LEAD IN: The definition, importance, and views regarding Mental Illness has changed and evolved from one generation to the other in Egypt. It is so interesting to look at different approaches of Mental Illness as it actually changed from one period of time to the other.

MUSIC: FADE IN: AShamaluevMusic - Dramatic and Emotional Background Music

SB: “When you think about questions that’s related to God, how God created himself and us, how does the universe work, your mind will be unstable and you will be unstable too” (0.12)

That was shocking, especially because it came out of my mother when I asked her to tell me about mental illness from her own point of view.

SB: “A person who is religious would be protected by God, as religion guides and calm anyone” (0.05)

According to my mum, religion is a sort of a protection shield that surrounds the people so the ones who are not religious are expected to suffer from such disease because they are not close to God and they don’t have enough faith.

MUSIC: FADE IN:

SB: “Going to a doctor was not a first option, what was more common was going to a Dagal who is a person that takes money to solve your problems by reading Quran, but the Dagal was only a liar and a thief” (0.11)

People at that time believed that Mental Illness is related to demonic issues, this mindset is almost eliminated but still exist in the areas of no education and poverty. The number of psychiatrists and therapists is increasing because of the evolution of education and globalization.

Going back to a generation that’s older than my parents which is grandparents generation. A person was never called “Mentally Ill”, but called “crazy”. A girl who is
identified as “crazy” would not get married and an employee who was thought to be “crazy” would be fired from his job.

People would actually make fun of parents with “crazy children” and even start calling slangs like this: \textit{NAT SOUND: “Mother of the crazy girl followed with laughter”}

\textit{My grandmother told me a story} of a mother who had three daughters and one of them was mentally unstable, the mother would not get her daughter to any outings or any trips, as she was scared that she would embarrass her in-front of her neighbors and other people.

The idea of embarrassment has totally changed from one generation to the other. This is not by far how my generation sees mental illness.

I interviewed Reem Mahmoud, who’s an honor student in the psychology department in, The American University in Cairo.

\textit{SB: “I see it as a monster or Idk it’s just something that’s very dreadful, it’s very like intimidating that if someone who have mental disease you will seem him perfectly healthy from the outside, that’s why I personally believe that Mental Illness is not just as physical or bottley illness but it is way more serious”} (0.08)

Mental illness is not like how it is pictured in movies, one of the misconceptions that people have about mental illness is about Schizophrenia disease.

\textit{SB: “Schizophrenia as a lot people know it’s not about having two personalities, MPPT it’s a multiple personalities disorder but schizophrenia is whole another spectrum, when you see them you will know that this person is schizophrenic because the first thing that}
you will going to see is that they will get so delusional, they tend to hallucinate a lot”
(0.19)

In the last years suicide rates has increased dramatically and the main driving force
behind this action is depression and anxiety.

Reem shared a story of her father who was being traumatized after losing his brother to
an accident,

SB: “What I saw is that my father he did not act on the grief of his brother, he didn’t cry,
he didn’t seem sad, he didn’t even talk about it to anyone of us, he was very close to his
brother, I thought for a bit that he was in denial because he didn’t even talk to anyone of
us about the fact that my brother is dead” (0.21)

This is what they call the calm before the storm, as his calmness was later reversed into his
actions, in situations that wouldn’t require him to be angry he would be.

Our generation now is facing more stress because of the political, social and financial pressures
but the mindsets are changing, more are acknowledging the importance of getting help and of
speaking out when they are feeling unbalanced.

SB: “It’s a vital thing to do, I mean that if I couldn’t resolve it myself, if I seeked for a
friends help and they tried to help me in a way but still there is something that I want to
talk it out with someone who is professional” (0.15)

I believe that one has no hand in becoming mentally ill and that it is not something to be
ashamed of. Many people around us are mentally ill and they need to be treated before
reaching the extreme cases.

SB: “In Egypt, we definitely need more social awareness campaign, we need a lot
campaign either through social media either in universities or whatsoever” (0.08)

The awareness found today is remarkable, there is more sympathy given to people with
Mental Illness and people actually care and try to help them instead of making fun of
them.
However, there are still some flaws. Many in the upper Egypt still think that it is a taboo, My maid told me that if someone is acting in an irrational and unjustified way they would be kept like a prisoner by their own parents out of embarrassment to expose them to the society.

There is still more effort that must be initiated from all of us. Going to a therapist should be as going to a doctor because you have a flu or anything that is regular and common.

Let's end the stigma about Mental Illness.

This audio documentary was produced by Hams Khamis for the audio production course at the American University in Cairo, taught by professor Kim Fox in the Fall semester of 2019. Special thanks to my mother, my grandmother, Reem and my maid and everyone who participated with their opinion that's much appreciated. The Music is by AShamaluevMusic-Dramatic and Emotional Background Music and all the NAT sounds was gathered by me.