

manotsava 2026

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH FESTIVAL

Programme Schedule

Dec 5–6 2026,
Jayamahal Palace Hotel

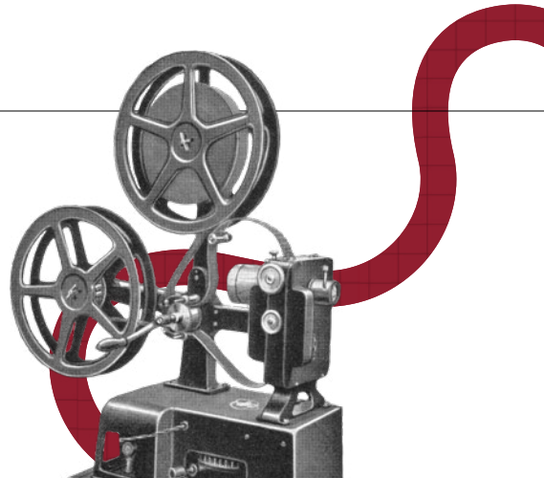


ROHINI NILEKANI philanthropies

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND NEUROSCIENCES

ncbs

DAY 1 | 5 December 2026

MAIN STAGE	INDOOR AUDITORIUM	POOLSIDE STAGE
9:30 Welcome: Flute Performance Prithwin Rajeeva, Flautist Shouri Shanbhog, Tabla Artiste **10:00 -11:00 | INAUGURATION** Opening Remarks: Dr Y.C. Janardhan Reddy, Director, NIMHANS Prof. L.S. Shashidhara, Director, NCBS Rohini Nilekani, Chairperson, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies		
11:15 – 12:15 Panel: A Parent's Journey: Understanding and Supporting a Child with Neurodiversity Dr Shakeeb Ahmed Khan, Founder, CIPHER Foundation | Keshavaram P, Assistant Professor, Manipal College of Health Professions, Manipal Academy of Higher Education | Chithra Seshadri, Trustee and Director, Farm Hill Learning Community & Sambhavam Centre for Autism Moderator: Prachi Deo, Founder and Executive Director, Nayi Disha	**11:15 – 12:15 Hooked: Rethinking Addiction and Recovery** Rocky, Person with Lived Experience | Shaleen Mitra, Officer on Special Duty to Health Minister, War Against Drugs, Punjab | Rohini Pradhan, Special Secretary cum Programme Director, Sikkim INSPIRES, Government of Sikkim Moderator: Urvita Bhatia, Assistant Professor, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Deputy Director of the Addictions and Related Research Group, Sangath	**11:15 – 12:15 Suicidality: Stories of Loss, Survival and Hope** Rituparna Mandal, Person with Lived Experience| Titiksha Bhatia, Person with Lived Experience and Former Peer Supporter, Centre for Mental Health Law & Policy | Arjun Gupta, Person with Lived Experience and PhD Scholar, Guru Jambheshwar University, Hisar Moderator: Arjun Kapoor, Co-Director, Centre for Mental Health Law & Policy
12:30 – 1:30 Keynote: The Science of Laughter: From Evolution and Neuroscience to Social Connection Prof. Sophie Scott, Director, UCL Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience In conversation with Rohini Nilekani, Chairperson, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies		
2:00 – 3:00 Raising and Being Men: Experiences of Growing Up in India Ankur Singla, Founder and CEO, Brew TV | Vineet Jawa, Co-Founder, Purusha | Dr Raman Tanwar, Andrologist and Editor-in-Chief, Best for Him Moderator: Vishnu Agnihotri, Director, GenWise	**2:00 – 3:00 The Truth about Sleep: Busting Myths with Science** Dr Satish Ramaiah, Executive Director – Psychiatric Services, Sukoon Health | Prof. Bindu M. Kutty, Former Senior Professor of Neurophysiology & Former Dean (Basic Sciences), NIMHANS | Prof. Shaon Chakrabarti, Associate Professor, National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) | Moderator: Ramya Kannan, Health Editor, The Hindu	**2:00 – 3:00 Giving Is Good for You: Volunteering and Wellbeing** Malti Jaswal, Founder, Inspiring Seniors Foundation | Jithin C Nedumala, Founder & CEO, Make A Difference (MAD) | Trina Chakrabarti, Director – East and Volunteer Engagement, CRY Moderator: Naveen Prashanth, Co-founder, The Social Impact Collective
3:15 – 4:15 Therapist in Your Pocket? AI, Tech and Mental Health Dr Pavan Mamidi, Director, CSBC, Ashoka University | Dr Lekhansh Shukla, Associate Professor, Centre for Addiction Medicine, Department of Psychiatry, NIMHANS | Dr Sneha Shashidhara, Assistant Professor, Psychology & Cognitive Sciences, Ashoka University & Centre for Social and Behaviour Change Moderator: Dr Sharon Barnhardt, Director (Research), Centre for Social and Behaviour Change, Ashoka University	**3:15 – 4:15 OK Boomer, OK Zoomer: Bridging the Generational Divide** Aayush Mahale, Sibling, Designer, Gen Z | Sudarshan Suchi, Learnt all about parenting from 2 kids (now adults), Eternal optimist, Gen X | Poonam Muttreja, Lifelong feminist, Boomer Moderator: Nivedita Soni, Friend, National Youth and Adolescents Programmes Lead, Pravah, Millennial	**3:15 – 4:15 ಕ್ವೀರ್ ಮನಸು - ಸವಾಲು, ಸಂಕೀರ್ಣತೆ ಮತ್ತು ಸಲಹೆಗಳು | Queer Mind - Challenges, Complexities and Suggestions (Kannada)** Christy Raj, Founder, Maarga; Secretary, Payana| Dadapeer Jyman, Writer, Researcher and Theatre Practitioner | Dr Preethi Reddy, Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, NIMHANS Moderator: Vasudhendra, Kannada Author and Queer Counsellor
5:00 - 6:30 Keynote Conversation: Anil Kapoor, Actor | Rohini Nilekani, Chairperson, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies		
	6:45 onwards | Film Screenings Toyaj, Hindi and English, Duration: 22 min | Things I Didn't Tell Amma, Tulu, Duration: 11 min | Orange, English and Hindi, Duration: 15 min | IRL, Hindi, Duration: 25 min | Vajood Rahe Maujood, Hindi, Duration: 9 min | Krishna's Waiting Room, Hindi, Duration: 45 min	

DAY 1 | 5 December 2026

WORKSHOP VENUE 1 (POOLSIDE)

11:15 – 12:45 Sharing Circle: Finding Togetherness in Care: For Families of LGBTQ+ People
Sadaf Arafati and Aryan Somaiya, Founders, Guftagu Therapy

1:15 – 2:45 Sharing Circle: A Restorative Circle for Parents of Children with Neurodivergence
Dr Saman Fatema Khan, CIPHER Foundation | Dr Shakeeb Ahmed Khan, CIPHER Foundation | Anusha Chandrasekharan, Development Practitioner

3:15 – 4:45 Sharing Circle: Naanu – Neenu – Naavu: Personal Agency in Workplace Relationships (Kannada)
Sailaja Manacha, Psychotherapist & Leadership Coach, Physis | Deepak Dhananjaya, Psychotherapist, Leadership| Coach & Consultant, Prabhava Institute of Inclusive Mental Health

WORKSHOP VENUE 2 (NEXT TO CZ)

11:15 – 12:45 Workshop: Feed the Feeling: Where Food Meets Regulation
Leanne Rose Pais, Counselling Psychologist, Trauma Specialist, and Founder & CEO, The Unopened Box | Elizabeth Yorke, Co-founder, Edible Issues

1:15 – 2:45 Workshop: Illusions of the Mind: Exploring Mental Health Through Magic
Ranjitha Raj, Founder, Mental Health Academy India (MHAI) | Shankar Junior (Tejaswi), Magician and Resource Person, MHAI | Panini Deraje, Musician, Theatre Artist and Resource Person, MHAI

3:15 – 4:45 Workshop: Stories That Demand to Be Told: Writing from Life Experience
Natasha Badhwar, Author, Filmmaker and Educator, Ochre Sky | Nishi Tiwari, Writer and Artist, Ochre Sky



WORKSHOP VENUE 3 (BIG TENT)

11:15 – 12:45 Workshop: Move, Reflect, Release: A Guided Movement Workshop for Mental Well-Being
Bhargavi Gopalan, Dance Scientist, Independent Practitioner | Tarini Anchan, Dance Movement Psychotherapist, Independent Practitioner

1:15 – 2:45 Workshop: Rap Writing for Self-Expression & Community Identity: Govandi Arts Festival x Kali
Mateen Ansari, Abid Khan and Kasim Shaikh, Rappers, Govandi Arts Festival | Kali (Akshay R), Rap Artist

3:15 – 4:45 Workshop: Unshameable: You Were Never Broken
Mrinal Gautam, Experiential Learning & Human Connection Facilitator, HeartPark | Balasree Viswanathan, Co-founder, Improv Lore

Children's Zone

Day 1 · 5 Dec 2026

CHILDREN'S ZONE | A HOME MADE OF BOOKS

11:00 – 12:00 Intergenerational Storyreading with Grandparents

12:30 – 1:30 Read-Aloud: Ajji Goes Missing! (English & Kannada)
Mala Kumar, Author and Editor | Shailaja S, Illustrator

2:00 – 3:00 Read-Aloud: The Pleasant Rakshasa (English & Kannada)
Poorvaja Prakash, Co-Founder, SkilLit Readers | Srilakshmi R, Co-Founder, SkilLit Readers



3:30 – 4:30 PM | Read-aloud: Kempi the Cow (Kannada & English)
Anupama Benachinamaradi, Author, Founder and Publishing Director, Awwa Pustaka

CHILDREN'S ZONE | WORKSHOP ZONE

11:00 – 12:30 Workshop: Haadu-Kunitha: The Rhythm of Resilience (English & Kannada)
Pratima Pandurangi, Co-founder, Sthira | Dhruva Ithal, Founder and Director, Sthira | Shoba S. Meera, Associate Professor, NIMHANS | Dr. Nikhita Kulkarni, Psychiatrist, NIMHANS

1:00 – 2:30 Workshop: Finding Our Rhythm Together Through Play: A Session for Families with Children with Neurodivergence
Soumini Menon, Founder, Developmental & Counselling Psychologist, Being Brave Mental Health Services | Chinmayee Ayyappan, Clinical Psychologist, Being Brave

3:00 – 4:30 Puppet Show: Friends Forever (English and Hindi)
Rahul Aggarwal, Co-Founder, Swatantra Talim Foundation | Ridhi Aggarwal, Puppeteer and Co-Founder, Swatantra Talim Foundation | Vijay Kumar, Puppeteer, Swatantra Puppeteers | Kabir Aggarwal, Puppeteer, Swatantra Puppeteers

DAY 2 | 6 December 2026

MAIN STAGE

9:30 Welcome: Flute Performance
Prithwin Rajeeva, Flautist
Shouri Shanbhog, Tabla Artiste

10:00 – 11:00 Family Caregivers and the Road to Resilience
Saraswathi Suresh, Family Caregiver and Co-founder, FAVMI (Families' Voice on Mental Illness) | Priyanka Goswami, Family Caregiver and Senior HR Manager, Ashadeep | Dr N. Janardhana, Professor, Deptartment of Psychiatric Social Work, NIMHANS | Moderator: Dr Cecilia Fernandes, Pediatric Neurologist and Spiritual Health Advocate, MaitriBodh Parivaar

11:15 – 12:15 Keynote Talk: Will AI Transform Healthcare?
Dr Devi Prasad Shetty, Chairman and Senior Consultant Cardiac Surgeon, Narayana Health

12:30 – 1:30 Error 404: Love Not Found
Paromita Vohra, Filmmaker, Writer and Founder, Agents of Ishq and Parodevi Pictures | Manak Matiyani, Independent Consultant and Feminist Activist | Surabhi Saral, Freelance Fiction Writer for TV and OTT shows
Moderator: Utkarsha Jagga, Founder, The Coping Central

2:00 – 3:00 The Missing Chapter: Menopause and Women's Mental Health
Dr G. Nancy Angeline, St John's | Dr Prabha Chandra, NIMHANS | Dy Jyothika Desai, Past President, Bangalore Menopause Society
Moderator: Dr Ayshwarya Ravichandran, Miyara Health

3:15 – 4:15 The Dark Side of Comedy
Prashasti Singh, Stand-up Comedian | Sonu Venugopal, Stand-up Comedian | Dr Shyam Bhat, Psychiatrist, Psychotherapist & Founder, Nirvikalpa Foundation
Moderator: Natasha Joshi, Chief Strategy Officer, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies

4:30 – 5:30 A Beautiful Mind — A Mental Health Quiz
Abhishek Veeraraghavan, Quizmaster, Mysore Quiz Club | Berty Ashley, Chief Curious Cat, Mysore Quiz Club

5:45 – 6:00 Closing Remarks
Rohini Nilekani, Chairperson, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies

INDOOR AUDITORIUM

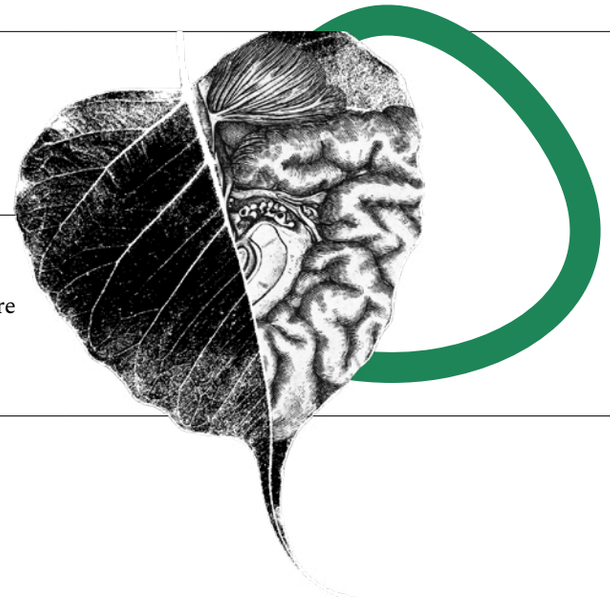
10:00 – 11:00 Are We Stressing too Much about Stress?
Dr Amit Malik, CEO and Founder, Amaha Health| Dr Prabahan Chakraborty, Research Assistant Professor, SRM Institute of Science and Technology
Moderator: Dr Anuja Luniya, Physiotherapist, Behavioural Health Specialist and Author

11:15 – 12:15 Performance: Prime
Avantika Bahl, Choreographer
Cast: Jhelum Paranjape | Venkatesh Iyer | Venkateswaran Akileswaran | Faredoon Dodo Bhujwala | Saraswati Devdas | Sunila Ashok | Francis Dsa Cardoso | Manuella F. Cardoso

12:30 – 1:30 Brain in a Dish: The Science and Ethics of Brain Organoids
Dr Achira Roy, Assistant Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) | Prof. Raghu Padinjat, Senior Professor, National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS-TIFR) | Dr Anant Bhan, Principal Investigator, Sangath
Moderator: Dr Shriya Palchaudhuri, Associate Director (External Engagements), Rohini Nilekani Centre for Brain and Mind, NCBS

2:00 – 4:00 Manotsava Development Sector Track: Rethinking Workplace Wellbeing Towards Healthier Non-profits
Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies in collaboration with Forbes Marshall and Dasra

Dr Urvita Bhatia, Assistant Professor, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine | Pradyut Bhattacharjee, Executive Director, SeSTA |
Rutuja Chaphekar, Manager, Social Initiatives, Forbes Marshall
Moderator: Aakanksha Mishra, Associate, Dasra



POOLSIDE STAGE

10:00 – 11:00 The Highs and Lows of Social Media (Kannada)
Raghu Gowda, Content Creator, Raghu Vine Store | Dr Padmavathi, Doctor and Content Creator | Nithin Kamath, Comedian
Moderator: Amulya Leona, Momentum Shifts

11:15 – 12:15 Keynote Talk: Will the Real Self Please Stand Up? Rethinking the Self in Psychotherapy
Dr Shyam Bhat, Psychiatrist, Psychotherapist & Founder, Nirvikalpa Foundation

12:30 – 1:30 Coping in the Classroom: Teachers and Teens
Kim Noble, Turnbridge High School | Preet Benjamin Aarons, Inventure Academy | Dr Ajit Bhide, Psychiatrist
Moderator: Helen Issar, Papagoya



2:00 – 3:00 Dying Out of Turn: Grief After Untimely Loss
Vishak Nair, Person with Lived Experience; Actor and Filmmaker | Sandhya Srinivasan, Person with Lived Experience | Nikhil Taneja, Person with Lived Experience; Co-Founder & Chief, Yuvaa | Moderator: Sonali Gupta, Psychotherapist and Author

4:00 – 5:30 PM Workshop: Rooted and Rising: People, Nature, Culture and the Cities We Want to Live In
Lovlesh Sharma, National Program Lead, National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) | Ananya, Director – Embodied Practices, citiesRISE | Supriya Mahabaleshwarkar, National Coordinator, Nature Youth Fellowship, citiesRISE | Priyanjana Pramanik, City Coordinator (Kolkata), Nature Youth Fellowship, citiesRISE | Dr Anindya 'Rana' Sinha, Mentor, Nature Youth Fellowship, citiesRISE

DAY 2 | 6 December 2026

WORKSHOP VENUE 1 (POOLSIDE)

10:00 – 11:30 Sharing Circle: The First 1000 Days of Parenthood: A Journey Through Perinatal Mental Health (Kannada)
Asha Kilaru, Co-Founder, Bangalore Birth Network | Sai Bhavani, Research Associate, Bangalore Birth Network

12:00 – 1:30 Sharing Circle: Visible / Invisible: Living with a Chronic Illness
Sanjana Vinod, Writer, Researcher and Student, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) | Dr Jwala Narayanan, Neuropsychologist, Cognitive Neurology Clinic | Dr Krishnaa Thandra Sistla, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Manipal Hospital Millers Road & Manvitha Neuropsychiatry Centre

2:00 – 3:30 Sharing Circle: Beyond Labels: Conversations on Addiction, Shame, and Recovery
Dr Jyotiee Mehraa, Chief Executive Officer, Pragmana Foundation | Francis Joseph, Public Health Expert (Consultant), Pragmana Foundation

4:00 – 5:30 Sharing Circle: The Words Left Unsaid: A Circle for Men
Maj. Pallavi Shivanna, Founder & Director, Kidii Spark Resilience | Vikram Bhat, CEO, SCALE

WORKSHOP VENUE 2 (NEXT TO CZ)

10:00 – 11:30 Sharing Circle: When 'Forever' Ends: Stories of Separation and Divorce
Dr Priya Puri, Founder and Chief Clinical Psychologist, The Healing Space | Dr Shikha Ahuja, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, The Healing Space

12:00 – 1:30 Workshop: Hunt for a Perfect Partner: Do You Have a Checklist?
Artika Singh, Sexuality Educator & Anthropologist | Sarwesh Kase, Counselling Psychologist & Program Manager, Allo Health

2:00 – 3:30 Sharing Circle: Unapologetically Here: For Women Thinking about Marriage - to Marry, Remarry or Stay Unmarried?
Apoorwa Iyer, Counselling Psychologist
Anvita Sethi, Integrative Psychotherapist

4:00 – 5:30 Workshop: Flowers I Never Sent: Craft, Grief, and the Language of Blooms
Kanupriya Mody, Art Therapist, Art Therapy with Kanupriya
Sofía Tejada, Occupational Therapist, Artist and Drama Therapist

WORKSHOP VENUE 3 (BIG TENT)

10:00 – 11:30 Workshop: Feeling at Home in Your Body: A Clowning-Based Mental Health Workshop
Madhusmita Devi, Programme Associate, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and Justice, The YP Foundation | Sonal, Programme Lead, The YP Foundation | Sukhmani Kohli, Consultant, The YP Foundation

12:00 – 1:30 Workshop: Drawing Minds: Comics, Care, and Conversations
Shivarshini B.V., Senior Research Fellow, Bangalore University | Prerna Tolani, PhD Research Scholar, National Institute of Technology Tiruchirappalli

2:00 – 5:00 Workshop: Pause with Paws: An Experiential Workshop with Therapy Dogs
Mrunal Salunkhe, Psychologist, Animal Assisted Intervention Specialist and Founder, TheraPaws
Krisha Shah, Junior Psychologist, TheraPaws
Pratha Patel, Therapy Dog Handler and Operations Executive, TheraPaws
Vishveshwar Kambli, Therapy Animal Handler, TheraPaws
Sifat Shah, Handler, TheraPaws



Children's Zone

Day 2 · 6 Dec 2026



CHILDREN'S ZONE | A HOME MADE OF BOOKS

11:00 - 12:00 Intergenerational Storyreading with Grandparents

12:30 – 1:30 Read Aloud
with Rohini Nilekani



3:30 – 4:30 Read-aloud: Angry Akku
Priya Muthukumar, Storyteller, Pratham Books

CHILDREN'S ZONE | WORKSHOP ZONE

11:00 - 12:30 Talk: Bridging Research and Rehabilitation for Neurodevelopmental Disorders
Prof. Anuradha Lohia, Chairperson, Manovikas Kendra, Kolkata

1:00 – 2:30 Workshop: The Papagoya Play Lab: An Invitation to Play
Pritika Joseph, Head of Programmes, Kindergarten, Papagoya Education | Shonalli Ponnappa, Head of Programmes, Papagoya Micro-School & Head of Wellbeing & Additional Needs, Papagoya Kindergarten & Micro-School | Ria Anandpara, Senior Manager - Centre & Community, Papagoya Kindergarten

3:00 – 4:30 Workshop: Repose: A Lullaby Workshop & Performance (English & Kannada)
Akash Narendran and Deepthi Bhaskar, Songs of Sleep