Mental Health is for Everyone

Promoting Mental Health In Adults

This resource is to promote mental health.

For crisis help:
- **Call 911**
- **Visit your nearest hospital emergency department**

What's Inside

What is mental health?

Good mental health is important for everyone as it helps us cope with life's stresses and reach our goals. Mental health is about how we think, feel and act. When our mental health is good it helps us to get the most out of life.

We all have highs and lows in our mental health. A low period does not mean you have a mental illness. It's normal to have feelings like anger, sadness or anxiety when facing challenges.

What is mental illness?

There is a difference between mental health and mental illness. A mental illness is when a person is diagnosed with a problem that alters their thinking, mood and/or behaviour. Illnesses are linked to times when a person is distressed and their ability to function well has changed. Examples of mental illness include depression and anxiety disorder.
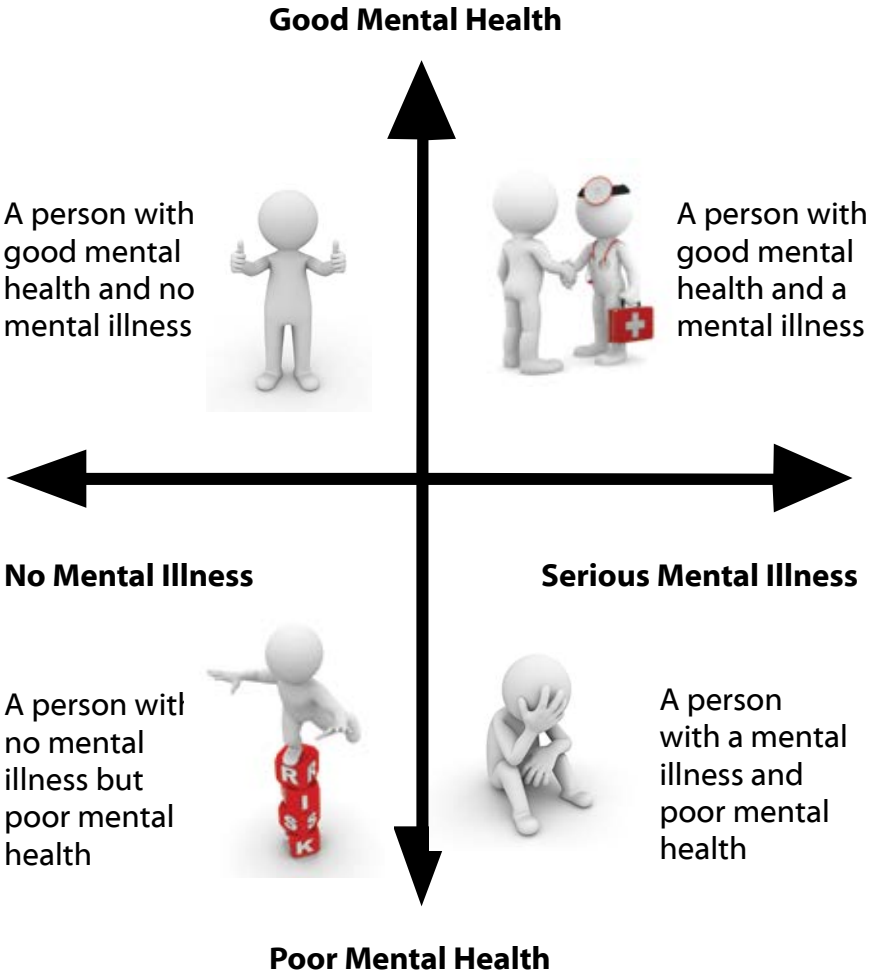
Whether or not you have an illness, knowing about mental health and how to keep mentally healthy is important for everyone. We can all improve our mental health.

1 in 5 people will have a mental illness in their lifetime.

4 out of 5 won't but this doesn't mean they are doing well mentally.

Mental health can be gained and lost each day through our interactions, relationships and how we behave towards one another. A person may not have a mental illness but can still have poor mental health. As well, a person can have a mental illness but have good mental health. The diagram below shows how it can vary.

Good Mental Health

A person with good mental health and no mental illness

A person with good mental health and a mental illness

No Mental Illness

Serious Mental Illness

A person with no mental illness but poor mental health

A person with a mental illness and poor mental health

Poor Mental Health

(Adapted from Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2014)

Transition and life events

There are certain times in our lives when our mental health may be more vulnerable. Some of these times are known as "transitions" and the others are "life events".

Transitions
- Graduating school and going to post-secondary education or work
- Moving out on your own
- Pregnancy and becoming a parent
- Later in life with changes to family structure and retiring from work

Life events
- Being unemployed, underemployed or experiencing work stress
- Experiencing loss, death of a loved one or getting divorced
- Having to care for someone who is dependent on you
- Immigrating to a new country
- Developing a chronic illness
- Experiencing and/or witnessing abuse, bullying, discrimination or violence

By taking care of our mental health we can reduce the chance of developing a mental health problem.

Here are some examples of how a person's mental health can vary:

Mark

When Mark started college he was eager to leave home and become independent.

By mid-semester Mark was struggling to keep up with his course work and he stopped going out with his friends. His parents noticed his mood had changed when he came home for the weekend. They talked with him about it and together they made a plan to visit their family doctor.

Mark was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder and got treatment. He is now able to manage his school work and spend time with his friends.

Jessica

When Jessica became a new mom she was very excited and happy.

Within a few weeks Jessica was very tired from lack of sleep and feeling a little overwhelmed. Jessica's friend noticed this and talked to her. Together they made a plan which included help from her family and friends with meals and housework.

With the support of her friends and family Jessica is now taking time for herself and feeling like she can manage her new role.
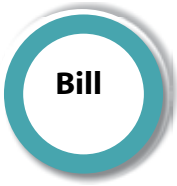
Bill

In his 20's, Bill was diagnosed and treated for depression and recovered.

Bill recently lost his job with a company he had worked at for the past 25 years. He is angry, having trouble sleeping and drinking heavily. Bill has started to have thoughts of suicide.

Bill remembers from his previous episode of depression that there is help available and decides to call the local crisis line.

Protective and risk factors

There are things that can protect our mental health and things that put it at risk. Protective factors buffer a person and help reduce the chance of developing a problem. Risk factors make it more likely that a person will develop a problem.

Protective Factors:

- Feeling like you belong
- Having good physical health
- Being able to solve problems
- Having your basic needs met (safe housing, stable income)
- Feeling in control of your life
- Spending time with people you enjoy

Risk Factors

Traumatic life experience

Childhood trauma

Having a parent with a mental health problem or illness

Having alcohol, drug and/or gambling problems

Being isolated and or feeling alone

Some risk factors may be outside of your control, but, there are always steps you can take to reduce their effect. **The key to improving mental health is to increase protective factors.**

What supports mental health?

Resiliency

Everyone can improve their mental health by building their resilience. Resiliency is the ability to handle life's ups and downs in positive ways and to bounce back from hard times. Making it through life's challenges strengthens our ability to handle future stressors.

Physical Health

Mental health and physical health are closely linked. Long-term stress can cause health problems. Also, having a chronic illness can impact mental health. Maintaining or improving our physical health benefits overall health.

Emotional Well-Being

We all have many emotions. Positive emotions support our mental health. When we are able to manage, express and use our emotions well, it can improve our health.

Healthy Coping

Our bodies are able to respond better to stress when we practice healthy coping. Choosing unhealthy coping methods can be harmful to your health and hinder your ability to deal with stress.

Positive Thinking

At times, it can be a challenge to have a positive outlook when dealing with transitions and life events. Optimistic thinking has been shown to enhance our overall health. Try to focus on the positives. Think of the things you can control and then make a plan to improve them.

Things you can do right now to improve your mental health:

Tip #1

Eat a healthy diet

Using Canada's Food Guide will benefit your health. Have breakfast every day. Eat more vegetables and fruit. Drink water to quench your thirst. While grocery shopping read the Nutrition Facts table on food labels to eat healthier.

Tip #2

Be active

Adults ages 18-65+ need at least 150 minutes of physical activity each week. It can help you to feel good, reduce stress, maintain a healthier weight and lower your risk for illness. Try things that fit into your life like going for a walk, a bike ride, jogging or swimming.

Tip #3

Get enough sleep

Sleep provides a time for our bodies and minds to rest and restore. While needs can vary across the ages, aim to get 7-9 hours of sleep each night. Some things that may help include: having a regular routine, avoiding caffeine and alcohol, winding down with a good book or bath and keeping your room dark, cool and electronic free.

Tip #4

Offer to help someone else

Helping others benefits you too. It can increase your feelings of well-being and being connected. Find out where there's a need close to you (e.g. volunteer at your child's school or a senior's home or help a neighbour).

Tip #5

Get involved and be creative

Taking part in local programs gives you a chance to create, express and connect with others. Getting involved has benefits for you and your community. Share your talents and find out what's going on in your community (e.g. community gardens, art/ cultural events and festivals).

Tip #6

Review what matters to you

Finding purpose and meaning in life promotes positive mental health. It can be a source of strength, inspiration, a means of coping with life and personal growth. This may include spiritual beliefs, religious practices, worship and/ or other activities that have meaning. Take time to review what matters to you and find ways to celebrate life.

Tip #7

Manage work stress

While work benefits our mental health in many ways, it can also be a source of stress. Some things that can help manage work stress are: thinking positively, getting to know your co-workers, finding a mentor, taking your breaks, getting training, learning new skills and trying to leave work on time.

Tip #8

Build and enjoy healthy relationships

Having healthy relationships with a partner, family member, friend and/or co-worker can be a source of support when we feel stressed. These relationships can provide us with feelings of love, value and respect. Consider going for a coffee or a walk with a friend. Sometimes relationships can be a source of stress. It may be helpful to think of conflict as a normal part of life and try to take steps to resolve it.

Most people do a good job of taking care of their mental health; however, we all benefit when we learn the facts.

Promoting mental health to everyone:
- improves mental health
- reduces stigma
- helps people to recognize risks and get help

If you have concerns about yourself or someone you care about talk with a health care provider.

For immediate help call 911 or visit your nearest hospital emergency department.

Durham Health Connection Line
905-666-6241 or 1-800-841-2729
durham.ca

If you require this information in an accessible format,
contact 905-666-6241 or 1-800-841-2729