. When there’s any health need, the health system has only provided Primary Healthcare for this average Nigerian. But guess what? Mental Healthcare is practically nonexistent at the primary healthcare level.

So what’s the next option? We need more Government (general and teaching) hospitals and psychiatric hospitals, which are usually not within reach at all levels, and offer secondary and tertiary healthcare. The consequence is that when the average Nigerian has a mental health issue or psychosocial condition, there’s no readily available first aid and which should be present at primary healthcare or preventative care. As such, these challenges have to get compounded over time before necessity pushes the average Nigerian to seek help at the tertiary level.

What are the statistics for the burden of mental health diseases in Nigeria? Let’s cite some statistics: Just last year, the Federal Minister of Health released a statistic that about 40 million Nigerians are living with some form of mental illness. Then there’s no mental healthcare at Primary Healthcare Centres, there is one psychiatrist to about 1.1 million Nigerians and no public health insurance that covers for the average Nigerian. That’s not all: Nigeria is the 10th most suicide prone country in Africa and the 9th poverty capital of the world. Do you see the picture?

The burden of mental ill health or psychosocial disabilities is severe in Nigeria. We literally cannot afford these conditions be it from an economic, financial or psychological viewpoint. We are under equipped to handle mental health care and poverty makes the burden even heavier. How well is the current system of care meeting this need? Obviously, not well enough at all. From primary healthcare to secondary and tertiary healthcare, there’s either non-existent or under equipped facilities for people handling the huge population of Nigerians who are living in poverty and unable to sustain this system of care. The problem is not so much about individuals creating solutions, which is good. It is about systemic changes. Changes that can only be made through policy, in order to improve the lives of the average Nigerian, who lives in poverty and is vulnerable.

What efforts are being made to meet the identified need? Thankfully, civil society organizations like She Writes Woman are filling the gap by ensuring that advocacy is amplified, conversations are widespread and not only about the problem but also ensuring that preventative approaches are being used. Since 2016, She Writes Woman has initiated and sustained the only monthly mental health support group in Nigeria, holding over 39 editions and directly supporting over 600 women and girls. With a 24/7 mental health helpline, She Writes Woman has supported about 1,000 cases and referred around 50 potential suicide cases. In a bid to ensure that young people are safe and talk about the breakdown before seeking help, this leading organisation also created Safe Place Nigeria, a life clinic that ensures that young people are safe enough to talk about life stressors and issues in hopes that they prevent much breakdowns.

What disparities and inequities in mental health access and quality exist among different populations in Nigeria? Generally speaking, the average Nigerian is disadvantaged as far as a sustainable quality mental healthcare is going. This is not to say that there aren’t facilities that offer quality healthcare at all, it is that wealthier Nigerians can afford and access personalised mental health care that trumps what is offered in public healthcare. For example, many people who visit psychiatric hospitals albeit to the low cost of care and good quality mental Healthcare. However, they also complain about the inconsistency of the mental health professionals available to them on a week-by-week basis, as well as long waiting times etc. The more affluent Nigerian can simply make a call and get on a phone or in front of a professional in 24 hours at the right price, a privilege the majority cannot afford.

Let’s also acknowledge that down South in Nigeria, there is more willingness, more civil society presence, more willing government policies, structures and systems and collective action on mental health than there is in most parts of Nigeria, especially in the North. As such, though Nigerians in the Southern region of the country believe mental healthcare needs a kind of improvement, those in the North, for example, don’t have lots of options.

**Hauwa Ojeifo**

MIND & MENTAL HEALTH COACH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SHE WRITES WOMAN.
WEAR THE RIGHT UNDERGARMENTS
Your underwear matters when you are rocking a Grecian cut dress with a thigh-high slit. Be sure to wear a strapless bra to avoid straps on display.

PLAY WITH A SUBTLE SIDE SLIT
Not sure a full-on frontal slit is the right fit for you? Then follow Actress NDIDIMA OKOJI’s lead and opt for a more subtly placed side slit, which offers all the drama of a front slit, but in a more toned-down fashion.

MAKE SURE THE DRESS FITS LIKE A GLOVE
The dress should be tailored to your body, so when you move it creates different ways to highlight your figure. G-series boutique Villa Thea

WEAR THE RIGHT UNDERGARMENTS
Your underwear matters when you are rocking a Grecian cut dress with a thigh-high slit. Be sure to wear strapless bras to avoid straps on display.

GO FOR DRAMA
We know less is always more, but in this case more definitely is more. SIKA OSEI could not have rocked the thigh-high slit in this ruffle dress any better than she is already doing.

CHOOSE A LIGHTWEIGHT FABRIC
What’s the point of wearing a leg-baring slit if it’s in heavy wool, crepe, or jacquard fabric that allows for little movement and few chances for a peek at your gams? That’s why it’s smart to choose a flowing, lightweight dress made from fabrics like satin or chiffon.

STICK WITH A STREAM-LINED CHIC
There are few things worse than showing off your gorgeous long legs with a high-high slit only to look down and see a whole heap sticking out. Keep your entire outfit sleek and streamlined by choosing a get-up made from low-profile solids, like the stappy pair OSAS IGHODARE matched with her tulle dress.

PLAY WITH A VISUALLY INTRIGUING NECKLINE
Leg-bearing slits have enough lengthening and slimming power on their own, but you can amp that up even further by choosing a high-cut or statement neckline like the scoop-neck line on SHARON OJO’s dress that will draw the eye up and make you look inches taller in an instant.

CINCH YOUR WAIST
Whether it’s with a white belt or a thick band of contrasting colour fabric, make sure your waist is defined or your dress will look lose. Cinching your waist is crucial if you want to make your thigh-high slit a little more dramatic and sexier.

HOW TO ROCK THE Thigh-High Slit
The new trend dominating the red carpet are thigh-high slits. You may not be exactly built like a typical celebrity, with their super-slim physiques, mile-long legs, and perfectly defined waists but really, you can pull the look off just as well. This star style staple can be translated to real life ones and is actually one of the simplest albeit daring ways, to add a little oomph and sex appeal to your night-out outfit. And the best part is, it can be totally tasteful and subtle when done the right way. So if you’re ready to show a little leg, take a few tips from these gorgeous women!

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